Modelling Effective Choral Conducting Education Through An Exploration Of Example Teaching And Learning In England

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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

The exact number of words of the thesis (exclusive of Bibliography and Appendices) is 80.232 words.

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ABSTRACT

A growing corpus of research provides evidence of the musical and non-musical benefits from choral participation, yet the preparation of individuals for their role as choral leaders and conductors within educational environments has not been given similar attention. Whilst choral leaders within schools, community or church contexts may emphasise the inadequate support mechanisms for choral education, there seem to be very few courses in the United Kingdom (UK) that deal with the preparation of choral conductors.

A new socially-located, heuristic framework has been developed, influenced by the theoretical constructs of Cognitive Apprenticeship, Situated Learning, and theories of expertise, as well as educational research on effective teaching and learning within higher education and the workplace. The framework encompasses five interconnected parameters, as part of an investigation into effective choral conducting education within several educational environments in the UK. These parameters relate to biographies, expectations, values and behaviours connected with (i) the tutor, (ii) the learner, (iii) the sequence and amount of training (process of preparation), (iv) the learning outcomes and (v) the socio-cultural contexts, including the teaching contexts, where choral practice takes place. A predominantly qualitative approach has been used for the collection and analysis of the data, concentrating on the participants' written self-reflective narratives, interviews and questionnaire responses. Five choral conducting education courses have been observed; three offered within higher education and two by independent bodies. Although data analyses suggest that none of the observed courses encompassed all the ingredients suggested by the framework, the framework itself offers insights and related methods of examining choral conducting education contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

My personal interest in choral conducting education was nurtured through involvement in choral activities, mainly as a chorister but also as conductor. Choral singing became a significant part of my life from an early age. I first joined the children's choir of a conservatoire in Athens at the age of eight years old and for twenty years I have been singing in various amateur, community, university and semi-professional choirs.

My first conductor has always been for me the ideal model of a choral conductor due to her ability to engage every single member of the group in choral activities. She did not have any formal degree in choral conducting (she is a guitarist and composer) and she had basic piano skills. However, her delicate hand gestures, her expressive face (especially her smile), her encouragement through positive feedback, her enthusiasm and the commitment that she displayed when working with children's voices were probably among the characteristics that inspired the singers and made them find choral participation attractive. This early experience subsequently raised questions as to whether the ability to conduct a choir is an intrinsic characteristic of the individual, a characteristic embedded in the activity, and/or something that one acquires through education.

In 2006, I had the opportunity to observe a Local Authority (LA) sponsored choral project that was designed both to introduce part-singing in primary schools in central London and to provide some form of professional development in choral rehearsing for the participant class teachers. One of the major aims of the project was to encourage the maintenance of the ongoing development of their school choirs at the end of the one-term project. An encouraging and enthusiastic professional singer (C), but not an 'expert' in choral conducting, as such, led the rehearsals. My weekly observation of the project rehearsals and the final concerts, in which the choirs participated, stimulated the recollection of my personal experiences as a singer and,

inevitably, I started drawing comparisons between the two conductors, my first conductor and C.

On the one hand, neither of them had any formal training in choral conducting and their piano skills were admittedly limited. On the other hand, they were both enthusiastic and encouraging, and the music repertoire that they chose seemed to satisfy the children's tastes. Nevertheless, I could not see the same enthusiasm in the eyes of the children that I was observing compared with the enthusiasm that I remember that my fellow choristers and I had whilst singing in our choir. The field notes that I took during the rehearsals of the LA choral project, as well as interviews with the children choristers, were later compared with my personal memories as a chorister in various groups and prompted me to contemplate the attributes that choral conductors should possess in order to make rehearsals engaging and purposeful. With respect to training in choral conducting, the informal discussions that I had with the participant teachers of this particular school-based project and my observations of their 'apprenticeship' during rehearsals in the classroom and in other Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses subsequently motivated me to investigate further the possible elements of an effective preparation in choral conducting.

During my secondary school and university years in Greece and in the UK, I have been conducted by various choral directors, the majority of whom were reported to have been working also with children and amateur groups. Some of them were competent technical interpreters of the music with accurate hand gestures, advanced keyboard and aural skills and also were successful at organizing the rehearsal time. Their rehearsals, however, were not always the most uplifting experience that I remember, unless the music by itself was stimulating my interest. Others were enthusiastic, encouraging and tried to make choral singing enjoyable for the singers, but their confusing hand gestures and body movements, their difficulty in explaining and demonstrating their wishes and their weaknesses in managing rehearsal time made choral participation less appealing.

Research studies recognize today that the responsibilities of the conductor, particularly in an educational environment, expand far beyond beating time (Wis,

2003; Apfelstadt, 2000). Prompted by what makes high school boys participate in choirs, Kennedy (2002) collected responses from the students and teacher of a grade 8/9 class of a suburban school in the USA. The interviews and observations underscored that love of singing, teacher influence and peer influence were the most salient factors that engaged these boys in choral singing. Among these factors, the conductor's attitude was considered to be a prime motivating force. Gerber (1989) emphasized that often 'the medium is the message', in other words, students tend to make connections first with the teacher and then the subject. Moreover, Daugherty and Hedden (2006) investigated effort, success, self-worth and competence for the Alabama children's Boychoir and reported that the conductor played a primary motivating role in chorister achievement.

From a historical perspective, groups with a limited number of participants did not usually have a choral 'master' or conductor[1]. However, in educational settings such as a school or a community choir, the role of the choral conductor is multifaceted because their responsibilities include, among others, the setting up of the choir, the selection of the music repertoire, the preparation of the music, the organization of events for its performance and the creation of an environment that enables participants to feel positive about their musical learning experiences. On the whole, the conductor seems to be a 'key' figure in making a choral activity an educational experience. The subsequent paragraphs provide a summary of the benefits from choral participation as they arise from relevant research, with an intention to highlight that knowledge, awareness and understanding of these benefits should inform and guide choral conductors' practice, as well as education, which is the focal interest of this study.

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[1] Throughout the history of conducting, it was not until the Middle Ages that an early form of conducting cheironomy was facilitated in Christian churches to indicate melodic shape. In the 17th century, the increased freedom of musical interpretation, which was added to the conductor's responsibilities, called for more efficient methods of direction other than hand gesturing (Sadies, 1980 p. 649). Likewise, large choral groups both in church or the opera may have needed a person to take a leading role and synchronize the singing.

1.2 The social and psychological benefits from choral participation

> Unlike many human attainments where a high degree of excellence must be reached
> before rewards can be received, singing offers rewards for everyone who attempts it.
>
> (Mann, 1836, cited in Kincheloe, 1985)

Research on the impact of choral participation on children and adults has drawn attention to the many sides of human behaviour that are influenced through choral singing. In particular, there are claims for a wide spectrum of non-musical benefits that children and adults obtain from choral participation. The third version of the English National Curriculum in Music (1999) underlined that music activities, in general, and singing in particular serve the purpose of promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth through the development of key skills, such as communication, working with others and through improving the singers' own learning and performance. Although Purves et al. (2006) found no formal link between a special programme of instrumental music and the development of literacy skills, there is research which argues for the positive effects of singing and choral participation on parameters such as language development (Chorus America, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2007), improved ability or performance in mathematics and improved overall academic performance (Chorus America, 2009). Music educators and parents also believe that good music programmes do create the potentials for successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society to evolve (Scottish Arts, 2007). The educators that participated in the Chorus America survey (2009) also stressed that student choir participation (i) makes students better participants in other groups, (ii) makes students more social or socially skilled, (iii) gets students more involved in their communities, (iv) makes students better listeners in other settings, (v) helps students express a wider range of emotions and (vi) helps them learn to better manage their emotions (op cit., p. 17).

Among the non-musical skills that are believed to be nurtured through choral participation are the development of imagination (Phuthego, 1998), a sense of self (Monks, 2003; Radford, 2001), the spiritual-aesthetic (Clift and Hancox, 2001; Radford, 2001) and social development of the participant (Sichivitsa, 2003; Richards and Durrant, 2003; McCrary, 2001; Seago, 1996). In addition, people seem to feel

positive about singing together (Kodály, 1974) and having the sense of belonging in a group (Durrant, 1998; Durrant and Himonides, 1998). Kodály acknowledged that there is nothing more demonstrative of social solidarity than choral activity, where many people unite to do something that cannot be done by a single person alone, however talented this person may be (Kodály 1974, p.121). Durrant and Himonides (1998) found that people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicity, social or financial statuses sing together and feel socially safe . What is more, they create friendships, they develop teambuilding attitudes, they increase trust in themselves and in others, as well as feelings for self-worth and self-satisfaction (Chorus America, 2009; 2003; Durrant, 2005; Kennedy, 2002).

In America, for instance, data reveal that around 42.6 million adults and children participate in choral groups and that choral singing is the most popular participatory art form of choice (Chorus America, 2009)[2]. In Sweden, respectively, out of the 8.9 million population, 600,000 people are reported to sing in choirs (Durrant, 2005), mentioning the significant influence of the Lutheran church on their choral activities. Moreover, the sense of group cohesiveness seemed to be significant to the participants' membership (Hogg and Vaughan, 2005).

Kennedy's study (2002) highlighted that within school contexts in the United States of America (USA) students enjoyed making friendships and socializing with people that they would not normally meet. In addition, students acknowledged the importance of meeting other students from different age ranges in the choir, a statement that possibly supports the positive usefulness of mixed-age choirs in education. What is more, many choral participants are reported to recognize the sense of unity and support (Radford, 2001), listening and following and creativity and discipline (Chorus America, 2009; 2003) during collective music making. The singers of the reports appeared to be 'avid patrons of the arts', volunteer significantly more frequently than the general public, contribute much more financially to philanthropic organisations than the average American, exhibit greater civic leadership and are better team players (op cit. 2009, p 5).

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[2] Further data suggest that there are approximately 270,000 choruses in the USA: 12,000 professional and community choruses, at least 41,000 K-12 school choruses and 216,000 church choirs (Chorus America Report, 2009).

Bowles's study (1998) pointed out that the students who are confident about their singing skills are the ones who enjoy participating in singing activities the most. The psychological benefits of choral participation include, apart from the development of self-confidence (Turton and Durrant, 2002), which is so widely proclaimed, the trust and feelings for self-worth and self-satisfaction. An anonymous quote from a thirteen-year-old child from Australia, on the importance of music in relation to confidence development is the following

> Music has given me a lot of confidence to do what I want – within reason – and not to worry about what other people think so much, and just do what I believe I should do (Anon, 2005, p. 180).

Kennedy (2002) and Chorus America (2009; 2003) also stressed the perceived communicative benefits that choristers reap when reaching out to the audience (integrative, musical-artistic experience) and sharing their talents (sense of achievement). A twelve-year-old child from Hong Kong said the following

> Singing in the choir on the stage is a wonderful experience. I feel that I am more privileged than my classmates who are not members of the choir (Anon, 2005, p. 181).

Choral teaching in school, because of its emotional content, discipline and requirement for personal interpretation and communication, is believed to help children develop trust in themselves and equip them with a sense of musical responsibility (Kennedy, 2002).

Lastly, choral singing appears to be linked to mood changes through the different breathing patterns employed whilst singing and the use of voice system that can also help towards the release of stress (Unwin, Kenny and Davis, 2002; Clift and Hancox, 2001). A research project by Unwin et al. (2002) linked group singing with mood changes. The findings indicated that both singing and listening to singing could alter the mood after participation in a short singing session[3]. Singing, with its required changes in breathing patterns and use of vocal muscles to express the emotions of the

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[3] The literature background of the study included scientific studies that tracked the physiological changes in blood circulation, respiration and body temperature of the participants while listening to music but the data of the actual study were based on the 'Profile of Mood States Questionnaire' (P.O.M.S.) that was distributed before, immediately after the singing sessions and one week later. The findings suggested that the singing group showed greater positive changes in mood compared to the listening group.

piece, was reported to have a stronger physiological effect on the subjects than passive listening. Similar findings were reported in a study by Clift and Hancox (2001) where choral participants mentioned that, with respect to the health benefits from singing, they reportedly improved their lung function and breathing and they managed to reduce their stress levels. Comments such as 'singing helps to make my mood more positive'; 'singing is good for my soul' highlight the reported contribution of singing to emotional, spiritual as well as related psychological benefits for the heart and immune system.

1.3   The musical benefits from choral singing

Research on singing education intends to communicate that everyone can sing (Welch, 2006; 2005; 2000; Langness, 2000; Goetze, Cooper and Brown, 1990). Some people, however, think that they lack the ability to sing often because as children they received negative comments, usually by an adult; parent or teacher. Those comments can have a life-long detrimental impact on their singing behaviour and the realization of their singing potential.

Singing performance and listening activities are meant to hold a prominent position in the English National Curriculum for music (1999). Deep breathing, good posture, relaxation of the vocal mechanism and expansion of the vocal range are among the basic singing skills that students can develop through choral singing (Boardman, 1996; Kodály, 1974; McRae, 1991; Rao, 1993; Thurman et al., 2004). What is more, research studies have illustrated that during choral practice and rehearsing, listening acuity can be developed (Bower, 2001; Burnsed, 2001; Geringer and Madsen, 1998; Sundberg, Friberg and Frydén, 1988), as well as a critical understanding of elements such as aesthetics and appreciation, vocal techniques, music history and theory can be effectively processed whilst studying the musical score (Bower, 2001; Corbin, 2001; Stevens, 2001).

1.3.1 New initiatives for singing

The musical and non-musical benefits from singing activities presented earlier on seem to have been taken into serious consideration by governmental bodies in the

United Kingdom (UK). There is now an emerging and increasing awareness, also from government bodies, of the importance of music generally and singing particularly in children's education. As a result, financial support from Local Authorities and the government has been given to initiatives, which aim to bring music activities, and in particular singing activities, in schools. To begin with, the 'Singing School Project', costing £10m, is a scheme developed in Manchester by Maurice Walsh, a trained singer. The aim of the scheme is to revive the tradition of singing in the classroom by providing free songbooks and CDs to the schools involved. Each year-group has about 100 songs on their CDs, mostly written by Mr. Walsh. The children of the participant schools who develop a singing talent join an area choir and are trained by professionals[4].

The *Sing Up National Singing Programme*, (www.singup.org) is a £40m government-funded National Singing Programme to be produced by Youth Music with Abbot Mead Vickers, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, over four years. The overall aim of this government investment is to raise the status of singing and provide good quality singing opportunities for primary school-aged children in England (17,000 primary schools participate in the programme). The 'Sing-Up' consortium are producing a songbook (led by Faber Music), a media and schools campaign 'highlighting the benefits of singing (led by Abbot Mead Vickers) and a workforce development programme to build the confidence and expertise of primary school teachers, musicians and parents in leading and supporting children's singing activities (led by The Sage Gateshead)[5].

Lastly, The Sage Gateshead, in Newcastle (UK), is a 'home for Music and Musical Discovery' that creates a variety of musical opportunities for children and adults of all ages. The Early Years programme provides 'structured ways' into musical discovery for pre-school children, whilst training Early Years workers and musicians to take the work forward independently[6]. The Sage Gateshead in collaboration with schools and Local Educational Authorities also has a scheme where a variety of performances and

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[4] Information retrieved in October 2007 from
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/article1293667.ece
[5] Information retrieved in October 2007 from http://www.musicmanifesto.co.uk/assets/x/50893
[6] Information retrieved in October 2007 from
http://www.thesagegateshead.org/l_and_p/schools/index.aspx

participatory activities, as well as supporting resources and training for the teachers are offered to the schools involved. What is more, throughout the year, schools can visit the building and participate in learning and practical activities. Taking everything into account, since there is demand for choral and collective singing activities within educational contexts (Rogers et al. 2008; Varvarigou, 2008; Ruocco, 2008; Lenton-Ward, 2005), there should be provision of opportunities for choral conducting education in order for individuals to fulfil their new roles as choral conductors or choral leaders.

1.4 Terminology of the study

A few words of clarification concerning the terms 'choral singing', 'collective singing', 'choral conductor' and 'choral leader' are in order before going any further. The term 'choral singing' as opposed to 'collective singing' underlines a formality in the music making process as well as a 'maturity', in terms of experience, in the vocal outcome. 'Choral singing' usually assumes progressive choral training, which focuses on greater vocal control on the part of the singers. This control can be demonstrated in homogeneity of tone, phrasing, rhythm accuracy and breathing. Furthermore, expression of a more refined and artistic character is expected. An additional parameter is that the singers rehearse regularly and they are led by a 'choral conductor' (i.e. an amateur or professional musician with some formal or informal training in choral conducting – or none, which is the focus of this study). Correspondingly, a group of people just assembled to sing together is the description of what one would term 'collective singing', such as singing carols, football chants and playground singing, which could happen in more informal settings. The singers involved in collective singing could be led by a 'choral conductor', if one exists, or by a 'choral leader' (i.e. an individual who leads the singing activity without necessarily having any training in music or conducting). 'Choral leaders' are often school teachers or other individuals with some intrinsic interest in music making. The current research addresses both types of singing and both types of choral educators because research suggests that both choral leaders and choral conductors reflect on their teaching and conducting of primary school children or early adolescents with a sense of anxiety and uncertainty (Rogers et al. 2008; Bresler, 1993). And ironically, it may be that those who can most assist children's discovery and appreciation of their

musical and vocal potential are often themselves unaware of that potential, for they have never received any vocal or singing preparation themselves (Gackle, 2000).

With regards to the terms 'tutor' and 'teacher' and 'student' and 'learner', the author wishes to clarify that in Chapter Two, where the existing literature is examined, the term 'teacher' is used to describe the choral conductors and the term 'student' the singers of the choirs that participated in these studies. However, in section 2.4.2, which deals with the professional development of teachers for their role as choral leaders within school environments, the term 'teacher' refers to the tutors or mentors of choral programmes and the term 'students' refers to the participants in these programmes. These terms were used by the authors cited in the chapter and were not changed by the researcher. In Chapters Three until Nine, the term 'learner' is used to describe the students on choral conducting education programmes and the term is borrowed from the theoretical construct of Cognitive Apprenticeship, which is explained in detail in Chapter Three. Similarly, the term 'tutor' refers to the teachers who lead in these programmes.

1.5   Limitations of the study

The literature review in Chapter Two reports on research studies that were undertaken from 1990 onwards, with the exception of some earlier seminal studies (i.e. Yarbrough, 1975; 1987) that informed later research. Journals such as the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, the *International Journal of Music Education*, the *British Journal of Music Education* and the *Journal of Research in Music Education* were among the principal primary sources that were used for a review of the existing literature because they were accessible to the researcher through the university library and on-line. This thesis does not include any publications from USA journals that focus on choral singing activities such as the *Choral Journal*, *ChorTeach* or *Chorus America* (with the exception of the 2009 and 2003 *Chorus America* reports on the benefits of singing, which were available on-line), for they were not accessible to the researcher.

1.6 Aims of the study

Although there are research studies undertaken in the field of choral singing and its musical and non-musical benefits, the extant research literature on choral conducting education in the UK is relatively limited. Moreover, the majority of these latter studies have been undertaken in USA contexts where the professional preparation of choral conductors is believed to be more systematic and structured than in many other countries. Within the available body of research studies that was accessible to the researcher emphasis appears to be given to the many qualities that choral conductors are expected to possess (i.e. their musical skills, technical competence in conducting, leadership abilities and communication skills). Therefore, the multifaceted role that conductors are called on to play needs to be recognized and supported by a multi-dimensional choral conducting education. Consequently, it should be helpful to have research into what it is that conductors can do to foster development, as well as spark and preserve singers' interest in choral participation. Since choral and collective singing activities seem to be part of almost every school community in the UK (Welch et al. 2008), it seems pertinent to examine the kind of preparation, if any, individuals receive for their role as choral conductors or choral leaders.

There is a relative scarcity of empirical studies dealing with choral pedagogy in a UK context, as opposed to a variety of sourcebooks in the USA (Wis, 2007; Boonshaft, 2002; Phillips, 1997; Brinson, 1996). Therefore, the focal interest of this research is to explore the nature and process of choral conducting education, the context(s) in which conductors receive their preparation and the perceived outcomes of this preparation.

My two research questions, therefore, are:

1. *What is the nature and process of choral conducting education in the UK? and*

2. *What are the learners' perceptions of their development and their programme's effectiveness?*

Research in music education that seeks to define high-quality preparation in choral conducting education should provide a basis for strengthening the position of choral activities in schools and communities. On the one hand, if choral conductors can be prepared effectively in professional practice, it may be that more people will be

encouraged to take up the role of a choral conductor with confidence. On the other hand, their effective attitudes and behaviour during choral activities might enable more children and adults to experience satisfaction and exhilaration from choral participation, which can lead to lifelong choral membership. Armstrong and Armstrong emphasised that 'whilst musical standards must be maintained, conductors must also recognise that they are in the business of transformation, not just producing the best musical product (1996, p. 23).

1.6.1 Thesis Structure

This chapter started with my personal narrative on choral experiences with an intention to set out the background to the study. It also presented my interest in choral conducting education, as well as studies highlighting the contribution of choral participation on the musical and non-musical development of individuals engaging in choral activities. The chapter concluded by encapsulating the research focus of the current study in two research questions. The literature on choral conducting education is reviewed in Chapter Two and offers the basis from where to explore choral conducting practice and preparation, primarily in the UK, where this study is located. Chapter Three constructs a socially-located, heuristic framework for the examination of effective choral conducting education in diverse contexts. The proposed framework is influenced by the theoretical constructs of Cognitive Apprenticeship, Situated Learning and theories of expertise, as well as educational research on effective learning and teaching within higher education and the workplace. Chapter Four describes the research design of the study. A phenomenographic methodology was considered appropriate for the examination of participants' experiences and perceptions of their education, which comprise the main source of data. A case study approach was applied to five diverse choral conducting preparation contexts and various methods such as web-based survey, documentary sources, audio-visual material, questionnaires, interviews and field notes were used for the generation of the data. Chapters Five, Six and Seven present analyses of the data from five different programmes on choral conducting education that were selected as Case Studies. A detailed discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter Eight. Chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, presents a summary of the findings of the thesis, followed by considerations of the implications of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1   Introduction

Chapter Two aims to explore research that has been undertaken in the field of choral conducting education in the UK. Although the central foci of the present research study are the nature and process, as well as the perceived effectiveness of choral conducting education in various contexts, the diverse literatures that are cited endeavour to acknowledge that the role of the choral conductor is multifaceted, i.e. musician, teacher and facilitator of music expression, administrator and organiser of performance opportunities. The majority of the research studies on choral education that are included in this review seem to illustrate that research attention is often either on the children as passive agents of singing activities (what they are perceived to like and what musical benefits they reap from choral participation) or on the technical competency of the conductor (mainly the hand-gestures) and how to achieve a successful choral performance. What is more, personal observations of choral activities in educational settings have revealed that far too often the choral conductors are either more musicians than they are educators (Durrant, 2003) or that classroom teachers with limited or nonexistent music training are expected to lead choral activities (Rogers et al. 2008; Ruocco, 2008; Wong and Davidson, 2006). In the first case, the bias towards a musical perspective more than an educational perspective focuses on getting a performance *from* the students rather than developing musicianship *in* the students[1]. In the second case, some teachers are likely to have minimum knowledge and experience in leading choral activities and, as importantly, minimum knowledge or understanding of children's voices (Holden and Button, 2006; Wong and Davidson, 2006). In the UK, for instance, the way that primary school teachers are prepared in music may seem unsystematic and unstructured, notwithstanding the short courses, day-workshops or summer schools that might be offered (Rogers et al., 2008; Rogers, 2002; Welch, 2000; Durrant, 1994).

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[1] Haworth (1992) suggested that this might be appropriate for high school choirs, but not for elementary grades.

To lay particular stress on the significance of the role of singing and choral education, Kodály emphasized that 'it is more important who the singing teacher is than who the director of an Opera House is, because a director might fail but a bad teacher may kill off the love for thirty years from thirty classes of pupils' (Kodály, 1974, p. 124). Hence, the following paragraphs intend to investigate what research studies tell us about the existing state of choral education, as well as enquire into the current preparation of choral conductors, primarily in the USA and the UK.

2.2 The responsibilities of a choral conductor

Many choral participants admit that singing activities have the power to encourage learning and evoke pleasure[2]. Therefore, the people who take up the role of a choral director need to possess more than mere technical skills in conducting or singing. As it appears from the literature, a conductor's outstanding technical competence per se does not necessarily facilitate effective musical communication and expression (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1996; Durrant, 1994; 2000; Gumm, 1993; 2004; Hamann, Lineburgh and Paul, 1998; Osman, 1991). Various studies (see Chapter One, 1.2) also put emphasis on the fact that there are a multitude of reasons for supporting choral activities with children and adults. The studies that are presented in the following section discuss issues related to choral practice mostly within educational settings.

2.2.1 Organizing the choir and crafting the rehearsals

Anecdotal evidence and experimental studies suggest that it is within the competence of the choral conductors to play different roles within a choir and especially within a school setting. Apart from leading rehearsals and performances, conductors have to choose suitable music repertoire (Bitz, 1998; Broeker, 2000; Montgomery, 1996; Persellin, 2000), conduct auditions (Bourne, 1992; Daugherty and Hedden, 2006; Haworth, 1992; Thurman et al., 2000a), recruit (Phillips, 1994), organize (Daugherty, 1999; Ekholm, 2002; Gackle, 2000; Stamer, 2002), train the singers (Brendell, 1996; Demorest, 1998a; 1998b; Demorest and May, 1995; Henry, 2001; 2004; Killian and Henry, 2005; Norris, 2004; Phillips, 1996) and plan rehearsal and performance schedules (Davis and Pulman, 2001; Peterson, 2000; Phillips, 1994; Phillips and

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[2] Adults who participate in non-professional choirs describe their experience of ensemble singing as 'exhilarating', 'uplifting', 'relaxing' and 'encouraging' despite having the fear of 'embarrassment' and 'going wrong' (Durrant 2003, p. 7).

