

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter of the study, the author offers an overview of the research. The research methods are briefly discussed before answers to the research questions are suggested. Taking note of the research methods can help the reader to understand how the author reached his conclusions and why he makes specific recommendations.

By sharing the conclusions resulting from the study and by making certain recommendations, the author aims to provide assistance to future researchers who want to extend the knowledge in this field of study.

#### **7.2 Summary of the research**

Sight-singing is a most important skill for singers as well as for choristers. This skill has been sadly neglected in South African schools with the result that many singers and choristers are not able to read music and sing from sight. By presenting a multiple media study package for sight-singing, the author aims to provide learners with a means to master sight-singing. Singers who can sing from sight can have access to a huge repertoire of written music in various styles.

To compile a sight-singing programme, which will enable learners to progress at their own pace, the author had to determine the essential knowledge and skills for sight-singing. He also considered the media attributes which are essential to communicate the various concepts to the learner.

As part of the transformation process in South Africa, the educational system is changing from a traditional approach to Outcomes-Based Education. The author aimed to contribute towards better music education in South Africa by suggesting national standards for sight-

singing, as part of the Standards Generating Body for Music in General and Higher Education.

The author employed a number of research methods to complete this study. These methods were a study of literature, evaluating a number of existing sight-singing programmes, compiling a study package for sight-singing, and action research, using the experimental study package. The various steps of the research are described very briefly.

### **7.2.1 Study of literature**

By making a study of previous research on music education and through interviews with a number of experts and through personal observation, the author concluded that the standard of music education in South Africa is not at an acceptable level. This agrees with the author's own experience, teaching new choristers at the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School.

Consulting relevant books, articles and webpages, the author determined the most important knowledge and skills that should form part of a sight-singing programme (Chapter 2). The author also gathered information about the possibilities and the use of educational media from these sources (Chapter 4).

### **7.2.2 Suggesting unit standards for sight-singing**

The author is a member of the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for Music in General and Higher Education. The aim of this SGB is to generate unit standards for music education at the levels of general and higher education in South Africa. The author suggested unit standards for sight-singing to be incorporated into the unit standards for music education (Chapter 3). Implementing the unit standards in all South African schools should help to improve the level of musical literacy among South Africans.

### **7.2.3 Evaluating existing sight-singing methods**

Using criteria regarding the contents, sequencing and the use of educational media in a sight-singing programme, seven different programmes were evaluated. By evaluating these

programmes, the author explained how other authors approached the subject. The author used some ideas from other authors' works in his suggested sight-singing programme, while he was also able to avoid the weaknesses of other programmes. This evaluation is described in Chapter 5.

#### **7.2.4 Compiling a multiple media study package for sight-singing**

The author compiled a multiple media study package for sight-singing consisting of a workbook with a CD recording. The information gathered during the literature study was used as a guideline to compile the study package.

#### **7.2.5 Action research on a small scale**

Teaching sight-singing to the new choristers that enter the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School presented the ideal opportunity to do research on this subject. After compiling a sight-singing workbook, the author used it to teach sight-singing at the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School. Having students of different ages and abilities in the same class presented the problem that not all the students progressed at the same pace. The logical solution seemed that each student should be allowed to progress at his own pace.

The disadvantage of the students not working in a group is that the teacher had to explain new concepts to each learner individually, which is very time-consuming. Therefore, an instructional CD was added to the workbook, resulting in a multiple-media study package. Several shortcomings in the workbook and the CD were identified. To improve the sight-singing programme, the workbook as well as the CD was revised. Adding some explanatory narrations to the music on the CD lengthened the recording and a second CD became necessary.

The author compiled a testbook with exercises similar to those in the workbook, to ensure that each student actually read the music and not only memorised some exercises. The study package was used to teach sight-singing at the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School in 2001, 2002 and 2003. During this period, the author revised the package a number of times, experimenting with different aspects of sight-singing tuition. The resulting study package is presented as appendixes to the thesis (Appendix A, B and D) and is described in Chapter 6.

