

**Experiences of a study on views
regarding the conductor profession and conductor training**
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Introduction

The purpose of conductive education is preparation for independent life management and for successful social integration. At the beginning the interpretation of the necessity of integration was attached to the support of children with disabilities, primarily in terms of education; later on this shifted towards inclusive education.¹ This shift entailed an extension of the interpretation of educational integration to the social level and at the same time an expansion of the population involved.² Organising and supporting the training and continuing education of pedagogues who are able to implement inclusive education for children with special needs is a major task for today's education policy.³ The group of children and youths with cerebral palsy (disability of central nervous system origin) represents a narrower segment of children with special needs. Conductors have a key role in their integration and preparation for successful inclusive education. The *conductor* is the manager, leader, organiser of conductive education, the accomplishment of the task assumes a holistic approach.⁴ The conductor's attitude to the student is based on the principle of wholeness, on the integrative approach.⁵ The conductor's aim is not to improve single partial functions; adopting the pedagogical approach to influence the personality as a whole, they intend to restart the stagnating learning process through comprehensive personality development focusing on the human being. General pedagogical skills⁶ are essential for the conductors' activity as well as are certain special capacities. All those capabilities are necessary for the conduction to be effective and also for coping with failure and staying in the career. The pedagogue's expertise is closely related to these abilities, according to Csapó's conceptual definition: "We speak about expertise in the case when knowledge is organised in compliance with the logic of a particular professional domain. Thus expertise includes the knowledge, skills and capacities required for practising the given profession."⁷

The conductor, who has obtained professional knowledge, attitude, abilities and competence in the professional field of conductive education, is able to effectively influence cerebral palsy, to teach learners, to prepare them for integration. Conductor training prepares candidates to pursue this specific pedagogical activity. The decision for pedagogy as a career is based primarily on the candidate's interest, prior personal and school experiences, positive impressions gathered in the world of learning and school, and teacher models who set an example.⁸ According to the findings of studies on career socialisation, young people may have a preliminary

¹Papp 2012; Giambona, Vassallo 2013; Zászkaliczky 2013; Réthy 2013; Varga 2015; Böddi 2017

²Varga 2015, Cserti, Csapó, Orsós 2013; Szemenyei, Végh 2013; Kokas, Lakatos 2013; Horváth 2013

³Perlusz 2013; Rózsáné 2013; Feketéné Szabó 2013; Mile 2016; Túri 2017b

⁴Hári 1991; Balogh 1998; Pintér 2002; Feketéné Szabó, Hevér 2011; Földesi 2014

⁵Földesi 2014; 2017; Balogh 2018; Schaffhauser 2016

⁶Hegy 1996

⁷Csapó 2004, 32.

⁸Falus 2004; Dombi 1999; Köcséné 2007

career attitude already at the moment when they choose a career which may change during the training, and in the initial period of their practice as pedagogues, in reaction to the impact of these.⁹ The training, however, may mean a considerably weaker intervention concerning the career attitude than the impact of the beliefs originating from previous personal and school experiences.¹⁰ All those views have indeed a crucial effect on the way of thinking and the pedagogical practice of both teachers and candidates.¹¹ Personal constructs which have an impact on the receptive and interpretive system¹² affect the candidates' way of thinking, pedagogical judgements, acceptance of instruction contents, later practice, serve as patterns, function as a sort of filter. While the opportunity is provided for acquiring professional knowledge and competences transmitted by teacher training, the candidates' beliefs will determine what they are able to accept and integrate during their studies.¹³

The possibility of the *successful exploration of views* is supported by a broad research methodology; in addition to the traditional explorative research methods like the *questionnaire*¹⁴, the *interview*¹⁵ and the *depth interview*¹⁶ more recent methods have emerged that make a more in-depth examination of views possible, such as the *concept map*¹⁷, *aided recall*¹⁸, *metaphor analysis*¹⁹, *sentence completion*²⁰ and *portfolio analysis*²¹.