Aitchison, 1997; 1998; Small and Bowers, 1997; Wis, 1996). Within school settings in particular, it lies within the responsibilities of teacher-conductors to assess students' performance (Blom and Poole, 2004; Keenan-Takagi, 2000), co-ordinate parents and support groups, book venues, accompanists and instrumentalists (McRae, 1991) and promote the choir (Wis, 2003).

There is an extensive body of publications on choral activities based on professional experiences of choral conductors, which form a subgroup of literature sources that provide useful information and suggestions for successful choral preparation, rehearsals and performances. To begin with, Brunner (1996) and Munson (1998) focused on the process of choral rehearsing since it is during rehearsals that the students can develop not only their musical competency (learn the notes, rhythms and vocal technique), but also awareness (they train the ear and determine the intentions of the composer) and sensitivity (they shape the performance according to the appropriate style and they communicate with each other and with the conductor). Two models for effective rehearsals have been proposed, (i) the 'synthesis-analysis-synthesis' model[3] (Brunner 1996) and (ii) the 'lesson-plan process' model[4] (Munson 1998). Both models indicate that successful rehearsals do not happen accidentally, but they are sequential and build upon each other as a result of the conductor's thoughtful preparation and reflection on the choral rehearsal process. Zielinski (2005) also proposed a model for planning and undertaking effective choral rehearsals, influenced by the Performance Pyramid, based on sports coach Wooden's pyramid. This model combines seven building blocks - (i) Preparation, (ii) practice, (iii) prioritize, (iv) personalise, (v) publicize, (vi) project the message and (vii) polish the product – that can assist choral conductors in teaching the basic elements of choral music as they proceed towards a successful performance.

Fisher (1991; 1992) experimented with methods for teaching English diction for choral music performance. He argued that the methods used by choral teachers and

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[3] According to the 'synthesis-analysis-synthesis' model, the students first 'grasp the overall musical intent, shape and structure and expressive import of the piece'. The 'analysis' is the part of the rehearsal where the students listen, critique, evaluate and refine the piece. The final 'synthesis' part enables students to compare their performance with the previous version and decide what has improved and what calls for further attention (Brunner, 1996, p. 38).

[4] Munson's 'lesson-plan process' (defining goals and thinking through procedures) consists of four stages: (i) analysis, (ii) lesson plan, (iii) rehearsal and (iv) evaluation. Planning the rehearsals is an extremely important process that enables the choral conductor to teach the students how to read the music (pitches, rhythms, dynamics as well as style) and help them develop a healthy vocal technique.

conductors of secondary school choirs and beyond are inconsistent and are based primarily on tradition and personal preference. Thus, he introduced the 'Articulatory Diction Development Method' (ADDM), which focused on developing kinaesthetic awareness and on controlling the speech articulators through sung exercises. Suggestions for successful choral intonation were also offered by Powell (1991), who concentrated on four areas of choral singing: (i) tuning lines vertically (listening and tuning to the other singers' notes), (ii) tuning lines horizontally (singing correct intervals), (iii) singing pure, uniform vowels and (iv) avoiding flaws in vocal production, which are usually related to inappropriate singing technique. Suggestions for successful choral intonation are also offered in numerous choral conducting methods from the USA (Wis, 2007; Smith and Sataloff, 2006; Brinson, 1996).

2.2.2 Warm-up instruction and repertoire selection

When schoolteachers or community-choir leaders participate in professional development courses in choral education (like the ones reported in Chapters Five and Six later), they often want to know more about repertoire selection and warm-up exercises for their choral groups. That possibly justifies the large variety of articles and experimental studies on choral warm-ups (Albrecht, 2003; Stegman, 2003; Briggs, 2000; Pricket and Bridges, 2000; Thurman et al., 2000b; Reames, 2001; Hemsley, 1998; Collier, 1996; Elliot, Sundberg and Gramming, 1993; Sundberg, 1992), which recommend vocal exercises with vowels for balanced resonance, or with consonants for the development of better vocal coordination. What is more, since studies on sight-reading activities suggest that sight-reading augments students' attentiveness (Brendell, 1996); teacher-conductors are encouraged to include sight-reading during the warm-up process. This is believed to be beneficial for the students because, on the one hand, concentration to sight-read keeps them on task and on the other hand, their sight-reading skills get improved. Boardman (1996), Stufft (1998) and Langness (2000)[5] also provided the conductor with suggestions and tips on how to develop children's interest in classroom singing and offered suggestions for facilitating vocal exercises related to breathing and singing games.

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[5] Langness (2000) suggested that breathing should be treated as a natural function. That is to say, the choral educator must draw attention to efficient breathing through observation and exploration, rather than start breathing exercises with routine 'how to' instructions or a demonstration of the 'correct way'.

With regard to repertoire selection, choral conductors seem to agree that good-quality music has 'vitality, originality, musical integrity' and can stand up to intense rehearsal (Persellin, 2000). By 'good-quality' repertoire, conductors usually refer to music that reinforces the singers' strengths, but also stretches them in some way whilst at the same time, offers enjoyment during rehearsals and performance (Apfelstadt, 2000; Gackle, 2000; Ruocco, 2008). Ruocco (2008) explained that selection of appropriate repertoire is key to a successful experience; if the music is too easy the singers get bored and may 'tune out' and stop listening, if it is too hard singers become de-motivated and feel inadequate if they are not able to sing it (Ruocco, 2008, p. 21). Indeed, the choice of musical texts appears to influence the performance and motivation of young singers (Hair, 1999; Killian, 1996; McGuire, 2000; Siebenaler, 1999). Abril's study (2005) has also shown that a multicultural music repertoire can, to a limited extent, 'expand children's musical choices and increase tolerance for that which is unfamiliar'. What is more, singers seem to enjoy performance of diverse musical styles and genres, more up-to-date songs (Kennedy, 2002; Rentz, 1994; Turton and Durrant, 2002) and music from different cultures (Abril, 2005; Apfelstadt, 2000).

The plethora of singing literature and the various publications of songbooks and empirical studies (Smith and Sataloff, 2006; Stannard, 2003; Hunt, 2001; Apfelstadt, 2000; Broeker, 2000; Persellin, 2000; Reynolds, 2000; Hemsley, 1998; Junda, 1997) offer music teachers, choral conductors and vocal instructors the option to choose the music repertoire that they like. Nonetheless, the choice of repertoire seems to be a difficult task. Persellin (2000) underlined that when repertoire has not been chosen 'wisely' for an ensemble (and by saying 'wisely' she refers to music that is appropriate for the ensembles' ages and abilities), 'no amount of charisma or creative teaching can undo the initial mistake' (Persellin, 2000, p. 71). To illustrate, any decrease of the popularity of singing at high school could potentially be connected to the music choices that music teachers make.

For the purpose of measuring the difficulty of solo vocal repertoire Ralston (1999) designed the 'Ralston Repertoire Difficulty Index' (RRDI), a 'valid and reliable instrument' based on six repertoire characteristics (range, tessitura, rhythm, phrasing, melodic line, and harmonic foundations). The value of this instrument for education

is, according to its designer, that it helps music teachers and voice instructors to make an easy and adequate match between the capabilities of their students and the difficulty of the repertoire.

Lastly, Forbes (2001) mentioned that, although most of the studies on repertoire address the issue of variety, quality is a criterion that hasn't been carefully examined. Forbes selected 104 directors of high school choirs for his study, some of whom were identified as outstanding by their colleagues and were nominated in choir competitions. Interviews, a written survey and solicited programmes were used to collect the data. The results of the study indicated, firstly, that the directors identified as 'outstanding' tended to select more classical, folk and non-Western repertoire for their choirs than the directors not identified as outstanding, although all students generally seemed to have a clear preference to popular music[6]. Secondly, 'outstanding' directors seemed to place great significance on helping students develop aesthetic sensitivity through the repertoire. The non-nominated directors tended to choose more popular/rock music from approved lists for contents or festivals and they preferred greater variety of repertoire. In conclusion, many factors seemed to influence the repertoire selection process, which, as a rule, appears to be unstructured and unsystematic. The studies by Forbes (2001) and Reames (2001) revealed that when directors had more years of experience they tended to programme more classical literature (particularly Baroque music), followed by folk songs and few popular songs for beginning high school choirs. Directors with less experience inclined to favour popular music and folk tunes, whereas classical music was less preferred.

People's different perceptions of the role that a choral conductor is supposed to play suggest a versatility of the conductor's position. In the light of this knowledge, the following section concerns the skills and knowledge that seem to be essential in supporting the choral conductors in their multifaceted role.

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[6] Similar findings on students musical preferences were illustrated in Rentz's study (1994) with 242 high school choral students, in select (n=132) and non-select (n=110) choral ensembles.

2.3 Choral conductors and traditional pathways to conducting

Kennell (2002) underlined that the study of pedagogy in universities today largely consists of the matching of musical repertoire and methods and the instructional strategies to developmental stages of the students: beginner, intermediate and advanced (Kennell, 2002, p. 249). Although Kennell's study addressed studio instruction, there seems to be a similar division of developmental stages and, by extension, pedagogical approaches in choral conducting programmes in the UK (Ruocco, 2008; Durrant, 2006). When it comes to the preparation of teachers as choral leaders in school or community choirs, participants of initial and intermediate level CPD courses tend to seek (i) training in the basic conducting gestures (Ruocco, 2008; Durrant, 2006) and (ii) practical advice in choosing music repertoire and warm-up exercises (Rogers et al., 2008). This raises the question as to whether instruction in gestures, music repertoire and warm-ups should be focal elements of choral education programmes. The part of literature that follows explores the nature of knowledge that seems to be necessary in order for choral conductors to fulfil the expectations of their role.

2.3.1 Conducting technique as physical movement

Conducting is not an end in itself; it is not for show.

(Whitten, 1988, p. 38)

Olsson (1997) discussed different theories for the examination of musical knowledge, using the concept of competence, which he defined as 'the system of guiding rules surrounding 'know-how' knowledge (knowing in-action). Competence, for Olsson, described the mutual relationship between the individual and the established rules. His study proposed four dimension of competence; (i) an 'instrumental skills – interpretation' competence, where content – based training was a strong concept for the acquisition of such competence; (ii) an 'instrumental skills – personality' competence, rooted in learning-by-doing (action-based learning), (iii) an 'interpretation – communicative skills' competence, implying an ability to communicative successfully both 'know-how' and aesthetic knowledge and (iv) a 'communicative skills – personality' competence (the artist as a mediator), stressing the artists' personality and skills of communication between the music and the audience.

In choral conducting practice, Olsson's 'instrumental skills' could be interpreted as the musical-technical competence that every conductor is expected to have and there is a strong corpus of existing literature (Billingham, 2008; Wis, 2007; Cofer, 1998; Phillips; 1997) on conducting gesture, which indicates the significance of conducting technique within music performance and music education. Nevertheless, the majority of the written textbooks attempt to teach conducting through separating and analyzing specific elements of gestural technique (beat-patterns, preparations, releases, tempo, dynamics, cuing, eye-contact and style), what Leman (2000) called 'choreographic body language'. Through empirical studies on non-verbal conductor behaviour, as well as surveys addressing conducting competency and systematic observations of conducting behaviour, researchers and practitioners endeavour to promote ways of furthering skill development on conducting (Madsen and Cassidy, 2005; Cofer, 1998; Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998). At the same time, precise definitions of conducting skills, opportunities to practise conducting, videotaped feedback and self-analysis appear to be common and recent basic elements of conducting education in the USA (Sheldon and DeNardo, 2005; Zielinski, 2005; Yarbrough, 1987)

On the topic of physical movements and beat patterns during conducting, Billingham (2008), Durrant (2006; 1994), Fuelberth (2004; 2003), Phillips (1997) and Dickey (1992) stated the importance of an adequate gestural vocabulary for effective communication. As Durrant (2006;1994) underlined, an ideal aim of professional development courses in choral conducting is to link conducting gesture with vocal outcome. Inappropriate gesture can give misleading messages to the performers[7] and can also distract the audience from the enjoyment of listening to the music.

Brittin (1992) investigated the accuracy and speed of conductor beat patterns, as a skill in effectively directing tempo change, in a visual context with music and non-music majors as observers. The results of her study indicated that whilst both music majors and non-majors were accurate at identifying accelerating tempos, non-majors were less accurate at identifying decelerating tempi or tempi remaining the same. The results suggest that conductors should always be aware of the level of understanding

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[7] 'The quality of response is [may be conceived as] a mirror of the quality of the energy projected. The more meaningful the conducting gesture, the more focused the energy. The more focused the energy, the greater the power to elicit the desired response' (Marvin, 1988, p. 26, in Durrant, 1994, p. 67).

that their singers have of their conducting patterns and gestures. A complementary study by Leman (2000) recommended that teachers and conductors might consider the possibility of redesigning the standard, traditional conducting patterns in order to achieve better vocal efficiency and musical expressiveness from their students.

Yet, it is often reported that young performers do not always understand the correct meaning of conducting gestures -'emblems' (Cofer, 1998). However, Cofer's study pointed out that even minimal amount of instruction can bring out significant change in the recognition and execution of conducting gestures. Scott (1996) explored the effects of visual diagnostic skills development as a pedagogical tool towards the acquisition of basic conducting techniques. The procedure included instructional videotapes, conducting pre- and post-tests that measured the mastery of conducting skills and written pre-and port-tests that measured the mastery of visual diagnostic skills. Conductors with little conducting experience, or students with no previous knowledge of conducting appeared to benefit the most from such an approach. Billingham (2008) combined choral conducting gestures with Rudolf Laban's theories on movement with the aim to develop 'stylistic artistry' through creative movement for musical expression. She argues that the joy of movement in conducting stems from the critical roles conductors have in moulding and shaping the sound of their ensembles. Therefore, her book intends to give conductors a new vocabulary and palette for their work, helping achieve more expressive and musical performances.

Despite the various research studies on conducting gestures as a means to elicit musically expressive performances, it is not clear if the expressivity of conductors demonstrated during performances is, at all, connected with the expressivity of their ensemble's performances (Price, 2006; Price and Chang, 2005). Whilst it is widely accepted that conductors' gestures and ensemble performances are related (Durrant, 2003; Skadsem, 1997) it might be that this is the case in some settings and not others or that the bulk of musical information might be transmitted during rehearsing and not performing.

2.3.2 Gestural Intensity

By applying the term 'intensity' to choral instruction, Byo (1990) described a model of teaching that incorporated contrasts between positive and negative, correct and incorrect gestural instruction. 'Intensity' was defined as '(i) sustained control of the

students/teacher interaction with (ii) efficient, accurate presentation of subject matter combined with (iii) enthusiastic affect and pacing' (Byo, 1990, p. 158). Byo (1990) argued that if the gestures of the conductor are to influence the attentiveness, attitude and performance of musicians, it seems necessary that musicians should be able to recognize qualitative differences in conducting gestures and interpret accurately the conductor's gestural intent. Features of the conductors' training observed included live instructor modelling of high and low contrasts through the teaching and conducting of different music tasks, practice of gestural contrasts with instructor's guidance and demonstration of high- and low-intensity contrasts to an ensemble which later validated the performance. The results of his experiments on recognition of gestural intensity contrasts revealed that, regardless of music experience, subjects could make reliable decisions related to the gestural intensity of the example presented to them.

Fuelberth (2004; 2003) examined the potential of left hand conducting gestures to generate or prevent perceptions of inappropriate vocal tension. A stimulus tape that included a control conducting condition (left hand, no change) and five experimental conducting conditions – (i) left hand, fisted gesture, (ii) left hand, palm up, (iii) left hand, palm down, (iv) left hand, stabbing gesture and (v) left hand, sideways, phrase-shaping gesture – was created and observed by one-hundred-and-ninety-two undergraduate and graduate students. These students were choral ensemble members. Results indicated that fisted, palm down and stabbing conducting conditions created greater tension levels than the no change condition. Results also indicated that the sideways, phrase-shaping condition created less tension than the no change condition. No significant difference between anticipated tension levels for the palm up and no change conducting conditions were found.

During conducting, unnecessary verbalizations, movements or long pauses are believed to influence singers' attentiveness and result in loss of teacher intensity. Reflecting these concerns, Madsen's study (1990) suggested that intensity as a concept could be operationally defined, easily taught to prospective student teachers and easily demonstrated and recognised with great accuracy and reliability across levels within the music education major who participated in the study. In particular, when non-music major student teachers were asked to lead singing activities it was

revealed that poor singing contributed relatively little to instructional problems. Nonetheless, Madsen underlined that if teachers have limited or inaccurate knowledge of the subject matter and they don't have clear objectives, 'even high enthusiastic delivery can only maintain short-term attention, which can result in inadequate learning' (Madsen, 1990, p. 43). This statement interpreted in choral practice stresses that choral activities seem to benefit more from good subject knowledge and effective delivery and sequencing than from outstanding singing, confidence in oneself or other qualities that the conductor might possess. Among others, studies by Wis (2007), Hall (2005), Brand, (2003), Kennedy (2000), Zielinski (2005), Madsen (1990) and Cassidy (1989) reasoned that maintaining student attentiveness in singing should be a challenge for all educators to take up, especially those who undertake singing activities for all students and not for selected choral groups.

2.3.3 Interpersonal skills and general leadership

It is well known that vision is often the dominant perceptual sense, with at least 75% of all information being communicated through this channel; hearing only covers 13% and touch 6% (Long, 1997). Conducting may, therefore, be regarded as an imitative form of communication, for it utilizes various patterns of movement that have evolved into a series of conventionally understood gestures (Dickey, 1992). For that reason, the role of the conductor as communicator is to share, pass along, give or interchange information, as well as thoughts and feelings (Decker and Kirk, 1988).

Alternatively to gestures, strategies such as verbal instruction and modelling have been shown to have a bearing upon students' performance levels. The concept of 'magnitude' (Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998; Yarbrough, 1975) as an attribute of effective teaching and as a stimulus for attentiveness in the interaction between the students and the conductor has been the topic of various studies. Yarbrough (1975) suggested that conductor's magnitude is what makes a rehearsal more exciting and that high-magnitude conditions are those that encompass a high teaching-delivery style. Such conditions are, therefore, believed to result in greater student attentiveness, preference and performance. The experimental conditions of high and low magnitude of teacher behaviour were operationally defined *a priori* by the experimenter. The behaviours observed were (i) eye contact, (ii) closeness to the choir, (iii) volume and

modulation of voice, (iv) gestures, (v) facial expressions and (vi) rehearsal pace[8]. The results of the study indicated that although magnitude of conductor behaviour had no significant effect on the performance, attentiveness and attitude of the students in mixed choruses, the students did prefer the high magnitude conductor over the low magnitude conductor. In relation to educational practice, it was suggested that the reinforcing effect of the conductor probably depends on their ability to change behaviour dramatically in all categories at the right time during rehearsals.

However, Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) connected intensity with enthusiasm when no formal definition of intensity was presented. The correlational data of the study showed a perfect relationship between intensity and enthusiasm; when subjects in the study rated intensity higher, they also rated use of rehearsal time and performance quality as better, enthusiasm as higher and overall effectiveness as better.

Dickey's study (1992) focused on modelling strategies and devices in relation to students' performances. The results indicated that modelling, as a nonverbal instructional practice, had a more positive effect on conducting students' 'hand-to-ear' skills and kinaesthetic response skills over verbal explanations. Similar findings were reported by Rosenthal (1984) in relation to the accuracy of advanced instrumentalists' musical performance. Four modelling conditions: (i) guided model, (ii) model only, (iii) guide only and (iv) practice only, were examined and it was highlighted that direct modelling without any added verbiage was the most effective condition in helping instrumentalists perform accurately. A later research study on the most effective type of communication (modelling, verbal and visual communication), undertaken by Francisco (1998), underlined that, although modelling is significantly more likely to improve ensemble performance, the combination of the three types is more likely to bring about better results on music performance on the whole.

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[8] A high magnitude conductor maintains *eye contact* with group and/or individuals throughout rehearsals; frequently walks or leans towards chorus or particular section (*closeness*); has wide range of volume as well as speaking pitch and the voice reflects enthusiasm and vitality (*volume and modulation of voice*); uses arms and hands to aid in musical phrasing, has great variety of movement and varies size of conducting patterns to indicate phrases, dynamics and the like (*gestures*); reflects through the face sharp contrasts between approval disapproval. Approval is expressed by grinning, laughing aloud, raising eyebrows, widening eyes. Disapproval is expressed by frowning, knitting brow, pursing lips, narrowing eyes (*facial expression*). Lastly, high magnitude conductors have 'rapid and exciting' rehearsal pace: quick instructions, minimal talking, less than one second between activities and frequently give instructions to the group while it is singing (Yarbrough, 1975 p.138).

Eye contact and facial expression as reinforcing techniques that affect choral performance and the perception of the overall conductor's effectiveness have been discussed in a number of studies (Broomhead, 2006; Madsen, 2003; Scott, 1996; Skadsem, 1997; VanWeelden, 2004; Yarbrough and Henley, 1999; Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998). Yarbrough (1975) considered the maintenance of eye contact with a group or individuals to be an indication of high magnitude teaching. A later study by Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) revealed that 'even tedious drill rehearsals can be successful in maintaining student attentiveness if approvals and eye contact are high' (Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998, p. 477) and if conductors' talk is efficient, accurate and 'kept to a minimum'.

Furthermore, Osman (1991) designed a 'Communication Skill Evaluation Instrument' (CSEI) based on systematic observation of specific skills that are considered essential for effective communication in the choral rehearsal. Elements such as eye contact, body gestures, facial expressions, verbal imagery, clarity of instructions, appropriate feedback, vocal demonstration and good podium poise were given specific attention. The study underscored, once more, that characteristics inherent to the teacher's role, such as learning how to lead, speaking with authority and clarity, commanding attention and inspiring are extremely significant in a choral situation.

As presented through the literature so far, choral experience is 'an avenue' that may be unique for communication due to the dynamics created within the group of performers, including the conductor and the audience. But in order for the communication between the conductor and the singers to be achieved, a positive learning environment through an acceptance and awareness of the singers' abilities should be secured.

2.3.4 Verbal communication during choral practice

Choral conductors tend to verbalize their instructions during rehearsals for various purposes, such as to question, model, direct, provide feedback, criticism and praise. Freer's research study (2006) enquired into teacher discourse and student experience in the middle school choral rehearsal. The results indicated that the two choral directors observed tended to use three types of instruction: (i) teacher task presentation, (ii) student response/ interaction with the task and (iii) specific teacher

reinforcement, in order to 'transfer responsibility for learning from teacher to students' (during 23% of teacher presentations) and 'offer task-based support' (during 22% of teacher reinforcements) (Freer, 2006 p. 87). Hence, there is a tendency for people to believe that decreased verbalization is related to performance achievement and often translated as ensemble maturity (Price, 2006). Davis (1998) put forward the notion that the frequency of verbal communication might simply indicate a conductor's preference and could not necessarily affect the ensemble's performance. Davis's study investigated the amount of non-verbal communication (conducting, approving and disapproving) between the student singers and the conductor during rehearsals and found that as the students became more proficient, non-verbal signals were used more often.

There is limited research on effective rehearsal structuring across a series of rehearsals and that which is available usually addresses the limitations related to possible technical inefficiencies of the conductor, or deals with measurements of the students' 'on/off-task' behaviour due to conductors' 'intensity' (Byo, 1990; Madsen, 1990) or 'magnitude' (Yarbrough, 1975). The major contribution of motivation and feedback from the conductor during choral rehearsal has been emphasized by several research studies (Rutkowski and Miller, 2003; Langness, 2000; Stamer, 1999; Dunn, 1997; Taylor, 1997; Corbin, 1995; Schmidt, 1995; Goetze, Cooper and Brown, 1990).

Both Langness (2000) and Goetze et al. (1990) stressed the importance of children receiving reinforcement and qualitative knowledge of results through verbal and/or visual feedback. Children of all ages are curious to learn about themselves and the function of their vocal mechanism while singing. The qualitative knowledge that teachers can offer them, such as how to use various vocal techniques without damaging their voice, promotes acceptance of individual differences in skills and motivates personal skill development.

The issue of forming a positive choral attitude through positive reinforcement, careful planning, motivation and patience was also put forward by Corbin (1995), Dunn (1997), Stamer (1999) and Gumm (2007). Corbin stated that a respectful and constructive relationship between the singers and the conductor can result in better musical growth and vocal development on the part of the singers, whose satisfaction

in singing often goes beyond performance. The student participants in Gumm's survey also highlighted that they preferred not to simply be told what to do but, instead, to be asked for their original insights into the ensemble experience. Correspondingly, Dunn (1997) focused on the influence of the conductor's feedback on structured choral rehearsals and the findings indicated that the group of students who received feedback also received considerably more 'reinforcement' than the students of the non-feedback group. Such support resulted in low 'off-task' behaviour as well as a more positive attitude towards the music, the rehearsals and the teacher-conductor. Finally, Stamer (1999) highlighted the significance of individual feedback and reported that the most important motivational technique is for the teacher to pay attention to the musical and personal development of their students and provide them with detailed feedback, both on individual progress and on ensemble effort.

The effectiveness of verbal, written (in the music), choral (listening to other choir members) and gestural instruction of the conductor were also discussed in Skadsem's empirical study (1997). The verbal condition, followed by the choral instruction, were reported to be significantly the most effective conditions at eliciting dynamic responses from the singers, especially the group of high school singers. The group of graduate singers-conductors had, however, better responses to gestural conditions. As far as eye contact was concerned, Skadsem suggested that it is a function of experience or confidence, as the high school choir exhibited the least amount of eye contact whilst performing with significantly more dynamic contrasts than the other singing groups.

