

## PART III

### Conclusion

#### Chapter 1

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1.1 Conclusions

The conclusions are structured as replies to the “Research Question” and the sub-questions in **Part I**, 1.3. Both the research question and the sub-questions have been placed in separate boxes to facilitate the reading process.

How can curricular recognition be given for choral singing in South African primary schools?

The implementation of Choral Unit Standards and Assessment Criteria will place the choral fraternity in a more powerful position to compete for recognition, support, time and resources. Naturally, Choral Unit Standards and Assessment Criteria are not “ends” in themselves, but merely serve as “means” to an end. The end result is:

- Well-rounded and better educated learners in South Africa;
- Recognition of the children’s choir as an instrument of aesthetic and artistic excellence; and
- Re-establishing the joy of singing in South African culture.

With the Choral Unit Standards in place, it becomes obvious that the choral programme is challenging and based on learning specific skills and knowledge, and choristers should be able to earn academic credits for their participation. The new Choral framework will advance the process of dispelling misconceptions like the following:

- The role of choral performance is “entertainment”;
- The choir exists only as a vehicle for promoting public relations for the school (or other institution);
- The choir merely provides relaxation and offers breathing-space from serious academic pursuits; and
- The choral programme is just a frill.

Greater accountability to stakeholders also results in increased acknowledgement and finer perception of the choral programme as an important medium for promoting the educational process, enhancing the quality of life, and giving children the opportunity to grow musically through the study and performance of quality choral music. (Refer to **Part II**, 1.1 “The Rationale for Choral Singing”.)

How can the choral director in the Primary school be guided in a constructive and meaningful way to address the issue of quality in structuring a comprehensive, balanced and sequenced choral programme?

A choral programme built on the Choral Unit Standards’ framework should provide greater accountability to stakeholders and would ensure greater acknowledgement from educational authorities and the community at large. Choral educators in the Primary school should find sufficient coordinated guidelines in the Choral Unit Standards (**Part I**, chapter 3) and the support material in **Part II** in order to implement an effective, purposeful and comprehensive choral programme.

How can a formal procedure for assessment of results be provided to ensure greater accountability to the choral director, choristers, parents, school governing body, government educational administrators, and the community at large?

There is a necessity for greater accountability by monitoring musical development and progress through formal and informal assessment of choristers. Implementation of the Choral Unit Standards gives the choral educator guidance as to the required criteria and standards for assessment purposes.

What support (resource) material does the general classroom teacher (who is responsible for the Primary School Choir) need to direct the choir effectively, with innovation and purpose. Furthermore, how can this essential support material, that addresses the challenge of choral directing in South African primary schools specifically, be made readily available at an affordable rate for a South African teacher?

The choral directing support material for teachers in **Part II** of this thesis has been generated with the express purpose of making the task lighter and more meaningful for the teacher in the Primary School who wishes to or even “has to” direct the school choir. This material should be made more readily available to teachers and students in training and at a far more affordable price. Two of the books (*Lifeline for Children’s Choir Directors* by Jean Ashworth Bartle, and *Directing the Children’s Choir* by Shirley McRae) that were discussed in **Part I**, 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, respectively, are out of print. In **Part I**, 1.5 “The South African Cost Factor”, a comparative price analysis of the two books, *Teaching Kids to Sing* by K.H. Phillips and *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears is supplied. As is evident from that analysis, the cost of the two books is well out of reach for most choral educators in South Africa. A South African publication of similar size and content can be produced at a considerably reduced sum, and **Part II** of this thesis can be published and made available to choral educators.

How can a common foundation or framework for all choirs throughout the country and at all levels of development be generated?

The Generic Unit Standards and the General Outcomes of the Choral Unit Standards apply to all cultural groups and every level of development. (Refer to **Part I**, Chapter 3 “Generating Choral Unit Standards”.) This will contribute to a common foundation for all choirs in South Africa. The Choral Unit Standards spell out what every chorister from whatever culture and at all levels of development should know and be able to demonstrate; it thereby creates a common foundation for all choirs. Should these Choral Unit Standards be implemented, it would greatly assist in the crossing of cultural barriers and the unifying process of the “Rainbow Nation” that this country so desperately needs.