Following a review of the technical literature and on the basis of the findings of further two studies (Dudás 2007; Fúzi 2012) I finalised the objectives of my survey. In her study Dudás stresses that the students have relevant views related to the training in respect of themselves and their future profession already at their entry to the training, while Fúzi thinks that the quality of their subsequent pedagogical practice is influenced by their personality, their technical knowledge and the role model they play as well as the balance of those. On this basis I placed the main focus of my research on exploring how the students participating in conductor training see *the conductor profession*, how their views concerning this matter change and what they think about the underlying *conductor training*. On the basis of a review of the specialist literature, selecting research methods to be applied for the empirical survey I built on research methodological approaches and tools known from and successfully employed in view studies.

⁹ Váriné1986; Köcséné 2007

¹⁰ Richardson 1996; Köcséné 2007; Rodgers, Scott 2008

¹¹ M. Nádas 1999; Szivák 1999; Falus 2001; Dudás 2007; Kálmán 2013

¹² Pajares 1992; Bullough 1997; Calderhead 1996; Richardson 1996; Falus 1998; 2001

¹³ Hunyadyne 1988; Falus 2001; Kimmel 2007; Dudás 2011

¹⁴ Golnhofer, M. Nádas 1981; Johnson 1994; Nettle 1998; Szivák 1999; Köcséné 2007

¹⁵ Golnhofer, Nahalka 2001; Köcséné 2007

¹⁶ Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, Lloyd 1991; Fülöp 1993

¹⁷ E. Szabó 1996; Zantig, Verloop, Vermunt 2001; Dudás 2007; Köcséné 2007

¹⁸ Falus 1985; Kotschy 1985; Meijer, Zanting, Verloop 2002; Sántha 2004

¹⁹ Vámos 2001; 2003; Köcséné 2007; Dudás 2007

²⁰ Zanting, Verloop, Vermunt 2001

²¹ Bullough 1993; Dudás 2005

Aims, issues, hypotheses of the study

At the time of their entry into the training, conductor candidates' views regarding the conductor profession and the training and the formation of these views are not known. The beliefs of professionals (academic staff, conductors) participating in the training in respect of the conductor's role and activity and the professional contents of conductor training are not clear either. My survey was aimed to explore student conductors' system of views and its development according to the following points:

1) views regarding the *conductor profession*, specifically a) the conductor's role and activity, b) general and personal factors determining the choice of career as a conductor, c) acceptance of the demand for special treatment, d) integration and inclusive education, and

2) views concerning *conductor training*, including those in respect of a) the perception of conductor training and b) whether the conductor profession can be learned.

Issues of the study:

1. What are conductor candidates' views regarding
 - a. the conductor's role and activity,
 - b. general and personal motives for choosing the conductor profession as a career,
 - c. recognition and acceptance of the demand for special treatment,
 - d. integration and inclusive education,
 - e. whether or not the conductor profession can be learned,
 - f. the contents of conductor training?
2. What are the views of professionals and students involved in conductor training on the role and activity of the conductor, on the professional contents of conductor training and its role in the process of becoming a conductor?
3. Is it possible to tackle changes in the views of students entering the training as they progress through their studies?
4. Is it possible to capture conformities and differences between the particular views of particular cohorts or subject to the number of years graduates have spent in service?

Hypotheses

1.
 - a. There are changes in conductor candidates' views regarding the conductor's role and activity during their studies.
 - b. The number of years spent in service has no impact on views regarding the conductor's role and activity.
2. During conductor training there is a transformation in conductor candidates' beliefs regarding the general and personal motives determining the choice of the conductor profession as a career.
3. Conductor candidates are sensitive towards the recognition and acceptance of individual needs and special educational needs.
4. There are changes in conductor candidates' views regarding integration and inclusive education during conductor training.

5. Conductor candidates and experts participating in the training hold different views on conductor training and on the role of particular training contents in the process of becoming a conductor.
6. There are changes in conductor candidates' beliefs during the training as to whether the conductor profession can be learned.