On balance, Schmidt (1995) enquired into what choral students consider as attributes of success in choral music[9]. With regard to approval feedback, students rated comments focused on their improvement (e.g. 'that sounds much better than what it did last week') higher than norm-reference approval (e.g. 'You are doing much better than other students I know'), which were considered meaningless, insincere and ineffective. Furthermore, the results suggested that students were more likely to attribute success to internal (ability and effort) than external (teacher, luck or task difficulty) reasons. In particular, students appeared to value effort more than ability. Although Taylor (1997) indicated that students are particularly able to detect when

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[9] The subjects of his study were 120 secondary school students who were asked to rate 29 audio taped excerpts of applied vocal instruction that featured teachers' approval or disapproval behaviours.

their teacher's praise is directed to their good performance or they are intended for encouragement, Schmidt's study also revealed that girls (especially at secondary school) were more responsive to adult praise than to praise from peers, whereas the opposite was found for boys.

To conclude, Goryunova and Shkolar (1993) and Stollak and Alexander (1998) referred to the use of imagery and analogy as a means of effective instruction during choral rehearsals. In particular, Goryunova and Shkolar (1993) suggested that through dialogue during rehearsals students' artistic thinking with images in music can be developed[10]. Furthermore, Stollak and Alexander (1998) reported that conductors who use analogy, metaphor and simile in rehearsals could encourage the creation of mental images or conceptualizations and the demonstration of techniques (often physical in nature) that are required for proper execution. That could provide students with models of problem solving[11].

2.3.5 Summary

Research studies seem to lay emphasis on the fact that conducting a choral ensemble requires more than mere technical artistry (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1996; Durrant, 1994; 2000; Gumm, 1993; 2004; Hamann, Lineburgh and Paul, 1998; Osman, 1991). There is also initial evidence which points out that there could be no relation between the expressivity of conducting gesture and the expressivity of ensemble performance (Price and Chang, 2005). Although certain studies suggest that teachers with inadequate subject knowledge cannot just rely on their enthusiasm for singing or conducting (Byo, 1990; Cassidy, 1989), enthusiasm might be an indicator of high intensity and motivation (Rentz, 1994; Turton and Durrant, 2002). What is more, students appear to 'forgive' inaccuracies in teaching or activity presentation once attracted by the teacher's enthusiasm and personality (Madsen, 2003; Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998). That is to say, the technical aspects of conducting, albeit significant, need not discourage conductors and students from leading choral ensembles enthusiastically.

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[10] Artistic thinking is, according to the authors of the article, a very effective method, especially with young students who are generally predisposed to learn about the world through various images.
[11] For example, they argue that phrases such as 'sing through the eyes' (for focused tone) and 'think *piano* as a colour, not just a dynamic marking' (for energized tone) allow the conductor explain an idea in different ways, each way assisting segment of students with different learning styles (Stollak and Alexander, 1998).

2.4 Choral singing within education

One way for schools and other communities to benefit from studies in choral conducting education is for the interest not to be overly focused on methods (i.e. sight-reading and warm-up exercises, ways of pacing rehearsals), but to embrace how a practice works and what meaning it has for all people involved in the particular context. The former speculation concerns the quality and effectiveness of the practices used by expert choral conductors that are discussed later by the current research study (see chapter Three). The latter speculation echoes Hookey's (2002, p. 3) apprehension of what professional knowledge is acquired in such communities of learners. Such apprehension is related to the context and nature of choral conducting education that is offered in academic institutions or independent bodies. With respect to choral education, where expert provision is available – and this is uneven across the UK (Rogers, 2002) – teachers may be able to achieve support for professional development in and through their institution, such as by attending professional development short courses or by sustained visits from a choral specialist (Ruocco, 2008; Varvarigou, 2008). However, workshops and seminars as contexts of preparation appear useful in motivating and raising consciousness but are often unlikely to produce lasting changes unless there are follow-ups (Rogers et al., 2008; Colwell, 1996/7).

With respect to choral activities in school environments or in community settings, there seems to be an agreement by the research community on inadequate support mechanisms for music education (Bennett, 2007; Holden and Button, 2006; Hookey, 2002; Leglar and Collay, 2002; Miller, 1996; Regelski, 1994; Schmidt, 1998). Primary school teachers particularly admit that they lack the confidence to lead choral activities (Durrant and Varvarigou, 2008; Ruocco, 2008; Varvarigou, 2008). Their lack of confidence, which possibly stems from inefficient instruction and training that they received during their undergraduate teacher education, appears to trouble them more than the lack of status of music in the school curriculum (Rogers et al. 2008; Ruocco, 2008; Bennett, 2007; Temmerman, 2005; Beauchamp, 1997; Bresler, 1993).

Demorest (1998b) has pointed out that one of the weaknesses of choral education is that it lacks comprehensive training. Bennett (2007) has drawn attention to the fact that the diversity of roles pursued by practising musicians is not reflected in the

majority of conservatoire curricula, thus 'the enormous potential for the transfer of music graduate skills into the broad cultural industries setting remains largely unrealized (Bennett, 2007, p. 179)[12]. Despite the fact that musicians spend the highest average proportion of time engaged in teaching, performance, business and ensemble direction (Bennett, 2007), data from UK higher education seem to indicate that the provision of choral conducting education does not seem to be of high priority in the agenda of most universities (see Table 4.1).

2.4.1 Programmes for choral activities in educational environments

Singing in a choir is suggested as an ideal activity for children to build up both musical and non-musical traits. It has also been suggested that the sooner young children get involved into singing, the more chances for them to enjoy it and join choral activities in the future (Corbin, 1995; Phillips, 1994). What is more, there are researchers who argue that choral experiences and conducting opportunities should be available to all students and educators, not only those involved in choirs of professional standards (Haworth, 1992; Holden and Button, 2006).

The challenges of musical practice in primary schools in the UK seem to revolve around three variables; (i) the inadequate support mechanisms for music education, (ii) the possible inefficiency of undergraduate teacher education programmes, which contribute to a lack of confidence of the generalist classroom teachers to teach music and (iii) the lack of status of music in the school curriculum (Beauchamp, 1997; Bresler, 1993; Holden and Button, 2006; Temmerman, 2005)[13]. Harrison et al. (1996) stated that the crux of the problem is the lack of confidence, which is evident amongst primary teachers, who have not acquired a conceptual framework for, or positive disposition towards leading choral activities. On the one hand, the lack of teacher's knowledge may be interpreted as a lack of students' musical talent. On the face of it, such misconception might lead to vocal frustration or failures on the part of the students who become turned off to all musical activities, involving singing. However, studies on choral conducting practices with data from primary-school children are limited (Lucas, 1994).

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[12] The music graduates that participated in her study suggested communication skills, pedagogy, psychology of performance, business skills, language (for conductors) and physical fitness among the core components to be included in effective curricula in music studies (Bennett, 2007 p.184).

[13] Beauchamp (1997) stated that using classroom teachers as music educators at the elementary school level is a political, economic and teacher-supply issue.

In a primary school setting in the UK, in the absence of a music specialist, the class teachers may be expected to train and conduct a choir, if this exists. The majority of the teachers often have a minimum knowledge and experience in choral activities (Durrant and Varvarigou, 2008; Rogers et al., 2008; Ruocco, 2008; Holden and Button, 2006; Rogers, 2002;) and, regardless of attendance on CPD short courses, day-workshops or summer schools that they might attend, they may not feel competent enough to maintain a choir at their school (Rogers, 2002; Welch, 2001; Anderson and Wilson, 1996; Durrant, 1994). With regard to workshop ideas, most of them may tend to be presented in a generalised mode (Colwell, 1996/7) and some teachers believe that they do not contain classroom nuances for successful lessons. In addition, such short courses often fail to inform participants about 'interactions arising from the particular context of the workshop that will not be present in the classroom' (Colwell, 1996/7, p. 77).

2.4.2 Teachers' professional development in music and singing activities

There is a growing body of literature on primary schoolteachers' professional development in music (Beauchamp, 1997; Hookey, 2002; Ruocco, 2008; Schmidt, 1998). Some educators believe that preservice and/or inservice voice education is a possible solution to the problems that the teachers and their students face (Langness, 2000; Stafford, 1990). Regelski (1994) and Ruocco (2008) suggested the application of 'action research'[14] towards professionalizing music praxis. Schmidt (1998), Hookey (2002) and Leglar and Collay (2002) encouraged pre-service teachers to keep diaries or journals of an autobiographical character, mini-ethnographies of classrooms and schools and suggested that they should talk to other colleagues about their beliefs on teaching, learning and learning to teach.

Hookey (1994) described a research project where music resource teachers provided classroom teachers with teaching demonstration and modelling practices. At first, such a learning situation proved to be less than satisfactory for the classroom teachers because the consultants failed to make the link between the 'different realities' in

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[14] Regelski (1994) wrote that 'action research deals in general with the nature, role and importance of an actor's or agent's meanings and values in terms of intentionality and purposiveness' (1994, p. 64). 'Action research, as action science, seeks to be practically useful and in that degree theoretically valid' (op cit. 78).

terms of the 'daily practice, the professional context and the beliefs that shape the work' of both parts (Hookey, 1994, p. 41). When the supervisor-type practice switched to collaborative research, with both sides offering ideas during consultation sessions, the project appeared to meet the needs of the classroom teachers and rewarded the specialists for their support.

Colwell (1996/7) reported on a similar research programme, the Iowa 'Professional Development Residency Program' (PDRP), with its aim to evaluate teachers' strengths and weaknesses in teaching techniques in the classroom, such as rehearsing, conducting and improvising. Starting from the realization that in-service education is not the 'one-half' or 'one-day' workshop that teachers attend at their schools, the directors of the project organized a team of 'experts' (consultants, mentors) to work with primary school teachers in their own situation over time. In addition, the communities of the schools, such as the school administrators, were actively involved. The overall evaluation of the project suggested that the approach was very successful because, according to the designers, it was based on four principles; that change takes time, requires focus, needs support and involves both individuals and their environment.

Dolloff (1994; 1996 in Hookey 2002) observed a choral development project in Canada, the 'North York Choral Development Project' that placed both teachers and students into a music-learning context with the support of an expert university-based choral director. Dolloff characterized the context of the project as a form of 'cognitive apprenticeship' because the learners were placed in a real situation wherein to develop skills. The participant teachers had to select 20 singers from their choirs to partake in choral workshops. They also had to observe the modelling of the choral expert in the context of seminars, demonstrations/rehearsals and concerts, which provided 'multiple models of "expertise-in-use"' (Hookey, 2002, p. 839). The teachers of this programme reported that they increased their personal expertise in choral music education through their engagement in seminars, discussions and music making. What is more, the programme supported the development of a professional community of choral music educators at a primary school level, where often there is one music teacher in primary schools in America, who takes responsibility for choral activities. Dolloff also reported that the teachers' perceptions of their development were closely

related to what they thought their students had gained. These were increased self-confidence, self-esteem and increased skills that led to more successful performance in teaching or singing. The theoretical construct of 'Cognitive Apprenticeship'(Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) is among the theoretical frameworks that have influenced the current research study and is presented in Chapter Three.

Wong and Davidson (2006) recognized the lack of formal mechanism for choral training in Hong Kong and undertook a mentoring programme with two expert choral directors and a teacher-training student in order to explore the demands of such a training approach. By adopting a 'clinical supervision' model, where the learner works intensively with the designated mentors who later provide feedback on the practice process, Wong and Davidson suggested that such an approach was very effective and beneficial for the learner[15]. Two major themes emerged from the findings of the study. Firstly, through the school choral mentoring scheme, the student choral teacher was exposed to the process of knowing in-action (learning through actual practice with a choir) and reflection in-action (through writing logbooks) that included self-evaluation reports) as a reflection on his teaching performance with topics that were discussed in previous briefing sessions: 'rehearsal environment; director-chorister interaction; demonstration of choral knowledge, techniques and efficient direction and artistry behaviour in relation to teaching effectiveness' (op cit. 2006, p. 168). Through this exposure, the student gradually became more self-aware. Secondly, the 'clinical supervision' model encouraged the professional development of the two mentors, as well as the trainee choral conductor. Wong and Davidson concluded that

> ...the interaction and communication between the school choral teacher, the student
> teacher and the institute supervisor might be seen as a professional development
> process towards effective choral teaching and learning. And so, in summary, ideally,

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[15] An experienced choral teacher and a researcher on teacher training programmes worked as mentors alongside one student choral teacher, who conducted a junior choir with 60 choristers. The mentoring procedure was the following: one week before the student's practical work the three participants met to review and discuss ideas for the four sessions and the student teacher was introduced to the choir. In the following four weeks of work, the student led choral rehearsals with the choir and had brief pre- and post-session conferences with both mentors. After the student had gone, the mentors would reflect on their work, as well as his work. For further triangulation, the student was encouraged to write self-evaluation reports as a reflection of his teaching performance that addressed the topics of rehearsal environment, director-chorister interaction, demonstration of choral knowledge, techniques and efficient direction and artistry behaviour in relation to teaching effectiveness (Wong & Davidson 2006, p.167-168).

it might be that the choral director's work is of a cyclical nature involving multiple, interlocking human and environmental factors' (Wong and Davidson, 2006, p. 173). Durrant (2006) described a choral project that was funded by a local educational authority (LEA) in central London and was led by a professional singer. The aim of the project was 'to provide training for children in singing and performance techniques, as well as opportunities to perform in public, both in their own schools and to come together in massed collaboration' (Lenton-Ward, 2005)[16]. The results of his study suggested that the project was worthwhile at a variety of levels: (i) musical (there seemed to be pitch accuracy improvement on the part of the children), (ii) non-musical (collective discipline and focus was underlined by the head-teachers) and (iii) social/cultural (the teachers were encouraged to lead their school choirs). What is more, Durrant (2006) put emphasis on the significance of funding as a supporting ground for the sustainability of such projects.

Ruocco (2008) described a research project, which she, as an educational researcher and music practitioner, organised and carried out in 2008, within Essex, one of the largest local educational authorities in the UK. The project, entitled 'Leading from the Front', was a partnership project between the Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD) and the Essex Music Services and received funding for one year by 'Sing Up', the group that Government established to promote singing in the UK. The aims of the project were to create a CPD programme that would enable teachers to develop the skills and confidence to become leaders of singing with a wide variety of repertoire, a 'battery of skills, an enhanced understanding of the process of leading singing and an enhanced awareness of the responsibilities of a leader of singing to ensure healthy singing from participants' (Ruocco, 2008, p.71). Fifteen schools and a total number of twenty seven members of staff (teachers and Head-teachers) participated in the project. The findings of the project suggested that despite the short time frame, this CPD programme enabled the participant teachers (i) to lead singing more effectively in their schools and (ii) to develop confidence about their skills, knowledge and understanding of leading singing, which made them communicate their enthusiasm with their classes and enhance the enjoyment not only for the pupils

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[16] The choral leader (C) paid weekly visits to primary schools and undertook rehearsals/workshops with the children and the class teacher of each school who would lead the rehearsals when C's initial input had finished. Moreover, a music specialist from a university Department on Education offered professional development courses for the teachers involved in the project and also provided C with individual conducting lessons.

but also for themselves. (iii) Although the research did not reveal much data on improvements in the quality of singing in the participant school, it was reported by the teachers and Head-teachers that the project repertoire brought 'a new dimension' (2008, p.71) to the schools that had never practised part-singing in the past. (iv) The project appeared to have had a positive impact on the choral and vocal development initiatives in the county of Essex with more boys joining choral singing at schools, participant teachers leading their choirs in joined festivals and some working as paid conductors at holiday courses with the Essex Training Choir. (v) This project could be replicated in other situations where there is a music service that can provide a teacher mentor to oversee the programme and work with teachers in schools in between the CPD days, as well as when appropriate external funding is available.

2.4.3 Effective models of choral practice

Whether choral conducting is teachable or not has troubled researchers who seem to agree that, as the literature review has so far presented, an efficient conductor should possess various attributes, such as refined conducting gestures and movements, rehearsal strategies, enthusiasm and commitment (Durrant, 2000). An earlier study by Durrant (1994) explored the definition of 'effective' conducting and suggested a model towards a 'deeper' choral communication, which is a communication that encourages responsiveness from the singers. According to his model, the behaviour and general communication skills of a conductor can encourage responsiveness from the students to a higher degree than a satisfactory level of technical and music competence.

Gumm (1993) endeavoured to identify teaching styles in a study with special reference to self-reported behaviour of secondary school choral conductors[17] and recognised the significance of self-perceptions as a valuable research approach that offers information from unique perspectives. His study demonstrated that music teaching style can be characterised by various patterns, so-called 'dimensions', of

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[17] Eight dimensions of choral music teaching style were identified and labelled: (i) Student Independence, (ii) Teacher Authority, (iii) Positive Learning Environment, (iv) Time Efficiency, (v) Non-verbal Motivation, (vi) Aesthetic Music Performance, (vii) Group Dynamics and (viii) Music Concept Learning. From the dimensions, eleven choral music styles were interpreted. These were: 1) Student-Centred Comprehensive Musicianship Oriented, 2) Teacher-Control Comprehensive Musicianship Oriented, 3) Student/Subject Matter Interaction Oriented, 4) Task Oriented, 5) Music Performance Oriented, 6) Cooperative Learning Oriented, 7) Concept Presentation Oriented, 8) Content Oriented, 9) Low Teacher Involvement Oriented, 10) Discovery Oriented and 11) Non-Focused Low-Interaction Oriented (Gumm, 1993).

self-reported behaviour. Through analysing the mean profile of groups of choral music directors, Gumm showed that music teaching style 'transcends the behavioural level of the teaching-learning process' (Gumm, 1993, p. 197). What is more, his finding that self-perceptions of choral ensemble teaching were relatively consistent on two occasions, which were five to six months apart, suggested stability is music teaching style.

Two later studies by Gumm (2004; 2007) focused on students' perceptions of the impact that their teachers' instruction had on them. In the former study (Gumm, 2004), choral music experience appeared to retain and reward students who engaged actively in the practice and who were motivated by the enjoyment, creativity and emotion of music. These students perceived their teachers as having positive, efficient, nonverbal motivating and assertive music teaching style. However, students with reflective and abstract learning styles did not appear to enjoy the traditional choral music classroom as much. The findings suggested that choral conducting profession needs to establish a better match between teaching behaviours, styles and the standards in music. It also needs to promote a thorough set of music teaching styles that draw on the various teaching styles described in previous research (Gumm, 1993).

In Gumm's latter study (2007) college students were asked to rate methodical and sociable characteristics of their conductors. The 'Methodical' items to be rated included presentation of material, course organisation, preparation for the class, 'helped me learn' and overall effectiveness. The 'Sociable' items rated respect, accessibility and enthusiasm. The findings of the study suggested that college students appreciated supporting teaching behaviours such as praise and positive feedback but they also preferred not to simply be told what to do, but instead to be asked for their 'original insights into the ensemble experience' (Gumm, 2007, p. 47). The results also pointed out that the more able, hard-working and experienced the musicians, the less attention they paid to their conductors' sociability. Those motivated by their enjoyment for the music being performed sought a conductor with developed sensitivity and sociability. This finding particularly stresses the significance of interpersonal skills as part and parcel of the choral conductor's role, especially when working with children or non-professional singers.

A study by Hamman et al. (1998) investigated whether there is a link between teaching effectiveness and a teacher's social skills. For this reason, Riggio's 'Social Skills Inventory' (SSI), an instrument designed to assess the social skills that individuals posses[18], as well as the 'Survey of Teaching Effectiveness', an observation-based assessment instrument, were utilized. The results reported that the so-called 'charismatic' individuals who are perceived to be successful in teaching are those with high levels of 'Emotional Expressivity', 'Emotional Sensitivity' and 'Social Control'. Drawing from this literature on preservice music teacher, it appears equally important for a choral conductor to have the ability to communicate nonverbally with the singers, interpret their emotional cues such as fatigue, distress or excitement and present oneself well in the classroom while guiding and directing the choir. Moreover, it is believed that choral conducting education courses should not only focus on developing musical-technical skills to choral conducting students but also assist the students in attaining the necessary interpersonal skills enabling them to be effective teachers.

Armstrong and Armstrong (1996) examined qualities related to the conductor as a transformational leader, other than fine musicianship, excellent organisational and disciplinary skills, which were taken for granted. They stressed that conductors can have a transforming impact on their students as often, due to rehearsal requirements of many music programmes, students spend more time with the conductor than with any other educator. Therefore, effective leadership skills are significant to a conductor. These skills include: (i) 'charisma' (by which is meant self-confident and self-determination of the leader) [19] and enthusiasm; and ability to (ii) inspire a shared vision; (iii) recognize the contribution of every individual and make them take pride in what they do regardless of their skills; (iv) encourage responsibility, initiative and leadership in their students; (v) encourage the students through praise and honest

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[18] Communication skills, also termed 'social skills', have been identified and categorized by Riggio and Zimmerman (1991) into six categories: 1) Emotional Expressivity (nonverbal sending), 2) Emotional Sensitivity (receiving and decoding nonverbal displays of others), 3) Emotional Control (regulating non-verbal 'self' communication), 4) Social Expressivity (engaging others in social interaction), 5) Social Sensitivity (decoding and comprehending verbal communication of others) and 6) Social Control (skill in social self-presentation and in directing communication in social settings). The Social Skills Inventory has been used to identify communication skill deficits in marriage and family counselling sessions; in screening, selection and placement processes; and as part of communication skill training programmes in health psychology settings (Hamman et al. 1998, p. 90).

[19]Armstrong and Armstrong underlined that in the absence of personal magnetism, which they considered a 'natural gift', the conductor can engender group loyalty by being caring, supportive and truly committed to their students (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1996, p. 23).

feedback (also Duke and Simmons, 2006) and (vi) provide good modelling. Furthermore, Apfelstadt (1997) explained that there are key skills, which can be teachable, that describe effective choral leadership. These skills are divided into two groups; (i) musical (i.e. artistic intuition, musicality/ expressiveness and aural sensitivity) and (ii) extra-musical (i.e. articulateness, confidence, effort, enthusiasm and initiative). Yet, Apfelstadt recognised that some people achieve or naturally possess a leadership characteristic that is difficult to label, which represents an artful combination of the musical and extra-musical skills. Although this elusive quality, which makes some people stand out immediately, can be broken down into its components and analysed it is impossible to duplicate or mimic. Therefore, she suggested that through rehearsal planning that addresses the areas of preparation, presentation and evaluation, all of which can be taught in choral conducting education programmes, students can increase their effectiveness as choral leaders. She concluded by saying that the pursuit of leadership skills is a lifelong task.

Methodologies on conducting practices of successful conductors in the UK tackle issues associated with choral preparation, rehearsing and performing. Durrant (1998; 2005) proposed a series of interrelated attributes that contribute to identifying choral conducting as 'effective'. The tripartite model consisted of principles related to knowledge of the choral repertoire, human voice, understanding of the nature of the conductor's role (termed 'philosophical principles underpinning role'); 'musical-technical skills' (such as aural skills, gestures, rehearsal strategies) and 'interpersonal skills' (ways of fostering motivation and enjoyment of singing).

A complementary study by Barresi (2000) in America described middle school choral teachers' attributes whose combination could lead to a model of an effective elementary school choral conductor. Three areas were identified; (i) personal qualities, (ii) professional understanding and (iii) technical competence. (i) Effective personal qualities addressed an ability to set boundaries for behaviour and goals for learning, commitment and dedication to the programme and the students, motivation to welcome day-to-day changes, love and devotion to the children, ability to show a sense of humour, enthusiasm and trust to the students. (ii) Professional understanding referred to an awareness of children's vocal development, the basics of singing instruction (pure vowel, diaphragmatic breathing and posture, phrasing and vocal

expressiveness) and appropriate selection of repertoire. Moreover, understanding also referred to the psychological (self-esteem, interpersonal relationships and peer relationships) and physical development during early adolescence. This awareness was believed to help the teachers develop effective teaching and classroom management strategies. (iii) Technical traits, referred to knowledge of early adolescent vocal development, effective vocal modelling, a 'good ear' for vocal tone, pitch accuracy and rehearsal management. Whilst many teachers in this study mentioned piano skills as salient, none mentioned conducting competence.

Research evidence suggests that when continued dependence on the piano for music learning and intonation is encouraged by the choral conductor, it can possibly limit the students' potential of becoming independent musicians in sight-reading and singing in tune (Guelker, 1998; Kodály, 1974; Lucas, 1994)[20]. In addition, Broomhead (2006) undertook a research study on instructional strategies for teaching expressive performance in choral rehearsal by observing, videotaping and interviewing three exemplary choral teachers. Seven categories in relation to teaching expressive performance during choral rehearsals emerged from the analysis of the data: (i) student-initiated input, without any corresponding impetus from the teacher, (ii) teacher inquiry (opportunities provided by the teacher for student response), (iii) referential (all procedures where extra musical factors were employed, such as imagery and analogy, to enhance musical expression), (iv) demonstration, (v) teacher feedback, (vi) detailing (students are specifically told what to do expressively) and (vii) conducting (gesture guidance). The question of instinct versus learned behaviour in choral conducting expressiveness was raised by the findings of the study and links to a question on whether certain attributes of a choral conductor that can be taught through formal education or intervention by other experts. The three choral teachers observed and interviewed did not seem to operate from 'a specific prescribed plan for expressive performing' (Broomhead, 2006, p. 17) but their behaviours had the feel and appearance of being quite instinctive and spontaneous. This identifies a potentially formative area for further investigation in choral conducting education.

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[20] Lucas (1994) undertook an experimental study with elementary school children and indicated that the children scored higher when tested using melodies isolated from direct harmonic context than when accompanied by a piano or in a vocal-harmony context. Moreover, Guelker (1998) stressed the importance of unaccompanied choral rehearsals. She argued that for rehearsals with younger children or not-so-confident singers, the piano may continue to be a helpful tool, but the focus for both the conductor and the students was proposed to be on the singing and not the accompaniment.