Are there critical cross-field linkages/articulation possibilities with other learning experiences and career opportunities?

In **Part I**, 4.2 “Critical Cross-Field Linkages/Articulation Possibilities”, some of the numerous trans-disciplinary learning experiences and career opportunities are mentioned. It becomes evident that by participating in a well-structured, balanced choral programme, choristers gain skills that enable them to function optimally, not only in the classroom, but also in the world outside the school environment, i.e. learning about ways of doing things in life in order to survive and flourish. Qualities such as analytical skills, self-discipline, communication skills and creative thinking are the cornerstones of the choral programme. These qualities are essential for success and fulfilment in life. The choral experience helps choristers to become independent thinkers, who constantly apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills learnt to:

- a continuously expanding set of musical experiences;
- other learning areas at school; and
- life in general.

The choristers are thus encouraged to engage in higher level thinking skills by transferring and applying previous knowledge to new situations.

## 1.2 Recommendations

Education policy makers, heads of schools, school boards and choral educators will have to make substantial investments with regard to resources and opportunities for the choral programme if it is to be effectively implemented. The following are examples of resources and opportunities that need to be addressed:

- Suitable and adequate rehearsal time;
- Acceptable rehearsal venues;
- Effective and beneficial materials and equipment; and
- Opportunities for teachers to attend choral in-service training courses, intensive workshops, seminars and clinics.

Recommendations regarding the feasibility of effectively implementing the choral unit standards are as follows:

- Pre-service education and training of teachers (PRESET): additional choral directing training at tertiary level is essential in order to successfully implement choral unit standards. Music educators in the primary school need course offerings in child voice pedagogy, repertory, and choral conducting emphasis.
- In-service education and training of teachers (INSET): teachers would be far more amenable to implementing choral unit standards if they had the necessary expertise. In-service choral training courses will significantly increase music and choral teaching skills. A teacher's interest, ability and sense of responsibility have a direct bearing on his/her effectiveness in the task(s) that are assigned to them. When a general classroom teacher is assigned the task of directing the choir, that teacher's interest, ability in and sense of responsibility for choral singing will have an immense influence on the effective and meaningful implementation of the choral unit standards. Without the necessary training, some teachers may find the implementing of the choral unit standards beyond their level of comfort, interest or even ability.
- Resources: materials and equipment. Providing appropriate materials and equipment for the choral programme requires increased financial investment. This, however, does not present a challenge to the same extent as having to purchase expensive

instruments, because each chorister comes already equipped with the necessary instrument (the voice).

- Suitable and adequate rehearsal time: every effort should be made to meet these essential requisites.
- Support material for teachers in choral directing: in designing unit standards for the choral programme, an increased awareness of a need for support material has become evident. This is a necessity in order to minimize a casual or haphazard approach as to what is taught in the choral programme.

As was mentioned in **Part II**, 6.14 “Aural and Music-Reading Skills”, the ability to read and notate music is a tremendous asset for choristers. Should they not receive the necessary instruction, the choral director will have to incorporate this into the choral programme. This thesis does not provide guidelines for reading and notating of music and it is recommended that a music literacy series for the choral programme is developed by future research.

In **Part I**, 1.6 “The General Music Appraisal Programme”, it is explained that the Unit Standards for Choral Singing are linked to the General Music Appraisal Programme (GMAP) which has been generated by Grové (2001). Choir Performance is thus an extension of GMAP and the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3 credits. This refers to *school choirs* specifically. The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. Should a chorister, however, sing in a more advanced choir like a *regional choir* for instance, a different credit allocation should be devised. This may require allocating 1 credit per Choral Unit Standard, which will then add up to a minimum of 9 credits. This aspect is outside the scope of this thesis and it is recommended that this is developed by future research.

There is a need for the compiling of an instructional choral video series for the South African choral educator which demonstrates choral directing techniques like the following:

- Conducting gestures;
- Warm-ups;
- Specialised exercises teaching relaxation;



- Correct singing posture;
- Breath management; and
- Vocalises for group vocal technique.

The children's choir in the Primary school represents the future of choral music in South Africa. By lending support to, and advancing the cause of the children's choir, the quality and future of Secondary, Tertiary, professional and community choirs are directly influenced.