Introduction of research methodology, sampling and timing

For examining the issues of the study and the hypotheses formulated on that basis I chose the *mixed research approach (mixed methods)*, of the mixed method research strategies I adopted the *embedded mixed methods design* and analysed the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the framework of a primarily quantitative examination where qualitative methods (concept map, metaphor, interview) had a supplementary, supportive role. Of the methods suitable for assessing the hypotheses of the study I decided for using the *questionnaire* (self-designed 1 to 5 Likert scale), the *concept map* and *metaphor creation* as well as the *semi structured interview*.

For analysing the attitude scale I employed an SPSS application. For the *content analysis* of the metaphors and concept maps and for setting up a system of categories underlying the analysis, on one hand I took studies with similar aims known from the specialist literature as a basis (e. g. Dudás 2006; 2007; Kimmel 2007; Köcséné 2007) and then, building on these, added two further elements, which I thought were necessary for the conductor's role and activity, to the categories applied in Dudás's study (2007); on the other hand I used MAXQDA, a software supporting qualitative text analysis. To process the data of semi structured interviews I carried out qualitative text analysis.

As one part of the research a *cross-sectional examination* was performed in order to explore the views of all students as well as professionals participating in conductor training in a descriptive manner. In the study:

From cohorts I, II, III and IV of the training (approximately 240 students) altogether 205 persons completed the attitude scales and created metaphors. From the 205 persons 59 were first year, 59 second year, 51 third year and 39 fourth year students.

The views of *professionals* involved in conductor training (academic staff, conductors) were also examined, 54 professionals (15 academic staff, 39 conductors) volunteered to participate in the study. Selected were the volunteer professionals who provided data about the time when they started their career. An aspect of selection was also the representation of time spent in the profession, thus three generation groups were formed: Professionals who had been in service for a) 0-6 years, b) 7-20 years, c) 21+ years.

In addition to the cross-sectional examination, I took semi structured interviews with fourth year students at the end of their training in a convenience sampling procedure. About 20 students from the cohort assessed were willing to participate in the interviews.

Another part of the research involved a *time series linear examination* between 2013 and 2017 among conductor candidates entering the training in the autumn of 2013

(59 persons) The survey was then repeated every year, thus embracing the whole period of their training.

During the survey I again adopted quantitative and qualitative methods, employing the *questionnaire* (self-designed 1 to 5 Likert scale), the *concept map* and *metaphor creation*. In order to assess hypotheses, I applied the attitude scale in respect of all questions of the research while the metaphor and the preparation of concept maps were used for examining the conductor's role and activity. The results of the attitude examination were evaluated in two phases:

First the findings of the attitude scale completed at the start of the survey by then first year students were compared with responses given four years later by fourth year students in order to examine the development in views. (N=59)

Secondly the views of a narrower sample, students who had contributed throughout the four years (N=16) were analysed in order to reveal the dynamics of changes in students' views from year to year.

As part of the assessment of views, in the framework of a *correlation analysis* I aimed to detect connections and interferences between the beliefs of students versus academic staff and conductors. In the course of the correlation analysis, responses to the questionnaires filled in during the four year survey by students, conductors and academic staff (380 questionnaires) were analysed, thus questionnaires completed in the frame of the cross-sectional and the time series examinations were also included in the sample for analysis. Methods employed for the cross-sectional examination comprised variance analysis, cross-tab analysis and correlation.

Outcomes of the survey

According to the outcomes of the *attitude scale* students stressed the holistic approach, thorough professional knowledge, positive characteristic traits (qualities, competences) and the conductor's expertise as attributes of the role. In the evaluation of the role comprehensive personality development and statements presenting the conductor as a special pedagogue prevailed. The conductor's activity was seen as a comprehensive, variegated, multifaceted and complex occupation. Among the conductor's characteristic traits a thorough grounding, dedication, a responsible attitude, empathy, understanding and patience were emphasised. As the special field of the activity the pedagogical approach, as typical characteristics assistance, guidance and control were accentuated. Among the skills observation, motivation, cooperation and communication skills and a good grasp of situations were deemed most important.