2.5 Summary

The aim of the current review was to present existing research studies in the fields of choral education, so as to underline that research on choral conducting preparation needs to be developed further. One of the primary aims of choral participation, according to the literature that was cited is to make the singers leave the rehearsal room with feelings of fulfilment and satisfaction, which are vital to learning and they provide the intrinsic motivation necessary to foster development. Hence, more attention needs to be given to the way choral leaders are educated. Decker and Kirk (1988) stressed that the conductor who recognizes the value and importance of music accepts responsibility for organizing experiences that contribute to musical growth and enjoyment.

The primarily American-based literature cited above also aimed to explore the skills and knowledge that choral conductors are often expected to possess, such as technical competence in conducting gestures and awareness of music repertoire. In addition, vocal modelling, eye contact and facial expressions in combination with verbal instruction, feedback and enthusiasm appear to be equally significant for successful choral rehearsals. What is more, it was highlighted that preparation, presentation and evaluation of the rehearsal are necessary skills for effective choral leadership and they can all be taught in choral conducting education programmes. The next chapter presents a framework that aims to facilitate the examination of choral conducting education currently offered in the UK.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

3.1 Introduction

The present empirical study aims to investigate issues related to choral conducting education in the UK. That is to say, it seeks to explore the preparatory processes in order to gain insights into those that are likely to result in more effective learning outcomes. The literature examined in Chapter Two identified some salient attributes of effective choral conductors. The extent to which these qualities are addressed by and taught in courses in higher education or other independent bodies in the UK and whether there are other qualities evidenced in such courses that are not reflected in the previous literature are the focus in subsequent chapters.

For the purpose of enquiring into the process of choral conducting preparation in the UK, several theoretical constructs have been combined to provide a supportive theoretical grounding. These theoretical constructs are (i) that of Cognitive Apprenticeship (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989), (ii) theories of expertise (Chi, Farr and Glaser, 1988; Chi, 2006; Ericsson, 2006b; Lehmann and Gruber, 2006; Sloboda, 1991), and (iii) Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). On the one hand, Cognitive Apprenticeship explores the characteristics of ideal learning environments and, therefore, could possibly offer multiple lenses through which to examine the content, methods, sequence and microsociology (i.e. the socio-cultural contexts) of the preparation process in choral conducting. On the other hand, Situated Learning, as part of the socio-cultural contexts of Cognitive Apprenticeship, explores the situated character of human understanding and communication and could possibly facilitate the examination of both the cognitive processes (and thus learning) that take place in communities of choral practice under investigation and the social situations in which these processes occur. In addition, culture and expert practice could be explored with reference to theories of Expertise (Chi, Farr and Glaser, 1988; Ericsson and Smith, 1991; Glaser, 1996; Glaser and Chi, 1998; Sloboda, 1991; 1996; Sternberg, 1998) which emphasize

the significance of examining the behaviours of experts in relation to the knowledge, strategies and skills underlying their practice.

3.2 'Cognitive Apprenticeship'

Research into Cognitive Apprenticeship enquires into teaching the processes that experts use to handle complex tasks and on learning through guided experience on cognitive (subject knowledge) and metacognitive levels, rather than physical skills and processes. The theory suggests that during teaching processes conceptual and factual knowledge are illustrated and situated in the contexts of their use, as well as in a variety of other contexts, encouraging a deeper understanding of the concepts and facts themselves and their possible use in problem-solving contexts (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989, p. 457).

The teaching methods of Cognitive Apprenticeship are designed to uncover the often tacit cognitive and metacognitive processes that are believed to comprise expertise so as to enable the students to observe, enact and practise them with help from the tutor/expert and from other student-participants (op cit. 1989, p. 458). What is more, Cognitive Apprenticeship requires extended techniques to encourage the development of self-correction and self-monitoring skills (metacognitive skills).

The emphasis on the word 'cognitive' draws attention to the fact that apprenticeship techniques reach well beyond the physical skills more normally associated with traditional apprenticeship to the kinds of cognitive skills normally related to conventional schooling (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989, p. 39). In traditional apprenticeship, it has been agreed that the problems and tasks that are given to the learners arise from the demands of the workplace and not primarily from pedagogical concerns, as it is reported in the apprenticeship of tailors, midwives and butchers (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In contrast, a Cognitive Apprenticeship approach aims to offer students opportunities to practise the application of certain techniques or methods for the successful completion of tasks and problems. Practicing could take place in diverse settings and there is a slow increase of the complexity of the task, so as for the component skills and models to be integrated. In addition, a principal objective of Cognitive Apprenticeship is to extend situated learning to diverse settings

so that students could learn how to apply their skills in various contents (i.e. everyday learning situations) and contexts.

Table 3.1: Cognitive Apprenticeship – Characteristics of Ideal Learning Environments

Content	Methods
• Domain knowledge • Heuristic strategies • Control strategies • Learning strategies	• Modelling • Coaching • Scaffolding and Fading • Articulation • Reflection • Exploration
Sequence	**Sociology**
• Increasing Complexity • Increasing Diversity • Global before local skills	• Situated learning • Culture of Expert practice • Intrinsic motivation • Exploiting cooperation-Exploiting competition

To facilitate considerations related to pedagogical and theoretical issues on teaching and learning, Collins et al. (1989) developed a framework which describes four dimensions that constitute any learning environment (See Table 3.1). Each dimension is characterized by several features that, according to the authors, should be considered in constructing and evaluating learning environments (op cit. 1989, pp. 476-477).

3.2.1 Content and Methods

The 'Content' addresses the knowledge and strategies that should be used in an effective learning environment. 'Domain knowledge' includes the conceptual and factual knowledge and procedures that are explicitly identified with a particular subject matter and are generally explained in school text books, class lectures and demonstrations. 'Heuristic strategies' are the effective techniques and approaches for accomplishing tasks that are learnt on the job, so called 'tricks of the trade'. Collins et al. (1989, p. 448) stressed that most heuristics are acquired by experts through the practice of solving problems. 'Control strategies' refer to the knowledge that experts have about managing problem solving; a large number of heuristic strategies are needed for apprentices to decide how to identify the problem and how to decide on the strategies used for solving it. Finally, 'Learning strategies' deal with knowledge about how to develop general strategies for discovering a new domain to more local strategies for extending reconfiguring knowledge on solving problems or carrying out a complete task.

The 'Methods' used in an effective teaching and learning environment aim to help students obtain and integrate cognitive and metacognitive strategies for using, managing and discovering knowledge. In a Cognitive Apprenticeship environment 'modelling', 'coaching', 'scaffolding and fading' support students in the acquisition of cognitive and metacognitive skills through processes of observation and guided practice. In particular, through 'modelling' the learner observes the tutor carrying out a task and builds a conceptual model of the target process that the learner is required to accomplish. 'Coaching' is 'the thread running through the entire apprenticeship experience', the process of overseeing the students' learning (Collins, Brown and Holum, 1991, p. 2). During coaching, the expert tutor observes the learners whilst they carry out a task and offers hints, scaffolding, feedback, modelling and reminders that could bring the learners' performance closer to that of the expert. 'Scaffolding' is the support that tutors give students in carrying out a task, whilst 'fading' is the gradual removal of support, which gives the student more responsibility and autonomy.

In addition, 'articulation' and 'reflection' are theorized to help students focus their observation on expert problem-solving and gain conscious access to (and control of) their own problem-solving strategies. Whilst 'articulation' includes any method of getting students to articulate their reasoning, knowledge or problem-solving processes, 'reflection' fosters comparisons between the learner's own problem-solving processes and the performance of an expert. Such comparisons aid learners in diagnosing difficulties and gradually adjusting their performance until they reach competence. Lastly, 'exploration' aims to encourage learning autonomy by pushing students into a model of problem-solving on their own. Collins et al. (1989) have stressed that exploration is the natural culmination of the fading of supports and that how to explore a domain productively should be part of the learners' learning strategies.

3.2.2 Sequencing and Sociology

The term 'Sequencing' refers to the sequencing of learning with emphasis on supporting both the phases of integration and generalization of knowledge and complex skills. 'Increasing complexity' describes a construction of a sequence of tasks and task environments or 'microworlds' where more and more of skills and

concepts necessary for expert performance are required (op cit. 1989, p. 484). 'Increasing diversity' refers to the construction of a sequence of tasks in which a wide variety of strategies and skills are required. Finally, 'global before local' suggests that learners should have a holistic idea of the task that they have to accomplish before attending to the details of a terrain. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that learners as 'peripheral participants can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about and what can be learnt' (op cit. 1991, p. 93). On the whole, the three characteristics of sequencing are believed to help learners build a 'conceptual map' that later helps them make sense of the task that they need to carry out. Even if they are unable to complete the whole task, they have a clear goal towards which to strive.

The 'Sociology' of an ideal learning environment (by which this study refers to the socio-cultural contexts where teaching and learning occur) is a dimension that should not be ignored in decisions about curriculum and pedagogical practices because social context has been found to affect learning in many ways (Mieg, 2006). In an apprenticeship environment, in particular, students learn skills in the context of their application to realistic problems, within a culture focused on and determined by expert practice. By advancing in skills, apprentices increase their participation in the community. 'Situated Learning' primarily concerns the social engagements that provide an appropriate context for learning to take place (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 14). Through social engagement, students (i) understand the purpose and uses of the knowledge they are learning; (ii) actively engage with knowledge rather than passively receiving it; (iii) experience different conditions under which their knowledge can be applied and; (iv) due to their learning in multiple contexts (the teaching context(s) and their own practice context(s) where new and old knowledge are applied), their knowledge becomes abstract, i.e. independent of any particular context.

The 'Culture of expert practice' encourages the creation of an educational environment in which participants 'actively communicate about and engage in the skills involved in expertise' (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989, p. 488). The principal aim of the culture of expert practice is to situate and support learning. In other words, through focusing on the practice of the expert, the learners observe available models of expertise-in-use. These models help the learners build and refine a

conceptual model of the task that they have to carry out. Furthermore, experts teach participants 'how to think like experts'; they encourage them to rely on the 'inner coach' (Ericsson, Prietula and Cokery, 2007, p. 121), through identifying and representing to them the cognitive processes that they, as experts, engage in as they solve problems. As a result, students are theorised to become more and more independent and able to set their own development plans. What is more, the creation of a culture of expert practice for learning includes focused interactions among learners and experts for the problem solving and carrying out tasks.

'Intrinsic motivation' suggests that the learners have taken up training in a particular field more because of an intrinsic interest in this field than for some extrinsic reason such as getting a good grade. Finally, 'exploiting cooperation' refers to collaborative activities among the learners in a way that promote cooperative problem solving. Cooperation can be blended with 'competition', where comparisons could be drawn between the processes that students use for problem-solving.

To sum up, Cognitive Apprenticeship is not a particular formula for instruction that experts need to follow when teaching novices, but instead, is a 'useful instructional paradigm' (Collins, Brown and Holum, 1991, p. 13) that can potentially support the expert to teach or explain fairly complex tasks to the learners. Also, it can help the learners generalise knowledge so that it can be used in different settings and support the acquisition of cognitive (knowledge of subject matter) and metacognitive (self-correction and self-monitoring) skills in 'learning-through-guided-experience'.

3.3 Theories of expertise

By definition, an expert is 'someone who performs a task significantly better (by some specific criterion) than the majority of people...or someone who can make an appropriate response to a situation that contains a degree of unpredictability' (Sloboda, 1991, p. 154). Chi (2006) has devised a seven-stage proficiency scale[1], where an 'expert' is described as a 'distinguished or brilliant journeyman...'[2]. The

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[1] Chi's proficiency scale is structured as following: (i) Naïve; (ii) Novice; (iii) Initiate; (iv) Apprentice; (v) Journeyman; (vi) Expert and (vii) Master (2006, p. 22).
[2] According to Chi (2006, p. 22), the 'expert' is 'the distinguished or brilliant journeyman, highly regarded by peers, whose judgments are uncommonly accurate and reliable, whose performance shows consummate skill and economy of effort and who can deal effectively with certain types of rare or

expert is one step before the 'master' who, traditionally, is 'qualified to teach those at a lower lever' (op cit. 2006, p. 22). Ericsson and Smith (1991) and Chi (2006) explain that people tend to believe that expertise is either predominantly influenced by inherited qualities (Absolute expertise), or that it is a function of learning and acquisition (Relevant expertise) (Chi, 2006, p. 22). Therefore, outstanding performance is usually attributed either to some general characteristics of the individual, such as intelligence, personality, music ability and body build, or to specific aspects, such as learning and practice (Ericsson and Smith, 1991, pp. 3-4). However, Sloboda (1991), Ericsson (2006a) and Mieg (2006) underline that declaring someone an expert is a social act which may or may not correspond to an intrinsic characteristic of the person so designated. Up-to-date research strongly highlights that experts are made and not born (Chi, 2006; Ericsson, Prietula and Cokery, 2007; Feltovitch, Prietula and Hoffman, 2006; Hunt, 2006; Lehmann and Gruber, 2006; Zimmerman, 2006). Also, Zimmerman's research (2006) suggests that through deliberate practice, which entails (i) high level of concentration, (ii) the structuring of specific training tasks to facilitate setting appropriate personal goals, (iii) monitoring informative feedback and (iv) opportunities for repetition and error correction, the individuals can develop various levels of expertise (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 705).

Chi (2006) has analytically described the key characteristics of generic expert performance. There are divided into the ways that experts excel and the ways that experts fall short. In the first group of characteristics, it is suggested that experts (i) generate the best solutions faster and more accurately than novices, (ii) detect and see the 'deep structure' of a problem or situation, (iii) spend a great deal of time analyzing a problem qualitatively, (iv) have accurate self-monitoring skills, (v) choose the appropriate strategies successfully, (vi) are opportunistic, in the sense that they make use of whatever sources of information are available and (vii) retrieve domain knowledge and strategies with minimal cognitive effort, execute their skills with greater automaticity and exert cognitive control over aspects of performance that control in needed (op cit. 2006, p. 24). In contrast, experts may (i) tend to have expertise limited to their domain, (ii) be overly confident and miscalibrate their capabilities, (iii) tend to gloss over details that are the less relevant features of a problem, (iv) are context-dependent within their domain, (v) are often inflexible with

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'tough' cases. Also an expert is one who has special skills or knowledge derived from extensive experience with subdomains'.

situations that deviate from those that are 'acceptable' in the domain, (vi) could be inaccurate in their prediction, judgment and advice to novices when they cannot take the perspective of the novices accurately and (vii) seem to be more susceptible to suggestions that can bias their choices than novices (op cit. 2006, pp. 25-27).

In the specific field of music performance, Lehmann and Davidson (2002) put particular emphasis on three characteristics of musical expertise:

A. 'Specificity or structure-by-skill interaction', which suggests that individuals perform at superior level only when the stimuli are representative of the properties for which they have developed the cognitive mechanisms (e.g. pianists can easily adapt to playing on a harpsichord).

B. 'Adaptability', which refers to the psychological, psychomotor and cognitive adaptations that musical experts display in relation to the task demands under which they usually operate. Experts can step back, but also zoom in on detail depending on the situation; they can restructure, reorganize and refine their representations and their musical performance according to the environment conditions (Feltovitch, Prietula and Hoffman, 2006). Apfelstadt (1997) also argues that a good music leader needs to adapt behaviour to suit the situation.

C. 'Developed problem-solving and memory skills'. Over time, musical experts build up mental representation, a matrix of cognitive skills (production, perception and reflection) and retrieval structures, which allow them to encode quickly and meaningfully what they see or hear and manipulate the information in desirable ways. By mental representations, they refer to internal representations in memory that a performer produces whilst in a process of encoding and understanding a relevant stimulus in a given situation. In music performance, mental representation does not preclude some degree of automaticity. Respectively, experts have fast access to information stored in long-term memory, whilst novices have difficulties in storing and subsequently retrieving the information.

At the same time, a determinant factor towards reaching expertise standards is deliberate practice (Lehmann and Davidson, 2002; Lehmann and Gruber, 2006). Deliberate practice is described as 'goal directed optimized practice…which serves to

establish a strong internal representation of the piece as well as the conditions under which the performance will take place' (Lehmann and Gruber, 2006, pp. 460-1). Contrary to the everyday belief that the 'highly talented' musicians need not practise as much as the less talented, accumulated hours of practice are an irrefutable predictor of excellence.

The current research study could possibly benefit from studies on the development of expertise. Firstly, looking at expert conductors might lead us to better understand where novices' development is heading. Once we know how expert conductors organize their knowledge in rehearsing and performing, it could be possible to improve the efficiency of existing teaching and learning environments. Secondly, Ericsson (2006b) and Ericsson et al. (2007) have argued that by having more accomplished individuals, such as exceptional tutors, to guide the sequencing of practice activities in a safe and effective manner through motivation and constructive feedback, learners can accelerate their learning. Thirdly, experts are usually more able to verbalize and explain what happens in the course of their performance whilst novices can often be quite surprised by achieving a given task. What is more, the performance of experts is less affected by extraneous conditions as it often happens with the performance of novices.

To sum up, the ultimate goal of applying research on expertise to education is to profit future generations of learners and teachers. Research studies into expertise suggest that task knowledge, performance skills and self-regulation competence are its basic elements (Zimmerman, 2006), which can and should be developed through deliberate practice and guidance from exceptional teachers and a supportive social environment (Mieg, 2006). With regard to expertise in education, Glaser (1996) suggests that although expertise can be described as 'relative standing or as mastery of performance criteria', neither of these preclude expert attainment by a majority of students (Glaser, 1996, p. 305). Besides, through knowledge of expert performance and its acquisition, competence in the skills and knowledge learned in schools and the workplace can be improved.

3.4   Situated Learning

By the term Situated Learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) described apprenticeship learning and provided insights from anthropological investigations of apprenticeship in various contexts, such as becoming a midwife in Yucatec, Mexico; a tailor in West Africa or a butcher in the USA. Situated Learning emphasizes that learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people in activity 'in, with and arising from the socially and culturally structured world' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 51). Learning is theorized to involve the whole person; it is connected to specific activities and social communities and implies becoming a full participant in the activity of the community.

Situated Learning also suggests that the individual gains knowledge and skills through highly interactive and productive participation in social practice, under the condition of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). In other words, learners do not get a discrete body of abstract knowledge to reapply in later contexts. Instead, they acquire the skills to perform by participating in the actual practice of the expert, but to a limited degree and with limited responsibility for the ultimate product as a whole (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 14). Learners as peripheral participants can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about (what Cognitive Apprenticeship termed 'Global before Local') and what can be learned by observing the systematic and structured practice of the expert by participating in frameworks that are structured. Nevertheless, Situated Learning does not provide any structure. Instead, it suggests LPP as a way of engaging in learning with other co-learners (co-participation). What Situated Learning tries to explore is the kind of social engagements that could possibly provide the proper context for learning to take place taking into account the situated character of human understanding and communication. In a word, Situated Learning underscores that there is no activity that is not situated. However the primary element of learning is not the cognitive process but the social practice as a generative phenomenon and learning is one of its characteristics.

Situated Learning, as a term, gives learning an actional ground. Lave and Wenger highlight that 'if learning is about increased access to performance, then the way to maximize learning is to perform, not to talk about it (op cit. 1991, p. 22). Although Lave and Wenger do not mention examples from the field of music, the acquisition of musical expertise (skills and knowledge) in many traditional contexts could form a

model for similar studies of apprenticeship learning. To illustrate, Green (2002) argues that different kinds of situated learning occur in different world music contexts and jazz. In addition, Campbell (1991) described numerous examples of apprenticeship learning in different traditions; in Norway (speelemenn - traditional fiddlers), Japan (noh theatre), India (schools of performance called gharanas, where students devote long hours of arduous training under the guidance of a master teacher, or guru), China (Chinese opera and instrumental music) and Africa (instrumental and vocal music). In the context of choral conducting, anecdotal evidence suggests that particularly in UK Cathedral choral tradition, choral conductors tend to be males who entered this tradition from an early age as choristers[3] and later started learning the organ. Some of these singers and organists who have been participating for years in the community of choral practice from the periphery and observed carefully their choral master(s), they slowly move into full participation as choral conductors themselves.

3.5   Theoretical Summary

To sum up, the theoretical framework of Cognitive Apprenticeship that was presented in this chapter suggests that learning has to be understood with respect to a practice as a whole, with its multiplicity of relations – both within the community and with the world at large. Activity, concept and culture are interdependent. No one can be totally understood without the other two; therefore learning must involve all three. Kennell (2002) underlined that any training with reference to a time interval or special location (community) may promote or assist change, but may not by itself bring about change in the learner. It is the experience of interacting with musical artifacts, in particular social surroundings and under the guidance of experts that seems to produce desired change in the learner. Likewise, the theory of Situated Learning suggested that in order for an educational environment to be effective it requires opportunities for structured practice, interaction with peers and systematic expert performance. Even if the experts do not teach, they embody practice at its fullest in the community of practice. Finally, the theories of Expertise put emphasis on self-regulatory

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[3] Welch (2006) explains that the tradition of highly skilled boy singers in the UK may be tracked back to the first foundations of English Cathedrals in Canterbury (597 AD), Rochester (604AD) and St Paul's, London (604AD). However, the 'all-male' hegemony of cathedral music was challenged in 1991 with the admittance of girls to Salisbury Cathedral in the West of England.

competence, task knowledge and performance as the three key characteristics of expertise that can be nurtured through deliberate practice.

3.6 General theoretical underpinnings in a model of effective choral conducting

Research studies presented in Chapter Two seem to emphasise that conducting a choral ensemble requires more than mere technical artistry. There is also evidence which points out that there could be no relation between the expressivity of conducting cheironomy and the expressivity of ensemble performance (Price and Chang, 2005). What is more, certain studies suggest that enthusiasm might be an indicator of high intensity and motivation, since students appear to 'forgive' inaccuracies in teaching or activity presentation once attracted by the teacher's enthusiasm and personality (Madsen, 2003; Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998). That is to say, the technical aspects of conducting, albeit significant, need not discourage conductors and students from participating enthusiastically in choral ensembles. However, it has been underlined that in order for choral conductors or school teachers who lead singing activities to facilitate children's and adolescents' singing development, it is important that they are aware that singing behaviour is a product of complex interactions between biological, developmental and environmental factors over time (Cooksey and Welch, 1998; Gackle, 2000; Welch, 2000; 2005b; 2005c; 2006) and teachers with inadequate subject knowledge cannot rely on their enthusiasm for singing or conducting.

The following paragraphs endeavour to bring together the characteristics of an effective choral conducting model as derived from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theoretical constructs on effective teaching and learning environments that were presented earlier in this chapter. The ultimate goal is to construct a model of effective choral conducting education that is inclusive of all the parameters that could potentially affect the process of preparation of choral conductors within educational environments and to suggest methods and practices that can maximize learners' and students' learning.

3.6.1 The profile of an effective choral conductor

The traditional underlying assumption about conductors is that good conductors are born, not made, a perception that is refuted by contemporary research on expertise acquisition (Chi, 2006; Ericsson, Prietula and Cokery, 2007; Feltovitch, Prietula and Hoffman, 2006; Hunt, 2006; Lehmann and Gruber, 2006; Zimmerman, 2006). The existing studies on vocal development and choral conducting practice have so far illustrated that in order to be called 'experts', effective choral conductors need to possess several attributes. These attributes are presented in the following paragraphs and the profile of an effective choral conductor that emerges is an adaptation of Durrant's 'Super-model choral conductor' (Durrant, 2003, pp. 100-102).

A. Philosophical and Pedagogical principles:

1. Knowledge and understanding of how the voice works (Altenmüller, 2001; 2003; Weinberger, 2004; Welch, 2005a);

2. Awareness of the stages of children's and adolescents' vocal development (Cooksey, 2000a; 2000b; Gackle, 2000; Toole, 2005; Welch, 2000; 2006);

3. Knowledge of the choral repertoire (Apfelstadt, 2000; Forbes, 2001; Persellin, 2000);

4. Awareness of the social (McCrary, 2001; Radford, 2001; Seago, 1996; Sichivitsa, 2003), psychological (Bowles, 1998; Chorus America, 2003; Durrant, 1998; Durrant and Himonides, 1998; Turton and Durrant, 2002) and physical (Clift and Hancox, 2001; Unwin, Kenny and Davis, 2002) effects that choral participation could possibly have on the participants.

B. Musical – Technical skills:

1. A good gestural vocabulary that facilitates effective delivery and pacing during rehearsals (Cofer, 1998; Durrant, 1994; 2003; Leman, 2000);

2. Good body posture and head position that indicate awareness of the relationship between physical gesture and choral tone (Durrant, 2006; Price, 2006);

3. Good aural and error detector skills, such as ability to hear inaccurate entries, pitches, rhythms, problems in diction and phrasing also seem to be necessary for a choral conductor (Brittin, 1992; Durrant, 2003; 2006).

C. Interpersonal skills and general Leadership:

1. Non-verbal communication, such as sustained eye contact with the singers and the use of facial expressions can possibly influence the quality of the

performance (Broomhead, 2006; Osman, 1991; Skadsem, 1997; VanWeelden, 2004; Yarbrough and Henley, 1999; Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998). Moreover, good vocal modelling that is characterised by accurate pitching and good phrasing is found to be particularly valuable when working with young children (Green, 1990; Price et al., 1994; Yarbrough, Bowers and Benson, 1992; Yarbrough et al., 1991);

2. Encouragement / Motivation (Schmidt, 1995; Stamer, 1999);

3. Quality feedback (Dunn, 1997; Goetze, Cooper and Brown, 1990; Langness, 2000);

4. Clear communication goals (Apfelstadt, 1997; Gumm, 2007);

5. Works well with people (Apfelstadt, 1997; Armstrong and Armstrong, 1996; Hamann, Lineburgh and Paul, 1998; Osman, 1991);

6. Enthusiasm (Corbin, 1995; Dunn, 1997; Gumm, 2004; Schmidt, 1995);

7. Effective rehearsal pacing and planning (Brendell, 1996; Daugherty, 1999; Demorest and May, 1995; Gumm, 2007; Hemsley, 1998; Phillips, 1994).