### **7.3 Answers to the main research question and sub-questions**

During the research process, the author found the following answers to the sub-questions and the main research question of this study.

#### **7.3.1 Answers to the sub-questions**

Answering the sub-questions that arose from the main research question enabled the author to answer the main research question of the study.

##### ***7.3.1.1 Which processes are involved in sight-singing?***

The ability to sing from sight implies that a singer is able to process certain information mentally and respond by singing the music that he read. The process of sight-singing can be described as follows: The sight-singer uses his observations and knowledge to construct a musical framework in his mind. The singer's observations are processed and interpreted within the framework that he created. After interpreting the notation, he anticipates the music that he is about to sing, and he sings it. Immediately after singing it, the singer evaluates his effort according to his anticipation, interpretation, framework, knowledge and observations. Chapter 2 contains a detailed description of this process.

##### ***7.3.1.2 Which music concepts should be mastered to sight-sing well?***

To sing music from sight, the singer should master a number of music concepts which can enable him to interpret music notation and to perform the music accurately. The relevant concepts include specific knowledge and skills.

The sight-singer needs knowledge of:

- the music notation system,
- the style of the music, and (ideally)
- the language (meaning) of the lyrics.

The sight-singer also needs the skills of:

- reading the notation and the text,
- interpreting the symbols which he observed,
- singing the music accurately, and
- evaluating his efforts.

The various music concepts relevant to sight-singing are discussed in Chapter 2.

### ***7.3.1.3 How can sight-singing skills be graded into national standards?***

The relevant knowledge and skills can be graded in various ways to compose national unit standards for sight-singing. The knowledge and skills for sight-singing can be graded into unit standards as follows:

- **NQF level 1:** The learner should be able to sing a diatonic melody with four different note values from sight.
- **NQF level 2:** The learner should be able to sing a diatonic melody with chromatic passing notes from sight, using five different note values and determine the key of the music.
- **NQF level 3:** The learner should be able to sing music in two different modes from sight and be able to distinguish between simple and compound time.
- **NQF level 4:** The learner should be able to sing tonal music with chromatic notes from sight and use irregular rhythmic groupings.

South African unit standards for sight-singing are suggested and described in Chapter 3.

### ***7.3.1.4 Which communication processes are involved in sight-singing?***

The following communication processes are involved in sight-singing:

- communication between the composer and the singer by means of the code of music notation,
- communication by the singer internally (anticipating the music), and
- communication between the singer and the listener by means of the code of vocal sound.

Sight-singing as communication is described in more details in Chapter 4.2.

### ***7.3.1.5 Which media attributes are essential in a multiple-media study package for sight-singing?***

Two media attributes are essential for a sight-singing study package, namely **print** and **sound**. The print is needed to convey the visual representation of the music notation, while the sound can demonstrate concepts of music. A variety of media has these attributes, but the author only used selected media for the study package. These media are:

- a workbook,
- a CD recording,
- music instruments (a pitchfork, piano and a metronome), and
- human media (the learner, teacher and peers).

The use of educational media in a multiple-media programme for sight-singing is discussed in Chapter 4.

### ***7.3.1.6 What are the advantages and disadvantages of some existing sight-singing methods?***

Some of the selected sight-singing methods offer the following advantages:

- A good selection of graded sight-singing exercises are provided (e.g. McLachlan 1983b; Telfer 1992a, 1992b).
- Concepts are explained clearly (e.g. Telfer 1992a; Bauguess 1995).
- User-friendly CDs are provided with music examples (e.g. Bauguess 1995; Austin & Howard 2000).
- Active student participation is required (e.g. Telfer 1992a; Bauguess 1995; Arnold 1999).

Some of the selected sight-singing methods have the following disadvantages:

- The standard of the exercises is not suitable to use at the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School. Some sight-singing programmes only cover the most basic aspects of sight-singing (e.g. Bauguess 1995), and some are too advanced (e.g. Arnold 1999).
- Not all sight-singing programmes provide sufficient exercises that allow learners to practice each new concept (e.g. Bauguess 1995; Austin & Howard 2000).
- Not all sight-singing programmes are suited for self-study. The learner is dependent on a teacher to explain the different concepts (Boyd 1981; McLachlan 1983b).