In the frame of a so-called simile-based metaphor collecting the students created *metaphors* related to the conductor's role and activity. Analysing the metaphors I composed so-called meaning-related sets and attached to them corresponding or in terms of meaning closely related expressions. When finalising the sets established I leaned on the written explanations attached to the similes. Following the grouping, building on the grouping scheme known from Dudás's study (2007) I created the major content category units and subgroups. After arrangement in category units, I employed qualitative content analysis as well as the programme of the MAXQDA text analysing software for the analysis. The outcome was that the *conductor's role* was typically associated with the similes 'helping professional' and 'interdisciplinary

professional' due to the wide spectrum of knowledge and competences that can be utilised in various areas, and on the other hand stressing the supportive, assistive character of the role.

The *conductor's activity* is seen as a multifactorial, complex job where on top of assistance, guidance and the pedagogical activity, knowledge associated with further domains and the ability to put those jointly in practice are also present. The interviews confirmed the interpretations of the role where the conductor is evaluated as a supportive, creative person who promotes development and the representation of the nature of the conductor's activity was supplemented by the definitions 'art-creation' (gardening) and 'interdisciplinary activity' were reinforced by the interviews.

According to the summative evaluation of the results of the attitude scale, the metaphors and the interviews, *in respect of the conductor's role* the students see the conductor as an *assistive, supportive professional* and an *interdisciplinary specialist* who is capable to cooperate both in homogeneous and heterogeneous teams, is open-minded towards accepting individual demands and special educational needs and supports integration and inclusive education. The students describe conductors and their occupation in *multifaceted, complex activities that require special expertise*.

In students' opinion the *general motives for choosing the conductor profession* include principally *commitment to the conductor profession, working with children* and the *recognition of the profession both at national and international level*. Beliefs regarding the *personal motives for choosing the conductor profession* are the same as those set forth under the general motives. Students present *commitment to the profession* and the *disposition to work with children* as the factors that had the greatest impact on their personal choice; among the personal motives the emphasis on the *positive pedagogical approach* appears as a new element in addition to the national and international recognition of the profession.

Students have a *positive attitude* towards accepting the demand for special treatment, already *at entry to the training* they are *very open-minded and acceptive towards individual needs* and they have an *acceptive attitude towards special educational needs* as well. The students' acceptive attitude towards special educational needs also entails accepting children and young persons with cerebral palsy and other symptom complexes. *Their open-minded, acceptive approach and empathy further improves and extends to full scale as they progress through the training*.

The detection of beliefs regarding *integration and inclusive education* was based on the evaluation of answers given to the 1-5 attitude scale, which *did not reveal significant differences between the opinions of students and professionals* in relation to integration and inclusive education. The outcomes reflect a strong consensus in considering conductive education a possible path, a vehicle in preparing for integration, participation in conductive education in a group is seen as a precondition of successful integration for children with CP.

Concerning the issue as to *whether the conductor profession can be acquired*, both students and professionals emphasise the importance of supervised practical work in the frame of theoretical and practical training built one upon the other. According to students' opinions, the conductor's job can be best acquired by spending the highest possible number of hours in the practice; on the other hand, learning from

experienced professionals in the practice and learning from each other in task situations during group practices are also important elements.

Our hypothesis that conductor candidates and professionals participating in the training hold different views on conductor training and on the role of particular training contents in the process of becoming a conductor was assessed in the scope of a cross-sectional examination. The hypothesis was partly verified, since students and professionals hold partly different views regarding the role of the training in the process of becoming a conductor, significant differences were seen in half of the statements formulated in relation to the examination of the question. The greatest difference between beliefs emerged was manifested in the evaluation of professional course units related to conductive pedagogy; while more than half of the professionals thought that professional course units related to conductive pedagogy, knowledge elements transmitted by these had the greatest contribution to the process of becoming a conductor being successful, only one fifth of the students shared this opinion. Views diverged also regarding the issue whether ongoing practical work should be given greater emphasis and a higher number of lessons; while three fourths of the professionals supported the idea, the majority of the students were rather negative. Opinions corresponded where the three domains of the academic training (conductive pedagogy, methodology and medical biology) were considered equally essential in conductor training and the need for a more proportionate, 1/3 - 1/3 - 1/3 division of lessons was stressed.