Table 3.2: Examples of the elements in the key attributes of an effective choral conductor (Durrant, 2003, pp. 100-102)

A. Philosophical and Pedagogical principles:
- Understanding of the voice (vocal production, healthy voice use, psychology and physiology of the voice)   - Awareness of children's and adolescents' vocal development (children's song-learning behaviour, adolescents' changing voice)   - Knowledge of the choral repertoire   - Awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music (social, psychological and physical effects of choral participation)
B. Musical – Technical skills:
- Gestural vocabulary (clear beat pattern, clear ictus definition, clear cutoffs, clear preparatory beats, independence of hands, clear indication of dynamics, clear indication of phrasing)   - Body movement and head posture (stable body position, upright and balanced stance, shoulders relaxed and chest not collapsed; head centrally balanced, not tilted forward, back nor sideways)   - Aural skills (correct inaccurate entries, pitches and rhythms, problems of diction; intonation at the ending of phrases; blend and balance among parts; vowel shapes)
C. Interpersonal skills and general leadership:
- Non verbal communication that encourages responses to visual cues (sustained eye contact with choir, use of spoken language sparingly, good vocal modelling: singing correct pitches and rhythms and good phrasing)   - Encouragement/ motivation   - Quality feedback   - Clear communication goals

- Works well with people
- Enthusiasm
- Effective rehearsal planning and pacing (Time efficiency, positive learning environment, assertive teaching, student independence)

In the light of all this knowledge, it seems that it lies within the role of every choral conductor to be a musical agent, a singing model and a motivating force for their singers. Table 3.2 gives some examples of elements in the key attributes of an effective choral conductor.

Gumm (2004) underscored that the students who are motivated by enjoyment, creativity and emotion in music and who engage actively in the practice are the ones who benefit the most from choral experiences. It is, therefore, of great importance for conductors within educational contexts who deal with the vocal development of children or young adults to have full awareness of how singing mastery develops, how children of the same age can be in different phases of development and 'how best to provide suitable 'developmentally sensitive' singing activities' (Welch, 2006). Having identified the most salient qualities of a choral conductor, what warrants the attention of the researchers at a subsequent stage is to make the link between the process of choral conducting preparation and the skills that can be taught through formal education or intervention within educational contexts.

3.6.2 Effective teaching and learning environments and the role of an effective choral conducting educator

The theories of Expertise suggest that experts excel in task knowledge and performance skills not necessarily because of some nascent talent or initial task interest but because of personal initiative, diligence and deliberate practice (Zimmerman, 2006). What is more, it is suggested that elite performers have always been supported by their social environment; their exceptional teachers and committed parents (Ericsson, 2006a; Hunt, 2006). Above all, expertise theories postulate that experts are always made and not just born. Therefore, a learning environment that has a focus on expert processes and learning through practice could possibly be beneficial in choral conducting education. The framework of Cognitive Apprenticeship describes a learning environment, where the primary aim is to teach the conceptual and factual knowledge that experts use to handle complex tasks, through exemplifying

and situating them in the context of their use. In addition, importance is given to learning through guided experience on cognitive and metacognitive (i.e. self-correction and self-monitoring) skills, rather than solely physical skills and processes. The methods that are employed, such as modelling, coaching and fading, scaffolding, articulation, reflection and exploration, are designed to uncover the tacit processes that comprise expertise in a way that students could observe, enact and practise them with the aid of the teacher and from other students.

Situated Learning suggests that i) learning is a process that takes place in a particular framework, not in an individual mind, ii) it is mediated by the differences of perspective among the co-participants and iii) those who participate in actional learning contexts and not self-contained structures acquire real understanding and learning. The combination of the Cognitive Apprenticeship framework, in a Situated Learning location suggests that learners in choral conducting education programmes can move from 'peripheral' (indirect or limited) participation to full participation in an environment that allows (i) greater commitment over time, (ii) intensive effort, (iii) more and broader responsibilities within the community of practice, (iv) more difficult and risky tasks and (v) an increased sense of identity as an expert practitioner (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 111). In brief, since expertise is not exclusively a cognitive affair but develops through deliberate practice over time, learners in choral conducting education contexts should have the opportunity to plan, perform and reflect on their practice within a safe and nurturing environment supported by expert tutors.

The role of an effective choral conducting educator should not be overlooked. It is a mere commonplace to say that the choral conducting tutor should possess the philosophical principles, musical – technical skills and interpersonal skills and general leadership that the learner choral conductor is expected to acquire and develop throughout the educational process. However, a knowledgeable and proficient choral conductor is not necessarily an effective educator. An effective choral conductor educator should ideally adopt a pedagogical approach that enables learners to grow within their learning context. For example, arranging suitable training tasks that the performers can master sequentially, monitoring the attained performance and offering feedback which leads to strategic adjustments in future efforts are attributes that

educators should possess regardless of the nature of the subject matter they teach (See Table 3.3). The following paragraphs describe the profile of an effective choral conductor educator in relation to various attributes. The profile constitutes an adaptation of the 'Nine Dimensions' of teaching, a framework suggested by Jennings (Jennings, 1994, pp. 29-33)[4] and research studies on teaching and learning in higher education (Entwistle, 2007; Perkins, 2007; Prosser, Martin and Trigwell, 2007).

3.6.2.1 Management of material

Jennings (1994) explained that preparation, provision, selection and design of consumable materials, hardware and visual aids are basic and vital aspects of a tutor's work. Likewise, a choral conductor educator should be able to use the available tools (i.e. music repertoire, technology etc) and signs (i.e. gestures and language) in a way that they facilitate the teaching process. To illustrate, the use of particular tools[5], such as video recordings, handouts and personal diaries, during the process of choral conducting education, could assist tutors and learners to display better goals and better planning, better strategy use, better self-monitoring and self-evaluation skills and finally, better adaptability to various conditions of practice (Zimmerman, 2006, pp. 714-715). Through the use of tools and deliberate practice in and out of the teaching context, the learners can establish strong internal representations of an expert conductor's practice and planning. It is believed that after the learners have developed metacognitive skills such as self-monitoring, self-evaluation and adaptability, they can take over to regulate their practice themselves (Lehmann and Gruber, 2006, p. 462).

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[4] Jennings's study (1994) used the theoretical construct of Cognitive Apprenticeship in a programme of initial teacher education at the University of Exeter. In this programme the university has deliberately integrated practical teaching with thinking about teaching by providing the conditions, situations and assistance for principled learning to take place. The framework of Cognitive Apprenticeship was used because it was acknowledged that it is crucial for learners to develop skills and competence in management, communication and subject matter knowledge to participate in and make best use of this scheme. The 'Nine Dimensions' of teaching as proposed by Jennings represent a progression from relatively simple levels of performance to more complex expressions of competence. The dimensions are: (i) Ethos, (ii) Direct instruction, (iii) Management of Material, (iv) Guided Practice, (v) Structured Conversation, (vi) Monitoring, (vii) Management of Order, (viii) Planning and Preparing and (ix) Written Evaluation. Ethos, is not numbered (labelled 'Dimension 0'), because Jennings and her colleagues believe that it is not appropriate to predict a 'level' at which an educator should be working. Due to the fact that choral conductor educators work with adult learners rather than children some dimensions such as Management of Order have not been included in the suggested framework.

[5] Bomer (2003) argues that the use of tools, or learning to use a tool, is nested in many layers of cultural and historical context. 'Everything important about learning to use a tool (i.e. hammer, but also a word, a diagram, a gesture, a process, a concept) depends on how its use is formed by those contexts'. Kennel (2002, p. 252) suggested that the cultural tools of language, literature and instructional process become the means for stimulating change.

3.6.2.2 Expectations/aspirations

The tutors, like the learners, have their own expectations and aspirations from the teaching process and their students. Therefore, whilst guiding the students, the tutors should not only be able to give direct instructions on how the students can improve elements related to choral practice, such as gestures or rehearsing techniques, but also be at the position to adjust their expectations to the students' existing skills, knowledge and experiences. This ability demands increasing awareness of and responsiveness to the people that the tutors have in front of them. Through encouragement of social interaction and the circulation of narratives and experiences, the tutors could potentially help the learners to articulate and reflect on their assumptions and reasons for the choices they make.

3.6.2.3 Perceptions of subject matter

In relation to tutors' perception of the subject matter, Entwistle (2007) points out that whilst students tend to have clear views about any aspects of the teaching which they find to interfere with their learning, they are novices in regard to the subject content. Hence, they cannot see the subject as a whole the same way tutors do. Therefore it lies within the tutors' responsibilities to have a clear understanding of what needs to be taught and how this knowledge could be applied in diverse environments. Tutors' perception of the subject matter also appears to affect the way they teach it. Prosser et al. (2007) undertook a study where they interviewed 37 higher education tutors who were active in research in the disciplinary areas of Business, Law, Health Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Science and Technology. The aim of the first stage of the study was to identify the qualitative variation in the experiences of the teaching and understanding of subject matter. In the second stage focus was put on the new phenomenon of the experience of research. Findings suggested that the way university teachers understand their subject affects the way they represent that subject to their students and, 'ultimately, how effectively their students will learn that subject' (Prosser et al., 2007, p. 57).

3.6.2.4 Planning and preparation

Effective sequencing of task processes aids learners to integrate and generalize the skills and knowledge that they have been building up during their training. Therefore, planning and preparation of the approach and methods to be used are integral to

effective instruction. Perkins (2007) recognizes that it is of prime significance, to engage learners in ways that lead them to 'grapple with the ideas and information in play and to a degree make their own meanings' (op cit. 2007, p. 33). For his purpose, Perkins identifies four basics of pedagogy: (i) clear information, (ii) thoughtful practice – both results of good planning and preparation, (iii) informative feedback and (iv) intrinsic or extrinsic motivation ('Theory One') (Perkins, 2007, p. 33) but underlines that, in actual practice they are lamentably neglected. A choral conductor educator should consider a variety of modes of teaching (diversity) and sequencing the tasks (increasing complexity) in ways that, allow learners to apply more and more of the skills and concepts that they have been observing and practicing and which constitute expert performance. For instance, guided practice through exploration is an element of learning highly utilized within Cognitive Apprenticeship environments, where learners observe, engage and discover expert strategies in context. Decreasing scaffolding of environmental supports and increasing guided practice is believed to foster self-monitoring and self-regulatory skills that encourage the learners as developing experts to take control of their learning environment and create conditions for deliberate practice.

3.6.2.5 Monitoring

Monitoring the learners' gradual development over time, what Zimmerman (2006, p. 507) called 'deliberate attention', is an ingredient of effective instruction that offers opportunities for sensitively interpreting one's progress and using the information to guide future action (Jennings, 1994, p. 32). Ericsson et al. (2007, p. 121) underscore that the best tutors identify aspects of the learner's performance that need to be improved at their next level of skill. If a tutor pushes the learner too fast or too hard the learners might get frustrated and even tempted to give up trying. Glaser (1996, p. 307) also argued that it lies within the role of tutors to provide scaffolding for assisted practice in the design of situations for self-analysis, monitoring and the use of feedback. Then the tutors have to fade out of the picture in order to enable learners to provide these environmental situations to themselves. Self- monitoring has also been emphasized by the tutors as a necessary method through which learners can overcome prior habits.

3.6.2.6 Evaluation/feedback

Evaluation has close links to the monitoring attribute; both stress the significance of collecting and analyzing data for the development of practical sequences. However, evaluation puts particular emphasis on the provision of regular feedback during the process of instruction. Ericsson et al. (2007) underline that the development of expertise requires tutors who are capable of giving constructive and even painful feedback to their students. Finally, Collins et al. (1989) suggested that the availability of multiple expert tutors could be a valuable feature of training, for it helps learners appreciate the different styles and ways of doing things.

Table 3.3: The attributes of an effective choral conductor educator

Effective choral conductor attributes (Table 3.2 - Durrant, 2003): A. Philosophical and Pedagogical principles B. Musical – Technical skills C. Interpersonal skills and general leadership
Methods and sequencing of choral conducting education: • Management of materials (tools and signs) • Expectations / Aspirations • Perceptions of subject matter • Planning and preparation • Monitoring (deliberate attention) • Evaluation / Feedback

All things considered, accomplished tutors will always play an essential role in guiding the sequencing of practice activities for future choral conductors in a safe and effective manner.

3.7 A suggested model for the examination of effective choral conducting preparation

The theoretical constructs of Cognitive Apprenticeship, Situated Learning and Expertise theories combined with the attributes of an effective choral conductor and an effective choral conductor educator identified by the literature on choral conducting, could facilitate the creation of a framework for the examination of effective choral conducting education. The framework (see Figure 1, p. 96) that is proposed in the following paragraphs considers time (duration of preparation) and location (learning and practicing contexts) as determinant parameters of effective education and acknowledges that, in reality, tutors' and learners' biographies and experiences affect not only the process but also the learning outcomes of the choral

conducting education offered within a teaching context, as it is demonstrated by the web that is created among the constitutive parts.

3.7.1 The tutors

The elliptical box that describes the tutors (see Figure 1) illustrates that tutors need to possess the philosophical awareness, musical-technical skills and interpersonal skills and leadership that underpin their role as practitioners and educators. Like the learners, the tutors have their own biographies and experiences that influence who they are as individuals and subsequently they influence the way they teach. Prosser et al. (2007) explain that 'experience is constituted in terms of a number of interacting and relating, but still independent, pasts coming together to form a whole' (op cit. 2007, p. 50). The necessity of being not only good choral conductors but also good choral conductor educators is particularly recognized in the sense that effective tutors are figures that, through application of methods and usage of tools, encourage and support the learners to reach autonomy and independence in choral conducting.

3.7.2 The learners

The elliptical box that refers to the learners indicates that individuals do not enter an education process as empty vessels. Due to their diverse backgrounds (knowledge, abilities, biographies and previous experiences) learners, even in the same course, often begin their training from different starting points from one another. What is more, they often have different learning needs and it is not uncommon that at times they might have to 'unlearn' skills or attitudes in order to re-learn new ones. The personal biographies and experiences comprise what Engeström (1999; 2001) describes as 'historicity' of an activity, which suggests that every activity takes shape and is transformed over long periods of time. The problems and potentials of an activity can only be understood against its own history, i.e. the local history of the activity and its participants and the wider history of the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity' (Engeström, 2001, p. 7). What is more, the learners often have their own expectations and aspirations of their learning context, as well as their own perception of the subject matter (i.e. what the role of a choral conductor is in diverse conducting environments). These perceptions are believed to influence both the process and learning outcome of their training. Richardson (2007) examined five higher education environments, where students completed an inventory on approaches

to studying (Approaches to Study Inventory – ASI) and the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). The findings revealed that approaches to studying are, to some extent, driven by students' perceptions of their academic environment.

3.7.3 The process of learning to be a choral conductor

With regard to the education process, the theories of Cognitive Apprenticeship and Situated Learning have highlighted that learners improve their skills, knowledge and awareness in a given domain through structured practice, observation and modelling of systematic expert performance and interaction with peers and experts. Cognitive Apprenticeship, in particular, has drawn attention to the significance of opportunities for reflection, exploration of alternatives and problem solving, as well as repetition with informative feedback from a teacher and other participants. Therefore, the learning environment that could possibly facilitate the development of the suggested attributes in choral conducting is an environment situated in a community of choral practice. That is to say, it should incorporate conducting a choir and receiving feedback from all people involved (tutors, singers and even the accompanist). Receiving feedback from peers or co-participants is a beneficial element of the education process that should not be overlooked. Chi's (2006, p. 26) study suggested that students are far more able to incorporate feedback from their peers than from their tutor in a writing task. Similarly, choral conducting education could possibly benefit from an educational context were both the tutors and co-participants could feedback on the individual and provide some kind of 'social validation' of their performance (Mieg, 2006, p. 750). Mieg explained that, from a social perspective, the role of expert is to confirm the 'veracity of information' introduced by group members. In choral conducting practice such validation could encourage articulation, exploration and reflection on the part of the learners, which can lead to an 'in-depth' interaction among the tutor(s) and the learners, through discussion, modelling and scaffolding practice.

3.7.4 The learning outcomes

The elliptical box on the learning outcomes suggests that learners in a process on choral conducting education should have acquired attributes that allow them to lead their choral groups with confidence, commitment and success. That is to say, they should have worked towards fostering their skills and knowledge on effective choral

conducting practice (philosophical principles, musical-technical skills and interpersonal skills and general leadership) for their role as conductors, as well as develop a pedagogical approach that allows them to be more effective choral educators. Research suggests that learners are highly likely to adopt, in their role as tutors, a pedagogical approach similar to the one they have experienced during their own education (Prosser, Martin and Trigwell, 2007). With reference to the learning outcomes in relation to the parameter of time, theories of expertise have repeatedly underscored that deliberate practice is a fundamental element towards the development of expertise in every domain. Feltovich et al. (2006) clearly stated that simple experience, which does make performance less effortful and less demanding, is not sufficient for the development of expertise. In order to improve performance, individuals should seek out practice activities that last over a long period of time. That is to say, learners in choral conducting should realize that in order for them to achieve autonomous and refined cognitive, physiological and motor skills they must practice and personally adapt their skills to dynamic contexts (their own contexts) over time.

3.7.5 The socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts

The socio-cultural communities of practice in which individuals are part of are believed to colour the ways the individuals understand their learning and practicing contexts and act within them. Research evidence indicates that elements such as gender, family, peer networks, social class, religion, ethnicity and nationality affect people's relationship with music. These elements are sometimes so powerful as to determine who is seen as 'musical' and who 'unmusical', who sings 'in-tune' and who 'out-of-tune' (Welch, 2005a). With regard to perceptions and attitudes towards choral participation, Mills (2000) undertook a study with the intention to sketch out the quality of singing in secondary schools that included teachers' narratives from school inspections. Being an HM Inspector herself, Mills acknowledged that although singing in secondary school has been problematic, the general quality of singing in schools seems to be making headway and singing activities often reach high standards. On the face of it, research on adults' attitudes, perceptions and reflections on their singing experiences in school indicates that although the majority of people appear to be united in the view that singing should be retained as a valuable activity in

secondary schools, the unpopularity of singing is clearly manifested for some pupils (Kwan, 2002; Turton and Durrant, 2002).

Daniels (2004) stressed that the possibilities for human action and development are shaped by social, cultural and historical factors and in order to understand and change any form of human practice it is necessary to analyze its historical development and its current status (op cit. 2004, pp. 185-6). Thus, the rectangular box of Figure 1 suggests that choral conducting practice (both as singing activity and teaching process), is embedded within diverse socio-cultural contexts that influence the choral singing phenomenon at both an individual and a collective level. To illustrate, at an individual level, choral conductors' musical preferences and repertoire choices often influenced by the environment where they conduct (i.e. church, school) might have a bearing upon the education process. At a collective level, the choral conductors' cultures, traditions, religions, professional environments and resources might also influence the education process. Cultural 'obligations' such as participation in choral festivals/ competitions, choral practice embedded in a culture where movement is an integral element of the singing activity (i.e. gospel tradition), encouragement and support or discouragement from one's professional environment might interfere with the process of preparation and, by extension, the outcomes of an individual's choral conducting education.

Taking everything into account, the framework for effective choral conducting education that has been described in this chapter offers a lens through which to examine several programmes on choral conducting education in the UK. It is common knowledge that real life environments might often be at great distance from ideal theoretical constructs. However, the theoretical framework that is suggested wishes to be a dynamic one; responsive to individuals' needs whilst taking into account the wider socio-cultural expectations and personal biographies, which could potentially challenge the criteria of effective choral conducting practice and the criteria of ideal teaching and learning environments.

3.8   Summary

This chapter has explored several theoretical constructs (Cognitive Apprenticeship, Situated Learning, various theories of Expertise and educational research within

higher education) and proposed a heuristic theoretical framework for the examination of the process of choral conducting education. Principal aim of the study is to examine the processes of choral conducting education in diverse environments in the UK and to explore the possible relations among the five parameters that have been identified. Whilst attributes for effective choral conducting practice have been identified by various research studies, there has been no systematic research on the process of preparation and the contexts in which it occurs, which is the focus of this study. The subsequent chapter presents the research methodology, the research approach and the qualitative methods that have been used for the examination of choral conducting education in diverse contexts in England.

Figure 1: Modelling effective choral conducting education – An outline of the ingredients

Socio-cultural Contexts, including Teaching Contexts

Learners
- Background (knowledge/abilities, biography)
- Expectations /aspirations
- Perceptions of subject matter

Process: Learning to be a choral conductor
Likely pedagogical context to provide effective learning, e.g. **Cognitive Apprenticeship model** (Collins et al. 1989; Eraut, 2007)
- *A.* Content
- *B.* Methods
- *C.* Sequencing
- *D.* Sociology
Situated Learning
Theories of Expertise

Learning Outcomes
- Effective choral conductor attributes include:
- A. Philosophical and Pedagogical principles
- B. Musical – Technical skills
- C. Interpersonal skills – General Leadership
- Pedagogical Approach

Tutors
Background & attributes (knowledge/abilities, biography)
- A. Philosophical and Pedagogical Principles
- B. Musical – Technical Skills
- C. Interpersonal skills and general Leadership
- D. Conceptions of learning contexts

Pedagogical approach
- o Managements of materials
- o Expectations/aspirations
- o Perceptions of subject matter
- o Planning and preparation
- o Monitoring
- o Evaluation/Feedback

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 The purpose and nature of the research

The prime interest of the current research study, as presented in the introductory chapter, is to explore and describe the nature and process of choral conducting education in various contexts in the UK and also to examine the learners' perceived learning outcomes of this education, mostly in relation to choral practice, i.e. the extent to which the learners have developed sufficiently broad and deep awareness, knowledge and skills in choral conducting, as well as a pedagogical approach that allows them to organize and lead choral rehearsals successfully and confidently.

Chapter Three (See 3.7) proposed a theoretical framework for the examination of effective choral conducting education. In brief, the theoretical framework suggests that every process of effective choral conducting education is the result of constant interactions among (i) the background, perceptions and expectations of the learners; (ii) the background and attributes of the tutors; (iii) the sequence and amount of training; and (iv) the socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts, where the practice is embedded. The subsequent chapters aim to evaluate the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter Three by looking into existing choral conducting environments and behaviours through the different ways that the tutors and learners experience choral conducting education. The participants' experiences and perceptions are the main source of data. Therefore, a phenomenographic approach to educational research is believed to be the most appropriate for the description, analysis – at a collective level – and understanding of individual experiences of choral conducting preparation. A synthesis of methods, which allow for multiple perspectives to be acquired, was adopted. The methods that were used include examination of documentary sources, observations, analysis of video snap-shots, questionnaires, interviews and personal reports on self-perceived progress, within the broader frame of a case study approach, where cases were the courses on choral conducting education that have been selected.

4.2 Phenomenography as a research methodology

Phenomenography was a term created by Marton (1981) to describe a qualitative research methodology that aims to find and systematize 'forms of thought in terms of which people interpret significant aspects of reality' (Marton, 1981, p. 177). The apprehended content (experiences or conceptualized) is for phenomenographers the point of departure for carrying out research and the basis for integrating the findings. Marton (1981) argued in favour of the kind of research that aims to find variation and the architecture of this variation in terms of the different aspects that define the phenomena. In detail, he explained its usefulness by highlighting that (i) people have access to the world only through experience and therefore, 'we cannot separate that which is experienced from the experience per se'; (ii) although the interpretation of a phenomenon or aspect of reality might vary, the way they are experienced or conceptualized occur in a relatively limited number of qualitatively different ways.

> In between the common and the idiosyncratic there seems, thus, to exist a level; a level of modes of experience, forms of thought, worthwhile studying.

> (Marton, 1981, p. 181)

(iii) Contrary to phenomenology[1], which is methodological (i.e. aims to capture the richness of experience, the fullness of all the ways in which a person experiences and describes the phenomenon of interest), phenomenography is substance-oriented (i.e. aims to capture the relationships between the actors and the phenomenon and not the phenomenon per se). Whilst the phenomenologist is inquiring into 'how' people experience the world, the phenomenographer is focused on 'what' are the critical aspects of the ways of experiencing the world that make people able to handle it in more or less efficient ways. (iv) Phenomenological investigation draws a line between pre-reflective experience and conceptual thought. That is to say, 'it aims to describe either what the world would look like without having learnt how to see it or how the taken-for-granted world of our everyday existence is 'lived' (Marton, 1981, p. 181). In contrast, phenomenography deals with both the conceptual and the experiential, 'as well as what is thought of as that which is lived…what is culturally learnt and with what are individually developed ways of relating ourselves to the world around us'

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[1] Phenomenology is a movement in philosophy or method of inquiry based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not independent of it. Phenomenology was initially developed in the early years of the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German mathematician who 'felt that objectivism of science precluded an adequate apprehension of the world' (Retrieved in February 2009 from http://hss.fullerton.edu/sociology/orleans/phenomenology.htm).

(op cit. 1981, p. 181). The outcome of such a methodological approach is a set of categories of description and the structural relationship between the categories, termed as 'outcome space' (Prosser, Martin and Trigwell, 2007, p. 52).