Seven different sight-singing programmes are discussed in Chapter 5, according to criteria derived from the previous chapters. At the end of the chapter, the various programmes are compared in Table 5.1.

### ***7.3.1.7 How can a multimedia sight-singing program be compiled?***

A multiple-media study package for sight-singing can be compiled according to a instructional design model, such as Dick and Carey's "systematic design model". This model includes an analysis of goals, learning contents and pupils, before writing performance objectives. As part of the instructional design process, the initial instruction is used experimentally with a small group of learners. The instruction can then be revised before it is used on a larger scale.

The author designed and produced a multiple-media study package for sight-singing, using Dick and Carey's systems approach model for instructional design. This study package consists of a workbook, a testbook and two instructional CDs.

### **7.3.2 Answering the main research question**

The main research question for this study was:

How should a multiple-media study package be designed to realise South African unit standards for sight-singing?
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After answering the sub-questions, the main research question can be answered as follows:

A multiple media study package for sight-singing can be designed after considering the desired outcome of sight-singing tuition, the educational situation in South Africa and the resources that are available.

The research for this thesis has shown that such a study package should contain the following essential elements:

- the necessary information and demonstrations to equip the learner with the knowledge he needs to sing from sight,
- enough exercises to enable the learner to acquire the necessary skills to sing from sight,
- the media attributes of print and sound, and
- specific exercises to evaluate learners' sight-singing skills.

## **7.4 Recommendations**

In accordance with the answers to the research questions, the following recommendations can be made:

### **7.4.1 Implementing the suggested unit standards for sight-singing**

The suggested unit standards for sight-singing should be implemented as part of the learning area *Culture and Arts* in South African schools. These standards can also be used as guidelines to improve choristers' sight-singing skills.

### **7.4.2 Music teachers and choral conductors**

Class Music teachers and choral conductors should be encouraged to achieve these suggested standards, to improve their music skills, and to ensure that they can teach sight-singing to their pupils or choristers. Sight-singing instruction could be offered to Class Music teachers, choral conductors and to choristers at choral workshops. The multiple-media study package for sight-singing should be a valuable educational aid in this regard.

### **7.4.3 Utilising trained musicians**

Musicians who are skilled in sight-singing and sight-reading can assist singers, choristers and music enthusiasts to improve their sight-singing skills when they are invited to share their knowledge with choirs or music enthusiasts.



## 7.5 Recommendations for further study

Sight-singing is a field of study which lends itself to numerous research projects. Because it is a process which takes place inside the singer's mind, our knowledge about sight-singing is mostly based on theories. A scientific approach to the subject can help to improve sight-singing tuition, resulting in a more musical literate society. The author has identified a number of possibilities for further research, namely:

- The mental processes of sight-singing.
- Designing a sight-singing package for group tuition.
- The suitability of Outcomes-Based Education for music tuition, in particular sight-singing tuition.
- In-service training in sight-singing for music teachers and choral conductors.
- Background factors which can influence learners' ability to sing from sight (reading tempo, accuracy of singing, ability to play a music instrument).
- Utilising Computer Assisted Instruction in a sight-singing programme. / The use of interactive multimedia programmes in sight-singing tuition.
- The relationship between learners' theoretical knowledge of music and their ability to sing from sight (anticipate music mentally).
- The sequencing of a sight-singing programme for learners with different ages and different musical abilities.
- The effect of learning aids, such as the tonic sol-fa and the Chev  system to help learners with sight-singing.

## 7.6 Final remarks

Although this research was initiated by a practical problem that the researcher experienced, he is convinced that the research can be applied much wider than the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School. In South Africa, which has limited educational resources, but a great potential in its learners, more effective use of existing resources should be considered. Utilising multiple media instead of being limited to printed media alone can enable many learners, who do not have the help of a skilled teacher, to learn sight-singing.

The author trusts that this research will contribute to improve the musical literacy of South Africans and, in particular, to improve the sight-singing skills of South African choristers.