Our hypothesis i. e. that there are changes in conductor candidates' views regarding the conductor's role and activity during their studies was verified with the help of the attitude scale, the concept map and the metaphor analysis.

These views are *in harmony with the theoretical principles* appearing as the elements of the conductive education system and the underlying conductor training:

- *comprehensive personality development, holistic approach*²²;
- *homogeneous / heterogeneous team work* ²³;
- *efficiency in border areas*²⁴;
- *knowledge of border areas essential for the activity*²⁵;
- *consolidation of acknowledging pedagogy as a primary specialist area*²⁶.
- *assistive role*²⁷.

In respect of views concerning the conductor's role and activity, however, we can observe that some opinions, that are *not necessarily in accord with the basic principles of conductive education and the training it underlies*, have gained strength and their relation certainly needs clarification:

- the roles as pedagogue and movement therapist are emphasised jointly (contrary Petó, 1955, Balogh, 1994; Feketéné Szabó, 2013);
- evaluation of the conductor as a professional providing movement therapy (contrary Hári,1990);

²² Petó 1955; Hári, Horváth, Kozma, Kókiúti 1991; Beck 2008; Feketéné Szabó 2011; Földesi 2014; Benyovszky 2015; Schaffhauser 2016

²³ Hári 1991; Pintér 2002; Medveczky 2004

²⁴ Balogh 1994; Medveczky 2004; Szabó, Hevér 2011

²⁵ Hári 1973; 1982; 1991; Feketéné Szabó 2013

²⁶ Hári 1980; 1982

²⁷ Petó 1955; Hári 1991; Horváth 2000; Pintér 2002

- close relation between the conductor's activity and movement therapy (contrary Pető 1955; Hári, Ákos; Hári 1990; Hári et al 1991; Földesi 2017).

The results of the survey verified the hypothesis according to which *the number of years spent in service had no impact on the views of conductors and academic staff regarding the conductor's role and activity; irrespective of the number of years they spent as practising pedagogues, their estimations of the role and the activity were similar.*

The findings were that views regarding the general motives determining the choice of career remained unchanged throughout the training; in some cases further new elements emerged such as the impact of positive pedagogue models and work experience as volunteers, however, *the results revealed that there had been no significant changes in students' views even in the upper years, since every year commitment for the profession and the liking for working with children were indicated as the two strongest factors determining the choice.*

Our hypothesis that there are *considerable changes in student conductors' views regarding integration and inclusive education* was verified. Views recognising integration as the aim of conductive education got stronger.

Minimal change was seen in views emphasising the necessity of interval conductive education in respect of developmental milestones, and in beliefs that conductive education has a repository of tools that can be adapted for supporting integration.

The outcomes *verified also the hypothesis* that there were *changes in students' views as to whether the conductor profession could be learned*, by the end of the training their opinions based on both individual and independent experiences and assignments and practical situations became more resolute, as did their views in favour of learning from each other. Opinions stressing the importance of practical training, of learning from experienced professionals in practical situations gained strength and became a conviction.

Summary

Considering that beliefs regarding the future profession, activity and the concept of the pedagogue may develop primarily as a result of the training and during the training, it would be essential to provide opportunities for detecting student conductors' views, reflecting on these and following how these change, either integrated in the content of the training or as a starting point for new view studies.

According to the findings of the study, role borders between the conductor profession and movement therapy are not entirely clear in the students' cast of mind. I propose that in order to make a more accurate definition of these role borders for the students possible, a uniform approach be developed and conveyed consistently to the students. Within the training we must strive to clarify views concerning its aim and essence and to eliminate contradictions.

It is recommended that the findings of the present study be employed for founding and supporting new surveys regarding student conductors' career orientation, identity and professional self concept.

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