Educational research is argued to have benefitted so far from the pedagogical potentiality of phenomenography. Prosser et al. (2007) and Entwistle (2007) emphasized that a phenomenographic perspective in educational research helps the researchers to understand the structure of the experience at a collective, rather than at an individual, level. Phenomenography attempts to identify and map the key qualitative variation in the way something is experienced and the underlying structure of that experience, and not to describe individuals' experiences. In particular, Entwistle (2007) explained that, especially within higher education, a phenomenographic approach that involves interviews of the learners could potentially encourage them to consider their learning experiences in successive steps as the researcher gently probes for deeper insights into these experiences (Entwistle, 2007, p. 5). Prosser et al. (2007) added

> It is not the way teachers teach and design their courses, but the ways students experience that teaching and the courses offered that is the key determinant of the quality of student learning   (Prosser, Martin and Trigwell, 2007, p. 49)

As opposed to objective observation, tutors' and learners' self-perceptions of measuring classroom interaction have been found to be the least favoured, as a reliable or accurate research approach, by research studies in music education. Preference appears to be given to evaluations by expert observers (see studies by Yarbrough, 1975; 1987; Yarbrough and Henley, 1999; Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998) more than personal narratives (see studies by Durrant and Varvarigou, 2008; Gaunt, 2006; Gumm, 1993; 2004). Gumm (1993), however, was among the first to use teachers' self-perceptions towards the development of a model and assessment instrument of choral music teaching styles. His findings suggested that teaching style based on teachers' self-reported ratings was stable within the choral music setting. On using self-perceptions as a research approach he explained

> …It could be argued that teachers' perceptions may be more pertinent to detecting a teacher's 'orientation' or at least a different aspect of orientation than is measured by an objective observer. However, there is still a need to find the relationship between what is captured by teacher's self-perceptions and by objective observational means.
>
>   (Gumm, 1993, p. 197)

With regard to choral conducting education, it is argued by the current research study that, because many individuals (tutors, learner-conductor, singers and accompanist) appear to interact with each other at the same time during rehearsing and performing, their views could potentially offer a better insight into the process of education than external observations. Prosser et al. (2007) also argued that 'at the heart of phenomenography is the assumption that some types of teaching or learning are better than others' (op cit. 2007, p. 57). The current study, therefore, suggests that a thorough understanding of the tutors' and learners' perceptions, expectations and conceptions of the education process could potentially benefit institutions and individuals for the design of effective processes in choral conducting education.

4.3   Approach and Methods for data collection and analyses

> Methods are like a kaleidoscope: depending on how they are approached, held and acted toward, different observations can be revealed.
>
> (Schutz, Chambless and DeCuir, 2004, p. 279)

Schutz et al. (2004, p. 207) suggested that in research studies there should always be a distinction between the method as tool (how-to-do things) and what can be implied from the data that was gathered using that method. Owing to the fact that different methods might work well for certain research questions whereas others may only work for other questions, the current empirical study employs various methods for methodological triangulation. The methods include (i) a web-based survey, (ii) examination of documentary sources, (iii) audiovisual material (i.e. videos of choral conductors during their education process), (iv) questionnaires, designed for the acquisition of information on the learners' background (biography and experiences), perceptions of and expectations from their education, as well as their perceived development over time, (v) semi-structured interviews with learner conductors and their tutors, and (vi) field notes, which have been taken during observation of the programmes that have been selected.

For the analysis of the data, the Atlas.ti programme was used both as a 'code-and-retrieve' programme (see p. 256) and a code-based, theory-building programme (Lee and Esterhuizen, 2000). Field notes, course documents, interviews, audio-visual transcripts and questionnaire responses were entered into Atlas.ti, where codes were

assigned to particular segments of text that were of interest to the analyst (see Appendix One). The codes, applied to the text segments, were later grouped into 'building blocks' for the reproduction of a set of interrelated conceptual categories related to the five parameters, suggested by the theoretical framework, that could potentially offer a comprehensive insight into the process of choral conducting education in the contexts that were selected.

4.3.1 The Case Study approach

The case study approach is believed to be the most suitable approach for the exploration of choral conducting education, as it currently occurs in various environments, because it enables the researcher to zoom in and out of the processes, whilst focusing on the individuals, the sequence of the preparation and the socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts. Since the choral conducting contexts exist prior to the research project and will continue to exist after the study has been completed, the real value of the case study is that it investigates contemporary cases and naturally occurring phenomena 'for purposes of illumination and understanding' (Hays, 2004, p. 218), rather than phenomena that are artificially generated for the purpose of a study, as it might happen with laboratory experiments (Denscombe, 2003).

For achieving a deeper understanding of the cases under examination, however, the researcher needs to put distinct boundaries of what is contained within the case and what is outside it. Although the researcher has the opportunity to examine each case in its entirety, and thus discover how the various parts possibly affect one another, the current research is not concerned with in-depth description of individual biographies and experiences. Instead, it is interested in the exploration and description of interactions among tutors and the learners and the way these interactions shape the processes and learning outcomes of choral conducting education in different contexts. Relationships and processes within social settings tend to be interrelated and the advantage of the case study approach is that it allows for details to unravel the complexities of the phenomenon under investigation. Similarly, although this research examines the learning outcomes in relation to the choral conductor attributes that the learners' have developed, as well as their pedagogical approach to choral conducting practice, the use of a case study approach allows for various other outcomes, yet

unknown to the researcher, to emerge and be reported. In addition, a great strength of the case study approach is that it encourages the researcher to use a variety of types of data and a variety of research methods in order to capture the often complex reality of the cases. The cases that constitute the units of analysis in this research study are programmes on choral conducting education in England. The subsequent paragraphs describe the research methods that have been considered most appropriate for the collection of the data.

4.3.2 Web-based Survey

Before selecting the cases to be studied, a panoramic view of the available courses on conducting education was considered necessary. Therefore, an internet survey was undertaken in January 2007 (and was updated in August 2008 and April 2009) with the intention of assisting the researcher to select the case studies to be subsequently observed. Survey as a research strategy helped the researcher to map down all the available courses in the UK and to acquire a comprehensive and detailed view. One of the purposes of this mapping survey was to provide an up-to-date snapshot of the state of choral conducting education in the UK and a sampling frame of all courses that comprise the 'population' for research. All relevant courses on conducting preparation have been included (Table 4.1, p. 88) and in order for the survey to be more precise, courses that particularly deal with choral conducting training have been singled out and examined in detail (see 4.4).

4.3.3 Documentary Sources

Documentary sources can be treated as a source of data in their own right (Denscombe, 2003; Knight, 2002; May, 2001). Documents can enhance understanding in case studies through the ability to situate contemporary accounts within an historical context (May, 2001). Also, the study of documents allows comparisons between the observer's interpretation of events and those recorded in documents relating to those events. Whilst there are alternative types of documents for research, the current research has examined (i) official course documents found in higher education institutions' handbooks or their web pages, (ii) informal material such as timetabled programmes of teaching session and handouts (music repertoire, articles from journals or books, notes, power point presentation) that were distributed throughout the sessions and (iii) self-reflective reports produced by the learners, some

of which were part of their course assignments. The researcher considered two primary advantages of using documentary sources; (i) the access to data and (ii) the permanence of the data. On the one hand, vast amount of information from the courses observed was held in documents which were easily accessible and relatively inexpensive to the researcher. On the other hand, such documents are permanent and their form makes them open to public scrutiny.

4.3.4 Audio-visual material

Blaxter et al. (2006) underlined that the way people see and understand their surroundings undoubtedly plays a part in the ways in which they behave, they act and interact with others and in the way their actions are perceived by others (op cit. 2006, p. 177). The use of audiovisual materials during a teaching and learning process can be an obtrusive method of collecting data if a camera is indiscreetly located in a classroom (Creswell, 2003, p. 187). However, the use of video in choral conducting education is often allied with instruction in technical skills (gestural vocabulary). The current study put no pressure on the researcher to impose control or change circumstances. Whenever audiovisual materials were used, it happened within the philosophy of the courses that have been examined and was not something introduced by the researcher. In other words, videos were not an integral part of the initial research. Therefore, although samples from video transcript are offered in Appendix Two it has been decided for the actual videos not to be included in this thesis for reasons of anonymisation of the individuals who have been filmed.

4.3.5 Questionnaires

Anonymous questionnaires have been handed out to the participants of some of the courses in focus. The questionnaires were designed by the researcher to be fit for the purpose of the research; they provided demographic information on the participants' background (age, attendance of similar courses in the past, degree or other qualification in music and where they conduct singers), as well as responses on their expectations of the course, what made them develop an interest in choral conducting and their perceptions of the most important attributes of a choral conductor. Furthermore, the participants were asked to rate their understanding, knowledge and awareness of the relationship between gesture and sound, the science and workings of the voice and the communication and interpersonal skills of a choral conductor.

Additionally, they were asked to assess their self-perceived development of their confidence in conducting technique, dealing in practice with singing development, effective gesturing and choral rehearsing styles. The final questionnaire (distributed at the last session of the course) also asked the participants to indicate which they considered to be the most useful and least useful parts of their education programme. On the whole, the questionnaires (see Appendix Three) were distributed and collected by the researcher on the same day and the response rate was high (see Table 4.2). Through questionnaires the participants were given the opportunity to assess their own progress over time and their perceptions were used as data. The perceptions of the individual participants as expressed through questionnaires could, at a later stage, contribute to methodological triangulation when combined with the tutors' perceptions of the participants' progress as well as the evidence of increasing competence in choral conducting as presented through videos. However, this was not within the objectives of the current research study.

4.3.6 Interviews

Francis (2007) described questionnaires as 'a skeleton awaiting flesh' and the data from interviews what supplies 'the flesh of interpretation' (op cit. 2007, p. 142). He explained that the questionnaires on their own 'would yield a shapeless mass'. In order to obtain an original contribution from the learner conductors and their tutors, the researcher undertook semi-structured interviews. In the form of informal conversations interviews are considered to be reliable sources of data collection, because they can generate information which is often not accessible through observations or questionnaires (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006). That is to say, interviewees can provide historical accounts on their relation to the activity in focus and how that relation developed.

Undertaking interviews was considered by the current study an appropriate method for data collection because it provided historical accounts of the tutors' and learners' background (knowledge/ abilities and biographies) in choral conducting practice, as well as their expectation and aspirations from their education process and their perceptions of what constitutes effective practice and an effective choral conducting education process. Their experiences from the education process and its meaning could possibly inform our understanding of what 'process' is in choral conducting

preparation and provide some suggestions of what 'high-quality' education in choral conducting could suggest in the contexts examined. Conversations with the participant tutors and learners (see Appendix Four) involved in the courses proved to be exceptionally valuable, as they shed light into aspects of the education processes in diverse contexts which have not so far been explored by the existing literature on choral education. Such aspects can provide an insightful view of the pedagogical problems confronted by tutors and learners during choral conducting education that enrich and facilitate the process of data analysis.

4.3.7 Field notes

In contrast to methods such as questionnaires and interviews, which rely on what people say they do or what they say they think, direct observations help the researcher to collect data from real life situations. The whole point of this empirical method is to observe situations as they normally occur, rather than as they happen under artificially created conditions, such as laboratory experiments. However, it is recognized that observations and the production of field notes are acutely sensitive to the possibility that the observers' perceptions of situations that they observe might be influenced by personal factors. The current research study tried to minimize the researcher's individual perceptions of events and situations by combining a variety of methods for the triangulation of the data findings.

4.4   Choral Conducting Courses in the UK

There are three options for anyone who would like to receive preparation in choral conducting in the UK. One option is through short-term modules during undergraduate courses. Another option includes group or individual instruction in postgraduate courses. As a third option individuals, have the opportunity to receive preparation through CPD programmes, by attending seminars, workshops and other courses organized by independent bodies.

The internet survey undertaken in January 2007 (and updated in August 2008 and April 2009) addressed programmes on choral conducting education offered in higher education institutions and by independent bodies in the UK. The results of the survey revealed that (i) only eight universities and conservatoires offer choral conducting courses as part of their curriculum studies and (ii) that there are three independent

bodies that offer choral conducting preparation. All programmes have been contacted and information on their content, teaching and assessment processes has been sought. Two independent bodies willingly offered access to the researcher for observation and data collection and therefore became part of this research study. However, not all universities responded. In order for the researcher to pursue an investigation into the processes of choral conducting education in diverse contexts, the contexts selected were the ones that allowed access to the researcher as well as collaboration between the participant tutors and learners and the researcher.

4.4.1 Conducting courses in higher education

There are few higher education institutions in the UK that include conducting courses in their curriculum studies. A survey undertaken in 2007 by the current author revealed that out of the 105 Music Departments in UK universities and academies, only 27 departments offer courses on conducting. Nevertheless, by 'Conducting', most course outlines (whenever one was available) seemed to refer to instruction in baton technique and rehearsal approaches for direction of instrumental rather than choral ensembles. The information presented in the following paragraphs was collected through navigating the universities' web pages and through personal contacts with members of staff from the 27 universities[2].

An examination of the outlines of the 27 conducting courses available illustrates that the majority (19 universities) seem to provide solely orchestral conducting modules. Four higher education institutions appear to offer separate modules and courses on orchestral and choral conducting (Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Birmingham Conservatoire, Oxford University and the Royal Academy of Music); one offers a general module on conducting which includes conducting instruction for both choral and instrumental ensembles (Kingston University); the University of Roehampton offers a specialized postgraduate course on Music Education and Applied Music Education (Choral) and the Institute of Education, University of London, offers a specialized module on choral conducting preparation (entitled 'Choral Conducting, Leadership and Communication') at a postgraduate level. Moreover, the University of Chichester offers a one-year, practical, performance-

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[2] Although all 27 Higher Education institutions have been contacted, only 15 responded by providing information on the conducting course that they offer.

based MA for which the prospective learners should have a 'fluent level of technical and expressive skill'. Although the regular weekly lessons take place on Chichester campus, the learners should be willing to travel to performance venues in the UK and in Europe as part of their choral training. Therefore the basic travel costs are included in the course fee. What is more, two universities have incorporated courses with elements of instrumental and choral conducting into related modules: (i) Stranmillis University College[3] has included some elements of conducting as a small part of a module entitled 'Conducting and Classroom Orchestration' for final year learners undertaking a Bachelors degree in Education and (ii) Napier University (Ian Tomlin School of Music) offers a short course on choral conducting in the form of a workshop (however, no further information was offered on the university website).

Table 4.1: Conducting and Choral Conducting courses in Higher Education in the UK (Web-based survey Jan. 07, updated Aug. 08)

	University / Higher Education Institution	Award Bearing		Modules	Compulsory	Elective
		Undergraduate	Postgraduate			
1	Oxford University	√	X	Choral Conducting	X	√ (2nd /3rd year)
2	Institute of Education, University of London	X	√	Choral Conducting, Leadership and Communication	X	√
3	Roehampton University	X	√ MA/PGDipl. in Music Education and Applied Music Education (Choral) (18 months)	1. Singing and Vocal development 2. Conducting	√	X
4	Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	X	√ MA in Choral Conducting √ PGDipl. in Conducting Studies [4]	Choral Conducting	X	√ (2 years)
5	Birmingham	√	√ MMus in Performance Practice (Choral Conducting)	Conducting	X	√ (2nd and 3rd year)
6	Kingston University London	√	√	Conducting (for choirs & orchestra)	X	√ (3rd year)[5]
7	Royal Academy of Music	√	√ PGDipl. MMUs or MA	1.Conducting (3 years)	X	√

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[3] The Bachelors degree in Education at Stranmillis University College is designed to prepare learners for teaching in primary schools. The practical musicianship module is on offer to those who see themselves organizing and directing musical activities in a primary classroom or as an extra-curricular activity. The conducting element gives the learners an opportunity to practise the basics of keeping time, and indicating how to start and stop a group of very young singers or instrumentalists.
[4] The Postgraduate Diploma Course offers opportunities for all learners to specialize in conducting. The learners successful in gaining a place receive specialist instruction in Technique, Repertoire, Score-Reading, Choral Conducting and Repetiteur work.
[5] 'Musical Skills Project' includes conducting or improvising.

No.	University					
				2.Choral Conducting (2 years)		
8	**University of Chichester**	X	**√ (MA Choral Studies)**	**1.Choral Directing 2.Choral Experience 3.Choral Arranging 4.Written exercise (Repertoire) 5.Written Exercise (Performance Practice)**	√	X
9	Napier University Edinburgh (Ian Tomlin School of Music)	√	X	Workshop: Choral Conducting (Short Course)	√ (Stage 3: Techniques of Conducting)	X
10	Stranmillis University College (A College of Queen's University-Belfast)	√ BA Music with Education	X	Conducting and Classroom Orchestration	√ (Year 4)	X
11	Aberdeen	√	√	Rehearsing and Directing	√	√ (1st & 2nd year)
12	Bath Spa University College	√	X	Conducting	√	X
13	Canterbury Christ Church College	√	√ PGDipl. / MA/MMus in Performance	Conducting	X	√ (practical option for levels 2 and 3)
14	Colchester Institute	√	X	Music Direction and Vocal Techniques	X	√
15	Durham	√	√ MA in Performance	Introduction to conducting	X	√ (level 2)
16	East Anglia (Norwich)	√	√ MMus in Conducting	Conducting	X	√ (Creative and Performance studies Group)
17	Guildhall school of Music and Drama	√	√ PGDipl/ MMus	Conducting	X	√ (3rd year)
18	Huddersfield	√	√ MMus in Performance/ MMus in Performance Studies	Conducting	X	√ (2nd year)
19	Hull	√	√ (MA taught course)	Performance	X	√ (included in Practical Studies)
20	Lancaster University	√	X	Conducting	√ (2nd and 3rd year)	X
21	Royal College of Music	√	√ PGDipl in Performance and Advanced Performance/ MMus in Advanced Performance/ DMus - in Orchestral Conducting	Conducting	X for undergraduates √ for postgraduates	√ (levels 2 and 3)
22	Royal Northern College of Music	√	√ PGDipl in Performance / MPhil & MMus	Conducting	√ (supporting Professional Studies	X

			in Conducting		Scheme)	
23	Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	X	√ PGDipl in conducting / MMus in Conducting	X	√ (usually 1 learner per year for maximum performance opportunities	X
24	Surrey (Guilford)	√	√ PGDipl /MMus	Conducting	X	√ (level 3)
25	University of Salford	√	√[6]	Conducting	√ (level 2)	√ (levels 1 & 3)[7]
26	University of Wales (Bangor)	√	√[8]	Conducting	X	√ (2nd year)
27	York	√	X	Conducting	X	√

Since the current research study concerns the nature and process of choral conducting education, the courses or modules that merit the careful consideration of the researcher are those focused exclusively on choral conducting. To start with, the University of Oxford offers an optional, undergraduate module on choral conducting for which no further information is offered. The Institute of Education (University of London) offers, as part of the MA course in Music Education, an optional module on 'Choral Conducting, Leadership and Communication'. This course aims at developing the skills and attitudes necessary for effective choral conducting and rehearsing. Learners analyse and critically evaluate their professional practice as choral conductors and discuss the role of research in choral education. The University of Roehampton offers an MA course in Applied Music Education (Choral). This course has 18-month duration and includes modules on 'Theoretical Perspectives', 'Singing and Vocal Development' and 'Conducting'. The conducting module includes seminar sessions, as well as practical sessions with the university choir. The learners of this course should also take a module on Research Methods and choose between a performance project and a dissertation.

The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama offers a two-year MA course on Choral Conducting that includes one-to-one lessons in conducting and singing, individual placements with a wide variety of choirs, conducting technique classes, advanced aural training and masterclasses from a range of specialists. The University of Birmingham offers a postgraduate course (MMus in Performance Practice) for choral conductors. The course includes individual instruction in conducting and the

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[6] For performers and conductors who specialize in contemporary music genres (18 months duration).
[7] *Performance Skills* modules include 'Conducting', 'Improvisation' and 'Latin Percussion'. Learners are asked to choose two out of the three options.
[8] MA /Diploma in Music History (taught course) where 'Conducting' is an optional module.

participants (usually 1 or 2 per year) have the opportunity to conduct the university ensembles. Kingston University offers an optional module on conducting, which can be selected by the undergraduate learners, as well as the learners of the taught MA courses in Music, Music Education and Music Performance. The module provides an introduction to the craft knowledge of conducting such as beating time in a range of meters and at a variety of tempi, indicating cut-offs, cues, clear up-beats and tempo changes but also communicating with performers, rehearsing in an efficient and practical manner and preparing a score. The course also involves the study of the techniques of professional conductors and analysis of their approach. As regards the actual performance practice, the learners practice conducting vocal pieces with the rest of their cohort singing who feed back on their performance.

The University of Chichester offers an MA programme in Choral Studies that combines extensive development of skills as a member of a dedicated choral ensemble, with a range of related skills in choir training, choral arrangement and individual vocal development. The learners are expected (i) to demonstrate critical awareness of choral practice through skills in choral arrangement, choral directing and choral singing, (ii) study the work of leading ensembles and (iii) research relevant areas of repertoire and performance practice. Lastly, the Royal Academy of Music offers a two-year choral conducting course (originally entitled 'Choral Direction and Church Music'), which culminates in the award of a Diploma of Postgraduate studies, with MMus available. The British sacred choral performance tradition (both English and Latin) is the stylistic and repertoire basis of the course, but sacred and secular European repertoire is also included. The studies include conducting and rehearsal techniques, repertoire, performance practice and interpretation, editing and vocal technique. In addition, the learners have the opportunity to work with members of the Academy's Chamber choir, as well as members from other professional choirs in London.

4.4.2 Conducting courses offered by independent bodies

There are three main independent bodies that cater for choral conducting education in the UK. These are (i) the Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD), (ii) an association called Sing for Pleasure (SfP) and (iii) the Royal College of Organists (a

charity and membership organization dedicated to the promotion and advancement of organ playing and choral directing). The Royal College of Organists offers a Choral Directing Diploma (DipCHD) to those organists interested in getting qualification in choral conducting. However, there seems to be no formal course on choral conducting education except for a two-hour choral conducting workshop in which the participants get prepared for the practical part of the College's diploma in Choral Directing (DipCHD) examination.

The choral conducting courses of the Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD) are designed 'for anyone leading choral music of any kind, whatever their experience'[9]. The philosophy of the course revolves around two basic variables: (i) the development of confidence and (ii) the development of practical skills, both of which can be used with any type of choir and age group. In addition, the course is designed in such as way that gives participants the chance to put into practice what they have learned at each session. This is achieved by breaking the course up into several sessions over an extended period of time. Whilst one person is conducting, the rest of the group act as a choir. Therefore, one of the strong elements of this course appears to be that participants are offered ample opportunities to conduct and observe in real time. Lastly, the possibility of accreditation is offered in collaboration with Trinity College London. The learners who have successfully completed the ABRSM Diploma can receive further training and development to individual needs. It is significant underlying that the instruction is offered in groups, as opposed to individual instruction.

Sing for Pleasure (SfP) is an association that 'aims to encourage excellence in the enjoyment of choral singing, especially among young people'[10]. It also offers help and advice to teachers and choir conductors through running CPD training, school-based singing days, summer schools, weekend course on children's singing and 5-day courses for 'Choral Conductors and Vocal Leaders' in various places in the country (i.e. London, Leicester, Malvern and Bolton). The possibility of accreditation by the Sing for Pleasure association is also offered to the participants in collaboration with

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[9] Course outline, retrieved in January 2007 from http://www.abcd.org.uk/condcourses.htm
[10] Course outline, retrieved in January 2007 from http://www.singforpleasure.org.uk/events/fullevent.php?course_id=102

the Trinity College London. All things considered, the results of the survey suggest that only eight higher education institutions and two independent bodies provide some sort of structured education in choral conducting. This highlights that people who are interested in receiving professional instruction in choral conducting in the UK have limited opportunities.

4.5 The data collection and analysis processes – ethical considerations

With regard to the process of data analysis, all fourteen interviews with learners and tutors were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data from the interviews, videos, field notes, questionnaires and handbook documents (in the form of Word documents) were entered into the Atlas.ti programme and were coded and grouped thematically. Groups of quotes or codes with similar context formed families, which later enabled themes to emerge. The participants' quotations were used to depict the raw data themes that formed the first level of analysis. This analysis facilitated the description of the choral conducting education programmes through the eyes of the tutors, the learners and the researcher and offered an informative insight into the education process offered in five contexts that were selected for the purpose of this research study (see Appendix One).

In relation to ethical considerations, any use of the material presented in this thesis ensures (i) that no one suffers as a result and (ii) that the anonymity of the participant tutors and learners is protected. In the extracts from the interviews and self-reflective reports, all names have been taken out. T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5 are used to represent each tutor talking; and S1, S2, etc are used to represent the learners.

4.5.1 Procedures

In November 2006, I distributed, as part of the initial preparation for my doctoral studies, a questionnaire to forty-four secondary school music PGCE learners (all having a first degree in music) at the Institute of Education in London, asking for information on their conducting experiences and any conducting courses that they have attended. Out of the forty-four learners, only eight had received training in conducting and this was reported as mainly in beat-patterns, baton technique and

rehearsal planning. This initial questionnaire led me investigate the programmes on choral conducting education that are available in the UK (Higher education and independent bodies). The programmes that were selected for the pilot and main study, the instruments used for the generation of the data and an analytical plan of the process of data collection is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: The procedure of data collection

	Date	Instrument	Sampling method	Number of items
Pre-pilot	November 2006	Questionnaire to PGCE learners	Whole population	42/42
PILOT STUDY				
	January 07	On-line survey	Documentary sources for all existing programmes	26/27
CS2	April 07 (I)	Did not attend the session		
	April 07 (II)	Questionnaire 1	Whole population	19
		Observations	Whole population	19
	June 07	Interview	T5	1
	July 07	Questionnaire 2	Whole population	18/19
	September 07	Questionnaire issued by the organisation	Whole population	10/19
	October 07	Questionnaire 3	Whole population	11/19
	November 07	Observations and informal discussions with learners	Whole population	
		Interview	T3	1
	November 07	Observations of final assessment process	Whole population	19/19
CS3a	January 07	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	15
		Questionnaire 1	Whole population	15
	March 07	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	13
		Questionnaire 2	Whole population	13
	May 07	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	10
		Questionnaire 3	Whole population	10
		Interviews	L5 and L9	2
	June 07	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	10
		Questionnaire 4	Whole population	10
		Interviews	L6	1
MAIN STUDY				
CS1	February 07	Observations	Whole population	8
		Interview	T1	1
	March 07	Observations	Whole population	8
	May 07	Observations	Whole population	8
		Interview	L1	1
	June 07	Observations	Whole population	8
CS3b	February 08	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	19
		Questionnaire 1	Whole population	19

		On-line Introduction		16/19
	March 08	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	17
		Questionnaire 1	Whole population	17
		On-line reflections		13/19
	April 08	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	11
		Questionnaire 1	Whole population	11
		On-line reflections		13/19
	June 08	Observation and audio-visual material	Whole population	16
		Questionnaire 1	Whole population	16
		On-line reflections		12/19
		Final reflections (on-line or from hard copy)		11
CS4	September 07 (I)	Observation of choral rehearsal and one-to-one session		T5 and L28
	September 07 (II)	Observation of choral rehearsal and one-to-one session		T5 and L28
		Interview	L28	1
	October 07	Observation of choral rehearsal and one-to-one session		T5 and L28
	February 08	Observation of T4's rehearsal		T4
		Observation of one-to-one session		T4 and L28
		Interview	T4	1
		On-line questionnaire	L28	1
	May 08	Interview	T4	1
		Interview	L28 and L29	1
Analysis	June 08-January 09	All data were analysed with ATLAS.ti		

4.6   Limitations of the study

What people decide to record is itself informed by decisions which relate to the social, political and economical environments in which they are part. What is documented in this research study may then be interesting for what is left out, as well as what it is contained. Although those being researched might behave differently from normal, owing to the knowledge that they are being observed in some way, the current study put no pressure on the researcher to impose control or change circumstances. The choral conducting education programmes have been investigated as they naturally occur without any intervention from the researcher.

