

# SAHK

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For the past 20 years, the humanistic approach in Conductive Education has brought local rehabilitation and special education personnel a new perspective on their work. The Presentation will outline the historical development of the application of the principles of Conductive Education in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong model of application, adapted to the local socio-cultural background. Conductive Education took root in the existing system of special education for children with physical or multiple disabilities, the subject of this paper, it then went on to influence the vocational and rehabilitation services for adults, which will be the subject of another paper at this conference. In the late 70's and early 80's, a few pioneers began applying the principles of C.E in their work in Pre-school Centres and Primary Schools. Visits to centres in Britain by administrators of services brought about two inspiring courses on the principles and practices of Conductive Education, given in Hong Kong by Mrs. Ester Cotton in 1984 and 1986. A Conductive Education Working Group was set up in 1986 under the chairmanship of Dr Marion Fang, the then Chairman of the Special School Council, and Dr Erik Kvan, the Chairman of the Spastic Association of Hong Kong. The Working Group provided a platform for uniting the efforts of personnel from the already established professions of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, nurses, special teachers, special early childhood educators and administrators from various special educational and rehabilitation settings. The work of the Conductive Education Project Team led by Mrs. Anita Tatlow between 1989 and 1992 gave added impetus to the development of the adaptation of Conductive Education in greater depth, exploring ways and means for its adaptation to the socio-cultural background of Hong Kong. The work resulted in the publication of The Hong Kong Conductive Education Source Book in 1994. The early contacts led to series of visits by administrators and frontline workers to the Petö Institute in Hungary, where the visitors were deeply motivated to make changes by the immense motivation and liveliness shown by the children staff there. From 1987 every year a number of rehabilitation personnel and special educators from Hong Kong attend the international courses at the Institute. Upon their return home, they compile reports for discussion in the Working Group of frontline workers from many agencies. Amongst these The Spastics Association of Hong Kong, a major service provider for children and adults with motor disorders and multiple handicaps, has played a significant role. Because the development took place within the already developed system of education with its institutions and financial structures, it gave advantage to both the administrators and frontline workers to explore the crucial elements in consolidating the practice. The deployment of Conductors foreign to the local language and culture was found difficult to incorporate into the existing system. Instead a transdisciplinary team model operating under the Principles of Conductive Education was chosen to replace the conventional multidisciplinary team model. Paramount in this model is the understanding that the multiple needs of the person with disabilities are interrelated. Visits of conductors for several months at a time has enhanced the local working practices. Conductive Educative interprets in the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities as a learning problem. This concept has inspired local rehabilitation and special education personnel to a revolutionary review of the conventional medical model of treating

disabilities. It has been realized that each discipline of the transdisciplinary team so formed requires a new mindset to orient itself to a new model. Educational and psychological means interacting with therapeutic techniques are emphasized in the teaching strategies to stimulate active learning on the part of the person with disabilities. Conductive Education rests on the philosophical belief of “unity of mind and body”, which leads the transdisciplinary team to develop an integrated curriculum encompassing cognitive, motor, personal-care, psychological, social and communicative learning in real life and age-appropriate contexts. The emphasis of a well-structured learning environment, supporting but not compromising the disabilities in the Petö concept alerts local practitioners at both frontline and management levels to carefully plan the whole day schedule which allows active participation of the learners. Involving parents in the children’s group learning, the principle mode of practice in Conductive Education shifts the relationship between the staff and the parents from an experts-novice relationship in the conventional one-to-one therapy session to a collaborative partnership. The parents’ knowledge and skills in facilitating their children grow as the group develops. They increasingly recognize their own signification role in the development of their children. Seeing the benefits of Conductive Education and this model of application, funds were given to the Association to establish the Jockey Club Conductive Learning Centre in 1994, for the purpose of sharing the principles of Conductive Education and the local model of implementation with other organization serving similar clientele. The Centre consists of a teaching unit, a children unit and a library, combining to provide training on both the theoretical and practical side. For the past five years, over 100 training programmes in the form of workshops, seminars and clinical attachments have been delivered to over 2000 participants of different professional backgrounds in special education and rehabilitation. The effect is far reaching: the concept and practice of the Principles of Conductive Education has been so impressive at the governmental level that a chapter has been devoted to it in the Curriculum Guide for special schools for the physically and multiply handicapped.



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