With regards to the role of the researcher in the collection and analysis of the data, it is recognized that (i) the contexts observed are open systems with the potential of continual change and therefore what has been reported refers to the specific time that the study took place and (ii) subjective experiences, objects and objectives are complex and layered, thus providing the opportunity for many different vantage points.

What is more, although all eight courses on choral conducting education have been contacted by the researcher, only three responded and allowed for observations and document examination to take place. Thus, one of the limitations of the study is that generalizing from the results acquired might probably be inappropriate and superficial. Generalization is not a goal in case studies, for the most part, because the main purpose is to discover the uniqueness of each case. Yet, generalizability is quite possible when based on several studies of the same phenomenon (Hays, 2004; Marton, 1981). Marton (1981) explained that conceptions and ways of understanding are not seen as individual qualities. They are considered rather as categories of descriptions 'to be used in facilitating the grasp of concrete cases of human functioning'.

> Since the same categories of description appear in different situations, the set of categories is thus stable and generalizeable between the situations even if individuals move from category to another on different occasions. The totality of such categories of description denotes a kind of collective intellect, an evolutionary tool in continual development. (Marton, 1981, p. 177)

4.7 Summary

This chapter looked into the nature and purposes of the research, as well as the methods of data collection. Flyvbjerg (2002) supported context-dependent knowledge as the core of human affairs, thus he emphasized the significance of conducting case studies. The case study approach was selected as the most appropriate for reflecting on the process and the experiences of the people involved in the choral conducting education phenomenon. It was also argued that the use of multiple methods for generating, analyzing information and for triangulation appeared to be the most suitable for this research. On the whole, the diversity of methods for data collection that have been used provided the tools for understanding various aspects of choral conducting education in the UK. The chapter concluded with some concerns related to ethical considerations and the limitations of the research. The subsequent chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) present the analysis of the data that have been collected in five different choral conducting education contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
I. ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the current empirical work was to investigate the nature and process of choral conducting training in programmes offered by higher education (HE) institutions and independent bodies in the UK. The perceived outcomes of the preparation offered in each programme were also explored through questionnaire responses, interviews and self-reflective reports offered by the participant learners and tutors. The suggested theoretical framework for the examination of an effective choral conducting education that has been described in Chapter Three structured the analysis of the current and subsequent chapters. This framework drew on five interconnected areas of enquiry, which appear to influence an effective process of choral conducting education. These are (i) the background and pedagogical approach of the tutors, (ii) the background, expectations, perceptions and conceptions of the learners, (iii) the process of preparation, (iv) the learning outcomes and (v) the socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts, in which choral practice occurs.

For a thorough analysis to be achieved, the data have been divided across three chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) which correspond to three diverse levels of choral conducting competence; initial, intermediate and advanced, that were observed. The prime criterion for the division of the five case studies into these three levels was the musical competence of the learners. Chapter Five describes a programme of choral conducting training at an initial level. Chapter Six presents three case studies at an intermediate level and Chapter Seven explores a year-long postgraduate programme offered by a conservatoire. The existence of a limited number of programmes on choral conducting education illustrates what this study has underlined; that there are limited opportunities in the UK for development of expertise in choral conducting through formal music training.

5.2 Case Study I (Absolute Beginners)

The course described in the following paragraphs is one of two courses offered by independent bodies in England. The organisation that ran the course also ran various other courses on choral conducting training at four different levels. The course observed was for absolute beginners and limited music reading skills (Level 1)[1]. The aims of the course at Level 1 were (i) to help the learners develop very basic musical skills, such as singing in a canon and (ii) to use simple gestural vocabulary with simple music repertoire. No further information on the course design or curriculum was offered on-line or through contact with the tutor. However, the tutor mentioned that the course had a clear syllabus that has been developed over forty years. He added that all tutors are trained according to this syllabus.

Table 5.1: Case study 1– official course content specifications [2]

Course content
♪ Develop a foundation repertoire of effective conducting gestures and techniques and then build on this in learners' individual ways and according to their varying experiences;
♪ Sing the various voice parts to enable them to be learned quickly and efficiently;
♪ Develop simple, clear but economical conducting gestures;
♪ Maintain pace during rehearsals;
♪ Achieve a musical performance even with the simplest repertoire;
♪ Remain in control but make rehearsals enjoyable for everyone;
♪ Understand necessity of thorough preparation;
♪ Analyze own achievement and the work of others in a constructive way.

The data from Case Study 1 (CS1) derived from observations of four, out of the five, face to face practical workshops that took place in February, March, May and June 2008 and two interviews; one with tutor and one with a volunteer participant choral conducting learner. The learner who was interviewed was the only one among the eight participant learners who had many years of experienced in music making. She had studied the piano for twelve years and has been singing in choirs for many years. There is no video data for this course, as filming was not part of the training process.

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1 Level 2 was for learners with prior conducting experience or learners who had completed Level 1; Level 3 was for learners with wider conducting experience or for those who had attended level 2. Level 4 (Advanced level) was for learners who wanted to be accredited by the Associated Board of RSM (DipABRSM in Music Direction).
2 The online reference has been omitted as part of the process of data anonymisation.

5.2.1 The tutor

The tutor (T1) developed an interest in choral conducting through his singing experiences at university, where he studied a non-music subject. After he worked as a choral leader in cathedral choirs, he undertook the same course in choral conducting training that he is now teaching. The tutor explained that he had received little formal music education, but that his choral conducting expertise was developed through actual conducting practice.

> **T1:** ...I started training here with [Independent body] when I was still at university, my last year. So I did my training there...But actually I have very little formal musical education. So I finished at O-level[3], really; O level music is as far as I went. I did a music diploma, sort of afterwards when I started work in church music, so actually, in terms of formal musical education, not a lot, but actually everything I learnt at O-level applies to what I do here. Frankly all the harmonic bits and pieces I use, so I remember most of it... and I use them all the time. So not a music degree or anything like that. So the training was really very much always on the job...

In parallel with developing the craft skills of conducting, he attended various CPD courses, some of which he described as 'soul-destroying'.

> **T1:** [I]...continued developing by going on the odd course here or there, and just building slowly fresh experience, different peoples' insights. Some courses I have been on have been completely useless, you know, they were actually very soul-destroying; very soul-destroying. One or two have been really very useful. They have really made me think and develop my own skills...

The tutor became head of conducting training of CS1 a couple of years before the research and within his responsibilities was the delivery of the organisation's syllabus and the training of the tutor team, according to the syllabus. He described his position as head of conducting training as 'quite dictatorial' because he felt that he had to secure that the provision of training was of a good quality and followed the 'strict code' of the organisation.

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2 The syllabus of Music at GCE Ordinary Level (O-level) is currently organised into Music Studies and Music Making. Music Studies cover a range of musical styles and traditions, as well as aural exploration through listening and analysis. *Music Making* refers to the necessary musical skills while allowing candidates the choice of a major in either *Performing* (technical competence on one instrument or voice and interpretative understanding of the music performed) or *Music Writing* (use of functional harmony and counterpoint in two-part writing and competence in and understanding of the processes of composing), according to their interests and abilities. More information on the 2008 O-Level in Music can be found in http://www.seab.gov.sg/SEAB/oLevel/syllabus/2008_GCE_O_Level_Syllabuses/6053_2008.pdf (Information retrieved in December 2008). The participant's experience of O-level several decades ago would have been somewhat different and likely focused on answering questions on music history and simple four-part harmony.

5.2.2 The learners

Eight learners undertook the course, most of whom had no prior experiences in choral conducting. Four learners worked within school environments and had enrolled on the course in order to learn how to lead children's choirs for their school events; one learner worked in management, but had been singing for many years with a professional choir; another learner played the organ in a church and was given the choir to conduct on special occasions, such as during Easter; one learner received singing tuition and wanted to get experience in leading voices and another learner worked in marketing, but also led an amateur singing group.

On the first session, T1 asked the learners to tell him what they considered to be the basic skills of a choral conductor. Their responses included the following:

- Start the choir together and stop it;
- Use hands to show dynamics;
- Teach the music effectively ('find the right teaching techniques');
- Take some responsibility for choral health;
- Find repertoire described as 'motivating', 'entertaining', 'challenging', 'achievable' and 'realistic';
- Good leadership skills ('to inspire the best out of the singers');
- Good communication skills ('engaging', 'authority', 'fun');
- Hands ('economical and clear gesture').

In order for the learners to get to know each other, they were divided in two groups with the aim of discussing their expectations from the course. Their responses in discussion addressed issues related to

- gestural technique ('improving a present flag – less semaphore method');
- repertoire ('how to find and deliver it'; 'learn how to teach non-sight reading singers to follow a piece of music', 'Can we teach the part without good keyboard skills?');
- leadership skills ('Clear & concise leadership', 'Management skills of a choir leader – skills of leadership');
- confidence development ('confidence out there'); and
- making singing an enjoyable experience for all concerned ('keeping everyone interested', 'how to get the best from a choir but make it enjoyable', 'motivating & challenging & broadening expectations').

The learner who volunteered to be interviewed worked as a marketing consultant in London and explained that her interest in choral conducting emerged after many years of participation in choirs during her high school and undergraduate studies. A year before the study she set up a singing group with whom she wanted to perform gospel music and arrangements of pop and jazz songs. On her choice of repertoire, she pointed out that she wanted to perform 'approachable music' in order to get people interested and 'speak their language'. Her main expectation from the course was to receive training in choral leadership that she interpreted as the ability to gain control over the different singing parts. The learner clarified, though, that she did not want her ensemble to sound like a choir.

> **L1**: Of course when you have more parts of the song I'd like to be able to have understanding how it works, need to have control over the different voice because we have five parts all the time, so I just like to be able to handle that. And I think it's just hard, but it's beautiful. I really want to be sure that I know what to do, how to control everyone and rhythmically as well!
>
> …I conduct from the side [her standing position]. A bit different, because this is not a proper choir. It's not a choir; I don't want this [my group] to be a choir. I don't want this to sound as a choir. I want this to be a singing group. It's a bit different feeling and I believe it will be interesting and I believe people will be interested in it…

Her approach to the selection of music repertoire (such as *Sweet, Sweet Spirit* - 19th Century gospel song popularised by Elvis Presley; *Isn't She Lovely* – pop song by Stevie Wonder (1976) and *Words* – choral jazz song by Anders Edenroth (2005)) parallels research findings mentioned in Chapter Two, showing that the conductors nominated by their colleagues as outstanding tended to select more classical, folk and non-Western repertoire for their choirs, whereas the non-nominated directors, or directors with less years of experience, tended to choose more popular/rock music. This finding will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Another learner of CS1, who worked in management but who had been singing with a professional choir for years, offered a comment in passing and highlighted that he undertook the course because he believed that there were transferable skills from choral conducting to management. He explained that the two environments share common skills, such as how to engage attention and make people cooperate for the achievement of a common goal. He wanted to explore these skills during training in choral conducting.

5.2.3 The process of preparation

The course consisted of five one-day workshops. Each workshop took place once a month. During the workshops, each learner conducted the rest of the group, who acted as choir, for around 20 minutes during each five-hour session. As in CS2, CS3a and CS3b (see Chapter Six) the learners were expected to practise with their own choirs in-between the periods of the workshop sessions.

The philosophy of the course, as articulated by the tutor, was based on helping each learner acquire key skills, referred to as 'building blocks', which could be used in conducting both vocal and instrumental groups, allowing them to become efficient music leaders.

> **T1:** I think that many of the key skills [between choral and orchestral conducting] are
> exactly the same. You know, being able to keep a steady beat, being understood,
> being clear, starting clearly, stopping clearly, being expressive, having independence
> in hand gestures. All these things are very, very common. All the key building blocks,
> here actually if someone did really well on this course and we stood him up in front
> of an orchestra, they would be understood. They would be absolutely understood.

Observations of the process of choral conducting training in CS1 suggested that there was a strong 'master-apprentice' relationship nurtured during the workshop sessions. On the one hand, T1 modelled conducting posture, gestures and rehearsal strategies; interacted in learners' conducting to 'correct' mistakes in gesture, posture and delivery of the music and gave feedback at the end of each learner's performance. On the other hand, the learners conducted the group, received feedback from the tutor and had a second or third opportunity to alter their performance practice.

> **Observation from session 2**
>
> **T1:** The next thing we will do is how to give the chord, start the piece, getting into
> parts and stopping it.
>
> *The tutor demonstrated first how to do the above; then he asked the singers*
>
> **T1:** What happened?
>
> **Learners:** "You finished it with eye-brows and hands" / "You prepared us to stop".
>
> **T1:** How?
>
> **Learners:** With 2 hands.
>
> **T1:** How did I actually stop it?
>
> *He demonstrated again and participants copied him.*
>
> **T1:** When you have a consonant you might need a stronger cut-off.
>
> **Learners:** Can I ask about the 's' at the end?

The tutor demonstrated how to do it. Then the participants made example closures on the words 'cat', 'hiss', 'day'.

Although T1 employed modelling as his main teaching method towards assisting learners' learning, he also used scaffolding and fading[4], probably because of the very basic competence level of the learners and not because he consciously considered it an effective approach to learning. For example, he gave the starting pitch to the choir with a tuning fork when the learner could not and then let the learners conduct the music; in order to assist the learners' experiences in the 'feeling' of hand independence, he controlled a learner's left hand whilst they tried to keep a steady pulse with the right hand.

> **<u>Observation from session 2</u>**
>
> L2 – learner conducted.
>
> **T1:** Very good. Well-done. [He always offers encouraging feedback]
>
> *T1 conducted the piece to show what he wanted for entrances.*
>
> *Learner tried it again twice.*
>
> *T1 showed her how to conduct the last sung chord to conclude the piece.*
>
> **T1:** More time and click.
>
> *T1 used the imagery of touching a hot iron again. He took her hand and they did it together.*
>
> **T1:** Tell me how does it feel?
>
> **L2:** It needs more clarity. *She then tried again.*
>
> **T1:** Bravo. [To the singers]Why was it good?
>
> *Feedback from one of the participants.*

The learners, like apprentices, copied the expert, answered questions when they were asked, but, on the whole, were not encouraged to self-reflect on their performance. In addition, feedback to each other was not encouraged either as, according to the tutor, 'it delayed the whole process'. Self-reflection and feedback were commonly used in all the other training environments observed (see Chapters Six and Seven) and were considered by the learners in these subsequent cases as helpful methods towards effective training.

In spite of the fact that training occurred within a small group of participants and the atmosphere among the members was friendly, there was no overt sense of community

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[4] The term 'scaffolding', describes a method of instruction where the teacher supports the learners in carrying out a task. 'Fading' is the gradual removal of this support, which gives the learner more responsibility and autonomy (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989).

developed during the course to this observer, nor in the comments from participants. The 'master-apprentice' relationship that flourished during the training process was probably attributed to two factors. Firstly, learners' musical skills were very basic and their over-simplistic perception of the choral conductor's main role as a person to start and stop the choir or indicate dynamics, expressed in the first session, possibly made them accept the process of training as it was designed for them by the tutor without being able to identify critically their needs towards development.

Secondly, in my opinion, the tutor believed that, due to time limitation, he ought to have absolute control of the training process in order for a structured curriculum to be covered. In addition, T1 explained that there was often a big gap about perception and reality in choral conducting, and therefore, from his perspective, control of the training process ensured that learners would not fall into misguided perceptions of their own abilities.

> **T1:**…the challenge that we [tutors] often face is that people's perceptions of their own abilities is way ahead of actually the reality. Their ability to reflect on their own ability, on actually where they are, is not very objective at all. And that's one of the challenges that we really, really face. They don't realize how bad they are. Very often. They can be bad and they think they are absolutely fantastic and they are not. They are just not. So, there is a big gap about perception and reality about choral conductors in this country. Somehow they get away with it because their singers are good.

Although T1 spoke about choral conductors' misconceptions of their expertise, he did not appear to offer feedback that would help learners realistically comprehend their level in musical-technical skills. The practical sessions at the initial level demonstrated predominance of approval reinforcement, an abundance of 'Fab[ulous]', 'Brill[iant]', 'Bravos" and 'Excellents' were evidenced, even when the performance was far from satisfactory. T1 had been leading CS1 programme for several year, however, his expertise in choral conducting and choral conducting education was self-reportedly acquired through experiences on the job and not through formal education. He may have gained considerable craft knowledge in this context, but had limited experience of how pedagogy might be varied.

5.2.4 The learning outcomes

Concerning the learning outcomes, the learner who was interviewed said that she felt more organised after the course, and this had a positive effect on her choir.

> L1:…Before then [the course], I didn't have a clue how to start; how to get them [the singers] started, how to finish them, so it was all very messy. Now it's getting there. It's getting into the shape, so it's much better…Mainly, the way they start singing or the way they sing all…because I know they always watch me and before that I wasn't sure. "Ok, they are watching me, what am I supposed to do though?" And now I show them what to do and they are really comfortable with it so I can see they do what I want them to do so they…and they want me to show them what to do, so I think it's like a mutual…It's really good.

However, although there was evident benefit from the course to the learner in her particular context (as represented), there was, in the researcher's personal opinion, no major progress in learners' musical-technical or communication skills. This might be attributed to differences in our perspectives of what might count as effective conductor, with this learner evidently at the beginning of this awareness. Also it may be attributed to the lack of musical skills that most of these CS1 learners had in the first place, which made them insecure about leading the choirs and teaching the music. For example, some learners looked scared when they had to conduct and some could not keep a steady pulse while conducting, let alone use both their hands. One learner, in particular, could not use the tuning fork to get the starting note for simple songs and explained that at school she has always been using the piano. Furthermore, most learners had difficulty in beating three or four beats in a bar. Almost all found it difficult to perform an 'up-beat' gesture and almost none paid attention to what the choir sang while they conducted. The following examples came from two observations of the same learner in sessions 4 and 5 (final session) and intend to demonstrate the weaknesses in subject matter knowledge that the learner displayed.

> **Learner (L3) session 4**
>
> *L3 is a pianist, but she cannot find a D from an A tuning fork. She cannot even sing a fourth above A, although she recognized that it is a fourth above. In terms of conducting L3 cannot beat a basic 3-pattern gesture for more than 3-4 bars without getting confused. S3 doesn't breathe with the choir – there is no expression on her face (probably because of efforts to concentrate).*
>
> *T1 asked singers to give feedback to L3 after first performance but they couldn't tell what she did with her right hand. So T1 gave feedback and S3 conducted again. After L3 finished T1 asked her:*

T1: How was that?

L3: It **felt** better.

L3 conducted again.

T1: Fab! Try to smile and encourage your singers. Your legs are still, hands are better. Things to work on for next time: getting independence in using the tuning fork. It needs practice. It will not happen overnight. Some good progress at it.

<u>**Learner (L3) session 5 (final session)**</u>

During coffee break, L3 said that she tried to learn the top melody of her piece and she could not do it without using the piano. She asked T1 to teach it for her. T1 said that he would do that so as she has more time to focus on conducting.

...

T1 taught the song very fast. Wrong intervals from the choir which tutor did not correct. He also asked the voices to hum.

L3 conducted. The piece is in 4/4. T1 conducted it in 2 and told her to do that as well. She conducted in upbeat gestures (the strong beat is the weak in her conducting).

T1: Fabulous. You had good rapport with the singers. You have improved. Congratulations. The next step for you is to develop your confidence through singing.

On the whole, the programme appeared to be highly valued by the learners who attended it, although they did not express any opinion on their progress in front of the group during the workshops. In fact, many learners expressed their interest in pursuing further choral conducting training in the same organisation; hence, they applied for the organisation's choral conducting summer school programme.

5.2.5 The socio-cultural context

The issue of limited opportunities for choral conducting education in the UK was raised by both the tutor and the learner that were interviewed. The learner pointed out that she had been trying for over a year to find a course on choral conducting, for despite observing conductors, she 'wasn't getting it'. She also emphasised that choral conductors should be trained and attributed 'bad' conducting to a lack of education.

L1:...I have seen so many bad conductors. It's just outrageous. A conductor has to know how to use patterning; they need to know the music, they need to be able to read music, they need to use clear gestures because that's just a 'must'. Because as we have seen here today, singers will do just want you show them to do and if you do the wrong thing, they will do the wrong thing as well. So it's just a 'must' that they must get everything proper and correct.

Correspondingly, the tutor underlined that there is very little formal training available in UK higher education. He added that some conservatoires do offer post-graduate diplomas in choral conducting. However, he believed that such courses were not easily accessible by individuals who already conduct choirs.

> **T1:** Some of the conservatoires offer a postgraduate choral conducting diploma but actually that doesn't get to many people. Not many people will do that [conservatoire diploma]. And the conservatoires notoriously, much to my anger, very few of them if any, actually offer this sort of training to people out in the field, which is fine for us because, you know, allows us sort of refill free.

The tutor also referred to various attitudes that he had encountered during his conducting career in relation to the role of choral conductors, as well as the status of choral conducting in the UK. With regard to the former, he expressed his disappointment in the fact that choral conducting was considered, in his experience, as second grade to orchestral conducting and, by implication, choral conductors who conduct orchestras often need to prove that they can do both. He explained that this might be linked to the fact that, within the UK choral tradition, the practice of a choral conductor is not considered as important as the practice of an orchestral conductor. That is to say, individuals with many years of enculturation in cathedral choirs emerge as choral leaders without any further training.

> **T1:** I think people take for granted that tradition. It is a very valuable tradition; it's a great tradition but we do take it for granted. That actually it just happens, 'Hey! Isn't that wonderful?' So that is why we [CS1 organisation] provide many courses; we do.

As a result, he reported that an often overlooked aspect of the choral conductor's role was the significance of teaching. T1 underlined that teaching the choir is a vital element of choral conducting practice.

> **T1:** ...I think the role of teaching in a choral conductors' job description sometimes can be underrated. I think it's very important. It's very underrated....[T]he ability to teach your singers to sing accurately and well from a vocal technique point of view and from phrasing and all the nuance that you want to put into it, it's just absolutely critical. It's so important but underrated that you have to be able to teach and those people, those are the conductors that purely want to do this bit, but none of the teaching. Actually, they are running a 100 meter sprint with one leg tied behind their back.

Lastly, the tutor expressed the opinion that choral conductors not only need training in order to become effective, but also some degree of personal 'charisma'. As regards CS1, he emphasised that for him its success lay in the fact that it can provide training

in all the skills choral conductors need, as well as ways to help less charismatic individuals overcome weaknesses related to their personality such as confidence and rapport with the singers.

> **T1:** We can teach virtually all the skills a choral conductor needs. We can also teach some cheats to get round blocks where we can't teach. I can't teach a person to be charismatic; I can show them how to go round it if they are not. I can't teach somebody to have a natural general genuine rapport with singers or the people in general. I can give them some cheats when they have difficulty in that particular area. I can show them how to hide it, how to overcome it. But I can't teach them to be charismatic sort of personality and I am not in the business of tampering with people and their personality.

Effective choral conducting practice in relation to a potential inherited charisma and the role of choral conducting education will be discussed in detail, in Chapter Eight.

5.3   Summary

In conclusion, the first case study offered some insight into the training of individuals with very basic or no musical background knowledge in choral conducting in a formal, structured context as provided by one organisation. The analysis was structured according to five parameters for the examination of an effective process in choral conducting preparation: (i) the tutors, (ii) the learners; (iii) the process of preparation, (iv) the perceived learning outcomes and (v) the socio-cultural context in which choral practice occurred. This analysis suggested that the environment for this training promoted a relatively strict 'master-apprentice' model. The 'master', an individual with many years of practical experience in choral conducting, yet little formal training in music, let alone choral conducting, took control of the training process. The learners were expected to follow the instructions of the tutor to the letter, which was intended (presumably) to make them feel more secure and not to over-expose their lack of musical skills such as aural, singing or reading ability. The tutor followed a structured programme seeking incremental changes in learners' behaviours towards an 'ideal'.

It is difficult, however, to desegregate in the data the element of time and progress. Time is critical to how much progress one can make in choral conducting education which requires training in both technical (craft) skills, musical knowledge and interpersonal-leadership skills. Although, no particular development in choral

leadership was observed in the learners, which suggests that an underlying, basic competence in musical skills from both the learners and tutors should be in place prior to the provision of choral conducting education, this model of instruction might be useful. On the one hand, it appeared to promote musical skills to learners with very limited expertise in music. When the learners began their training journey, they did not know what to aim for by the end of this journey. Paradoxically, this appeared to be a positive factor as the learners did not get discouraged from realising how limited their skills and knowledge were before starting their training. This was expressed by L3 who reported that the course had some positive change in the way she organised her rehearsals. On the other hand, this model of training helped the learners have some experiences in choral conducting, which other choral conducting courses might have denied them because of their very basic musical background. Yet, choral conducting appears to need the application of already mastered musical skills and knowledge.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
II. INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

6.1   Introduction

The current chapter presents three case studies grouped together because they describe choral conducting training courses at an 'intermediate' level, as defined mainly by the musical competence –reading, aural and singing skills – of their participants. The analysis of this chapter is also structured according to the five parameters suggested by the framework of an effective choral conducting education that was proposed in Chapter Three. These are (i) the background and pedagogical approach of the tutors, (ii) the background, expectations, perceptions and conceptions of the learners, (iii) the process of preparation, (iv) the perceived learning outcomes and (v) the socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts, in which choral practice occurs.

Most of the learners of Case Study 2 (CS2) and Case Study 3a (CS3a) and all learners in Case Study 3b (CS3b) had some advanced qualification in music, which enabled the tutors to focus on the development of gestural competence and choral rehearsal strategies rather than teaching conducting patterns or music reading (as was the case in Case Study 1 (CS1) – see Chapter Five). CS2 and CS3a were initially observed as a preliminary, 'pilot' study, which served as an introduction of the observer into the field of choral conducting education in England. CS3a was revisited one year later (CS3b) because in the second year the practical workshops were supported by on-line interactive activities. Such an approach has not been used before as an integral element of choral conducting education in the UK.

6.2   Case study 2 (Intermediate/ Independent)

CS2 was a programme offered by one of the two independent bodies that cater for the provision of choral conducting education in England. The teaching context promoted cohort training (like in CS1). Each learner conducted 10-15 minutes at each session and the rest of the group acted as the choir. There were eight face to face sessions,

spread across a period of eight months [April (2 sessions), June, July, September, October, November 07 (2 sessions)], but the course design suggested that the learners were expected to rehearse constantly with their own choirs in-between the taught sessions. The gaps in-between the sessions would give the learners the opportunity and time to observe other models of choral expertise, explore gesture, articulate their experiences 'on-action'[1] and reflect on their practice during the workshops or/and in their own choral conducting environments. The philosophy of the course put emphasis on group interaction and collaboration where all participants – tutors, singers and accompanist – could give regular and constructive feedback to each other during each session. Two out of the three main tutors of the course (T2 and T3) modelled gestures and interacted with the learners. However, they stressed that each individual could try out, in private, different gestures and rehearsal approaches and adopt those that they believed that best suited their practice in their own choral environments. What is more, the learners were encouraged to ask their singers for feedback and comments on the effectiveness of their practice.

With regard to vocal education (Table 6.1), through demonstration by T3 who specialised in singing, great emphasis was put on vocal considerations, posture, breathing and support; singing vowels and consonants; suitability of range, phrasing and pronunciation. A wide variety of melodic and rhythmic warm-ups was presented and worked on within a group setting at the beginning of every session for almost an hour.

Table 6.1: Case study 2 – official course content specifications[2]

Course content
♫ **Develop an awareness of the relationship between physical gesture and choral tone.**
♫ **Preparing a score with real awareness of how to approach rehearsal and performance:** *Tempo, intonation, diction and language, pauses and tempo changes, phrase analysis and breathing, balance and blend, stylistic awareness, developing arranging skills, programme planning and notes*
♫ **Develop vocal awareness for you and your choir:** *Vocal health, voice types, vocal development, vocal technique, tone colour and timbre, posture, breathing, sight-singing, aural training, intonation, developing the singers' listening skills*
♫ **Using warm-up exercises to develop the sound and flexibility of your choir.**
♫ **Develop your singers' musicianship skills.**

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[1] Cain (2007) made a distinction between reflection 'in-action' and 'on-action'. The former described a 'thoughtful experimentation whilst performing actions' whereas the latter referred to a 'retrospective reflection through video recordings' (Cain, 2007, p. 283).

[2] The online reference has been omitted as part of the process of data anonymisation.

> ♫ **Developing your own gesture vocabulary:** *Developing effective conducting gesture for rehearsal and performance with specific reference to the above topics. Particular emphasis will be given to developing a range of gesture vocabulary that will improve vocal tone, develop musical skills, enhance musical interpretation towards a more expressive performance*
> ♫ **Increasing your effectiveness in rehearsal:** *Posture and stance, effective communication between conductor and choir in rehearsal, clarity and efficiency of gesture versus verbal instruction, efficient rehearsal pacing*
> ♫ **Developing programme-planning skills with some guidance on choosing repertoire**
> ♫ **Developing arranging skills**

Concerning choral conducting education, the principal goals of the course (as specified in the course material for learners) were to assist the learners develop their own gestural vocabulary that could be used with any type of choir and age group, as well as to help them increase their awareness of the relationship between physical gesture and choral tone. Apart from the technical side of developing an effective gestural vocabulary, i.e. clear hand gestures and a relaxed body movement and head posture, various strategies for rehearsing a choir were modelled by the tutors of the programme and practised by the learners during the practical sessions, having tried these out in their own time.

For their final assessment, the learners conducted the course choir and received feedback from the tutors. They were also expected to (i) submit an *a cappella* arrangement of a folk song for their choir (2-3 minutes duration); (ii) plan a concert programme of unaccompanied pieces or pieces accompanied by one or two instruments; and (iii) write notes to 'introduce the programme to a musically interested but not specifically knowledgeable audience'. However, these requirements were not addressed during the training process. T3 explained that the *a cappella* arrangement and the programme notes were for the accreditation of the course from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), as the course was accepted as a substitute for the Diploma in Music Direction (DipABRSM), which allows the learner who have successfully completed the course to proceed to the Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (LRSM)[3]. T3 added that the learners sent the

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[3] 'The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music or ABRSM is an educational body that provides examination in music. Often referred to simply as the 'Associated Board' or the 'Royal Schools of Music', the organisation is based in London but runs examination centres all over the world. In addition, the ABRSM is a publishing house for music that produces syllabuses, music pieces and exam papers that assist learners in preparing for their exams. The Royal Schools of the title are: (i) Royal Northern College of Music, (ii) Royal Academy of Music, (iii) Royal College of Music and (iv) Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama...Over 620.000 candidates take ABRSM examination

tutors drafts of their arrangements and programme notes throughout the period of the course; therefore, in a sense, these elements had been taught but not during the sessions.

As far as composing skills are concerned, there is no reference in the extant literature of arranging or composing skills as a necessarily prerequisite for choral conductors. Therefore, a possible explanation of the existence of such condition as part of the assessment criteria is that choral conductors who work with children or amateur church and community choirs might occasionally need to arrange music repertoire for their vocal groups. Therefore, arranging skills might be a useful skill to have.

6.2.1 The tutors

CS2 was led by three main tutors and two visiting tutors. However, this study focused on the two main tutors (T2 and T3), who shared the leadership of the practical workshops. The third main tutor was more in charge of the theoretical - discussion sessions. Also, T2 and T3 were the same individuals who led CS3a (see 6.3 below). The fact that three out of the nine existing courses on choral conducting are led by the same individuals intrigued the researcher and offered her the opportunity to observe their teaching practice in three diverse choral conducting contexts. T2 and T3 both have a degree in music and many years of experience in leading professional and amateur choral groups. T2 has a wide range of conducting and teaching experience; he conducts two university choirs and has a PhD in the area of choral conducting education. T3 has a degree in singing performance and music education and specialises in conducting young and developing voices. However, both tutors mentioned that, although they attended basic choral conducting courses at university, as well as extra choral courses along the way, they had developed their expertise on choral conducting 'on the job' and, for the most part, when they started teaching.

each year in over ninety countries. The offer graded exams as well as more advanced diploma qualifications'. Retrieved in January 2009 from
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Associated_Board_of_the_Royal_Schools_of_Music

6.2.2 The learners

To begin with, demographic information on the nineteen learners who enrolled on the programme showed that the group consisted of 12 males and 7 females; their ages ranged from early 20s to 60s (see Table 6.2) and the majority (n=17:19) had attended a conducting course in the past, either during their academic studies or in summer schools.

Table 6.2: Learners' age range

20s	6	32%
30s	4	21%
40s	4	21%
50s	4	21%
60s	1	5%
Total	19	100%

Moreover, eleven learners (n=11:19, 54%) worked with community choirs, eight learners (n=8:19, 42%) conducted church choirs, two learners conducted university/college choirs (2:19, 11%), two conducted secondary school choirs (2:19, 11%) and two learners made a general reference to a school environment without specifying the type of school (2:19, 11%). What is more, one learner conducted a youth choir (1:19, 5%), one a primary school choir (1:19, 5%), one a preparatory school choir (1:19, 5%) and one a junior choir (see Table 6.3).

The learners' interest in choral conducting arose largely through their choral singing experiences or due to their responsibilities as music coordinators in their schools or communities. Concerning the question enquiring into the most important attributes of an effective choral conductor, their responses showed that verbal and non-verbal communication with the singers was perceived to be the most salient feature (being mentioned by almost half of the participants, 9:19, 47%), followed by knowledge of the music. Qualities such as empathy, humanity and inclusiveness were also mentioned by a minority (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.3: Learners' conducting environments[4]

Choral society/ community	11	58%
Church	8	42%
University/college	2	11%
Secondary school	2	11%
School (general reference)	2	11%
Youth choir	1	5%
Primary school	1	5%
Prep. School	1	5%
Junior choir	1	5%

Table 6.4: Perceived most important attributes of an effective choral conductor

Communication (verbal and non-verbal)	9	47%
Knowledge of music/the score	6	32%
Empathy/Humanity/ Inclusiveness	4	21%
Confidence in gestures	3	16%
Enthusiasm	3	16%
Musicality	3	16%
Knowledge and understanding of the voice	3	16%
Feeling /passion for music	2	11%
Enable others	2	11%
Encourage others/supportive	2	11%
Connect with music/the choir	2	11%
Personality	2	11%
Leadership/administrative skills	2	11%
Humour	2	11%
Good teacher/transferring the knowledge to the choir	2	11%
Musical vision	1	5%
Interpersonal skills	1	5%
Positive	1	5%
Clarity	1	5%
Inspire others	1	5%
Courage	1	5%
Clarity of intention	1	5%
Good singer	1	5%

As regards the skills that they believed they could develop from the course, the majority (n=10:19, 52%) wished to develop an effective gestural vocabulary, described as 'a variety of gestures', 'independence of hand movements' and 'understanding of effective gestures'. Seven learners (n=7:19, 37%) also mentioned knowledge and understanding of vocal technique and five learners talked about confidence in abilities, self-awareness and confidence in performance (n=5:19, 26%). (see Table 6.5).

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[4] The percentages of Tables 6.4; 6.5; 6.8 and 6.9 in CS2 do not add up to 100% because the learners have given more than one answers.

Table 6.5: Learners' expectations from the course

Gestural vocabulary	10	52%
Knowledge/understanding of vocal technique	7	37%
Confidence in abilities /Self-awareness /Confidence in performance	5	26%
Communication skills	3	16%
Preparing the score / Rehearsal technique	3	16%
Choral conducting styles	2	11%
Efficient use of energy	1	5%
Regular tuition on choral conducting	1	5%
Better posture	1	5%
Knowledge of repertoire	1	5%
Expression	1	5%
Interpretive skills	1	5%
Improve choral sound	1	5%
Music connections	1	5%

A contradiction between learners' perception of the most important attributes of an effective conductor and their expectations from the training programme was highlighted by their responses. Although the learners considered communication skills, followed by musical knowledge and personality characteristics, such as empathy, humanity and inclusiveness, as the most important attributes of effective choral conducting practice, they expressed the expectation to develop through their training, a gestural vocabulary, knowledge and understanding of vocal technique and self-confidence in conducting rather than communication skills. Such a contradiction might be linked to a perception articulated by T1 in CS1 and T4 in CS4 (see Chapter Seven) on some element of 'charisma' in effective choral conducting practice. Communication skills, therefore, might be interpreted by some learners as an inherited charisma, which is difficult to nurture through training, as opposed to musical-technical competence. The issues of 'charisma' in choral conducting practice and the role of choral education will be discussed in Chapter Eight. Another plausible explanation could be that they considered communication skills in choral conducting as an ability that develops once technical competence is in place.

Although, the learners of the CS2 had different levels of familiarity with and experience in choral conducting, there was a relevant homogeneity observed among the group. The familiarity probably stemmed from the fact that most individuals had a degree or other advanced qualification in music, and that they had attended a conducting course before or because the majority conducted choral society or church

choirs and therefore shared some common concerns in relation to their practice (i.e. repertoire, rehearsal approach) in these contexts. Nevertheless, in terms of musical – technical skills, the majority appeared unaware of the possibility that any awkward body posture and head position tended to result in confusing gestures, which was likely to affect the way their singers performed (see 2.3.1, in Chapter Two). T2 and T3 both put particular emphasis on making the learners acknowledge that body movement and hand gestures may have a significant effect on the vocal production of the singers, and that unclear or confusing gestures were likely to inhibit communication between the conductors and the choir.

The learners were encouraged to keep personal journals that would help them monitor their own progress over time, as well as to report issues, which could be later raised during the practical workshops, that dealt with difficulties they tackled when working in their own professional environments. Unfortunately, few learners seemed to have kept such journals. This probably suggests that, either they did not have the time to do it, which was a missed opportunity to develop personal awareness of their skills and understanding in choral conducting, or that they did not realise that choral conducting requires a variety of skills, other than gestural competence, which was the main reported focus of most learners.

6.2.3 The process of preparation

The findings from the data analysis of CS2, gathered by four different questionnaires that were distributed to all the learners, documentary sources, observations and informal interviews with the tutors revolve around two particular variables; (i) the process of training as observed by the researcher and commented on by the learners themselves and (ii) the outcomes of the preparation process as reflected upon by the learners.

With regard to the process of preparation, the philosophy of the course encouraged interaction between learners and tutors, feedback from the singers, scaffolding, coaching and exploration of gesture and rehearsal approaches as core ingredients of the training process in choral conducting. The two major findings were the following:

(i) the interactive learning environment, which existed and promoted teaching methods, such as the ones mentioned earlier, did appear to nurture the development of craft skills in choral conducting; however, (ii) a 'master-apprentice' relationship between learners and tutor seemed to be favoured by the learners themselves.

6.2.3.1 Methods for teaching and learning in choral conducting

To start with, the cohort of nineteen learners was divided during the workshops into two groups of ten to twelve people (some volunteer singers from outside the course joined each group at the practical sessions). The groups practised in different rooms, but the members of the groups, as well as the tutors in charge of each group, changed at every session. The reason for the division into two groups was to give each learner more 'podium time' and the tutor in charge the opportunity to give more attention to the learners. From the learners' responses, the 'time to conduct was reported to be the most useful part of the course, which probably suggests that learning that is active is seen to be most powerful. Comments from participants on guided practice included:

- '[I benefitted from] standing up in front conducting and getting first hand critique.'

- 'Practical sessions [most useful] – but very nerve-racking.'

- 'I would like to be seen by all the tutors – T3 hasn't really seen me. I found T2's approach very positive and felt very relaxed – she got the best out of me. Previously I have felt rather deflated and negative.'

Guided practice in choral conducting education suggests that there are skills related to rehearsing and communicating with the choir that can only be developed whilst systematically working with choirs, because the nature of the activity is group based. During the process of training, the tutors interacted with the learners to model healthy conducting postures; they demonstrated gestures and offered more than one gestural option for the learners to experiment with. Moreover, they encouraged the learners to copy them, but also to explore more than one way of evoking the same musical response from the choir. Often, the tutors gave a few examples of closing a musical phrase, starting a piece or sustaining the pitch of the choir. They then let the learners experiment and choose the way that suited them, and then they gradually withdrew their support (scaffolding and fading) until the learners were dealing with rehearsal issues that came along on their own. At the end of each individual's conducting

session, the tutors offered detailed feedback, hints and reminders but also encouraged the singers to feedback to each conductor.

6.2.3.2 The teaching context

Two of the main philosophies of the course, repeatedly stated by the tutors, were that (i) choral conductors should be prepared to adapt their technique and rehearsal approach at any given moment and (ii) that feedback and validation of effective practice should come from the choir. Therefore, the tutors encouraged cooperation among the learners and they sought to promote a sense of creating a community of choral practice in which learners became active agents of the training process through offering feedback, comments and suggestions to their fellow learners. What is more, they organised group or pair activities, as well as discussion sessions. For instance, the tutors paired up the learners and asked one person to conduct the other in turns. Later, the conducted fed back to their conductors and their comments generated discussions on technique or leadership in conducting between the pair and also among the group.

However, some learners' responses to questionnaires indicated that group discussion, personal narratives and accounts of individuals' experiences in choral conducting were not considered particularly useful and were described as 'not well-focused' and 'lacked direction'.

- 'Rehearsal technique sessions. Lacked specific objectives. Too much time spent on seeing irrelevant anecdotes from some learners.'
- 'On the whole yes [satisfied with instruction] – sometimes a tendency to wander off the subject.'

Least useful part of the programme:
- 'Some of the extended periods of talking.'
- 'Discussions – sometimes lacked direction.'
- 'Discussion groups because everyone's circumstances are very different.'

That might suggest that the learners perceived an ideal learning situation in choral conducting as an environment where the learners conduct and the tutors correct without allowing any time for self-reflective discussion or critical commentary from the choir. Furthermore, there seemed to be no scheme of work in CS2, which would

clearly describe the sequence of activities in connection to the aims of the course and some learners did pick up on that as a weakness of the programme.

- 'A thorough programme of targets to be mastered over six months would be great. At the moment, everyone has their own personal issues; it makes it hard to stay focused. If everyone thought of the same issue at the same time, each at their own level, we could go into much more depth, and could achieve more over the six months period.'

- 'Though always interesting, the teaching seems general, often skimming over lots rather than settling on a specific topic and seeking mastery of it. A gradual programme of topics to address over six months would be helpful.'

- 'Some instructors speak too much, it doesn't add to the quality of information. I find instructors did not always work well together but, instead it sometimes felt as a 'competition' of who said the most interesting things and who had the last word. A lot of time was lost with personal 'show-off', in my opinion. Also, written targets could be distributed and followed for the day in a gradual and logical manner, from basics to more advanced considerations over the six months.'

As a result, some participants tended to arrive at the session with their own agendas. They brought pieces that they planned to do with their choirs or pieces that they would not be able to do with their choirs but very much wanted to have an opportunity to conduct and they focused on improving their gestures on these particular pieces. They seemed to neglect, therefore, to give attention to their general performance and communication with the choir in front of them. As a result, moments of distress and frustration from both the tutors and their fellow learners were frequently observed, as the singers were often unfamiliar with the pieces that they were expected to sight-read or these pieces of music were beyond their singing abilities. What is more, the priority given to individuals' agendas also distracted some learners from learning though observation of the practice of their fellow learners, which was highlighted by the tutors as one of the main benefits of cohort training.

- 'As I am primary school teacher and choir leader, the SATB material whilst good to sing, is not what I will be using with my choir.'

- 'It would be nice to have the opportunity to work on the pieces we have to do with our choirs.'

On the whole, with regard to teaching context, the significance of learning 'in-action', through situated practice and coaching from the tutors, was acknowledged by the

learners. Despite the fact that discussion sessions created frustration for some learners, conducting the choir, receiving feedback, retrying gestures and rehearsal approaches were, by the end of the course, considered rather beneficial. Likewise, the use of video recordings was highlighted as a greatly valued tool towards observing and practising choral conducting.

6.2.4 The learning outcomes

Learners' responses to the questionnaires suggested that exploration of gestures, adaptation of posture, use of new warm-ups and focus on conducting, as opposed to conducting and singing with choir or playing the piano, were among the first elements that they put into practice with their own choirs. Hence, they reported that they put emphasis on better preparation prior to rehearsals, which made them feel more confident and relaxed choral leaders.

- 'I am more prepared so my choirs have learned faster.'

- 'I conducted a concert last week and my shoulders weren't aching afterwards.'

- 'I am more attached to the earth.'

The second section of the last questionnaire dealt with the learners' self-efficacy[5] perceptions. Eleven learners responded to the questionnaires and the findings from the analysis of their responses suggested that the majority (n=6:11, 55%) thought that they acquired a very good understanding of the relationship between gesture and sound. However, seven learners (n=7:11, 64%) rated their understanding of the use of the voice for the conductor and the choir and six learners (n=6:11, 55%) rated score preparation for rehearsal and performance as satisfactory, suggesting that there was a bias towards particular satisfaction with these aspects of their self-development (see Table 6.6).

Confidence and practical skills' development were central targets of the course (see Table 6.7). The learners reported that they had gained a lot of confidence in their practical skills (n=6:11, 55%) with emphasis on gestural efficiency (n=6:11, 55%) and

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[5] Self-efficacy is an impression that one is capable of performing in a certain manner or attaining certain goals. 'Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established.' (Bandura, A. (1997) *Self-efficacy*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 80). Contrary to self-efficacy, which relates to a person's perception of their ability to reach a goal, self-esteem relates to a person's sense of self-worth.

the use of warm-ups for the development of sound and flexibility in the choir (n=7:11, 64%). Nevertheless, they appeared satisfactorily confident in choral rehearsing style (n=6:11, 55%) and ways to increase effectiveness during choral conducting (n=8:11, 73%).

Table 6.6: Self-perceived development of understanding

Understanding of:	A lot	Satisfactory	Little
The relationship between physical gesture and vocal tone	6	5	0
The use of the voice for the conductor and the choir	4	7	0
Preparing a score with real awareness of how to approach rehearsal and performance	4	6	1

Table 6.7: Self-perceived development of confidence

Confidence in:	A lot	Satisfactory	Little
Choral rehearsing styles with any type of choir and choral group	4	6	1
Practical skills that can be used with any type of choir and choral group	6	5	0
Use of warm-ups to develop the sound and flexibility of the choir	7	3	1
Gesturing efficiently	6	3	2
Ways to increase effectiveness during choral rehearsals	3	8	0

This finding might suggest that effective choral conducting practice entails craft skills that are enhanced through regular and deliberate practice with a choir and more often than what this programme could offer. Learners' responses revealed that merely having 'content' knowledge, such as the relationship between physical gesture and vocal tone or the use of the voice, was clearly not sufficient to enable them facilitate effective choral leadership.

Finally, seven learners considered the practical training that they had received during the sessions as the most useful part of the course (n=7:11, 64%). A minority particularly valued vocal activities (n=4:11, 36%), such as the warm-ups, vocal exercises and instruction on vocal technique, opportunities for observation of other conductors (n=2:11, 18%) and feedback from the tutors (n=2:11, 18%) (see Table 6.8). This finding suggests that the programme appeared to fulfil learners' expectations, as reported in 6.2.2. What is more, it underlines that working with a choir during in the training process offers not only opportunities for practice but also

for observation of diverse conducting models in action, which were considered significant by the participants.

Table 6.8: Most useful part of the course

Time to conduct and rehearse	7	64%
Warm-ups	4	36%
Having people to observe	2	18%
Comments from tutors	2	18%
Focus on particular skills	1	9%
Standing up in front conducting	1	9%
Discussions	1	9%
Developing repertoire	1	9%

On the contrary, when reporting the least useful part of the course, three learners (n=3:11, 27%) mentioned the discussion sessions and two learners some vocal sessions (n=2:11, 18%) (See Table 6.9). This links to some learners' perception of an effective teaching and learning environment in choral conducting, as one that promotes a 'master-apprentice' relationship between learners and tutors (See 6.2.3.2).

Table 6.9: Least useful part of the course

Discussions (not well-focused, lacked direction)	3	27%
All day has been useful	2	18%
Some vocal sessions\warm-ups	2	18%
Practicing beating patterns	1	9%
Rehearsal technique sessions (lacked specific objectives)	1	9%
Extended period of talking	1	9%
No reply	1	9%

Comments from participants included:

- 'The course helped me achieve my goal; confidence, in front of the choir.'
- 'I felt relaxed and comfortable. I managed to get them [the choir] to speed. I've learnt loads from the course and it's the first weekend that I don't feel scared stiff.'
- 'I heard very interesting ideas…I was anxious and the choir picked up that. I enjoy rehearsing because in rehearsals there are moments that of themselves are worth. [In the course]…you are talking about serious things; life really. It's not only about conducting here.'
- 'Most of it [conducting], for me, is confidence. I have explored a lot in this course.'
- 'One of the major triumphs was that you made me [stand] still…Looking yourself at the camera is so useful! Horrifying but so useful!'

- 'I feel hugely more confident than I felt at the beginning of the course... [The course] broadened my horizons. It is good that you put into practice what you have learnt when you have the breaks in-between.'

- 'Confidence and comradeship from meeting others and sharing experiences. Off the cuff remarks, helpful.'

- '[The course] broadened my horizons. It's good that you put into practice what you have learnt when you have the breaks in-between. [However] I didn't like the Britten [piece – Rejoice in the Lamb] and the whole fuss about beat patterns when it needs to be conducted simply in two beats. [Also] feedback from one particular participant was off-putting. And some of T3's warm-up sessions and the experimental music she suggested.'

The confidence that some participants reported during the final evaluation on the last day of the course did not seem compatible with their observed progress in musical-technical skills. In particular, some individuals appeared very confident about their performance, when their communication and leadership skills as conductors showed, at least to the observer, limited improvement. The opposite attitude was also observed. Some learners had demonstrated progress in technical-musical skills, but their confidence level, as evidenced by averting their eyes from the choir, by speaking hesitantly, by avoiding vocal modelling and by tensed gesturing, was not boosted. This finding might be linked to research studies on people's self-perceptions as fixed, trait-like entities (an entity theory) as opposed to more dynamic, malleable and developable attributes (an incremental theory) (Dweck, Chiu and Hong, 1995), which is discussed further in Chapter Eight. By extension, this finding might also be linked to learners' musical background and prior experiences in choral conducting. To illustrate, individuals who had been conducting church choirs for years considered CS2's contribution to their understanding of choral conducting practice and the role of the choral conductor significant.

- 'I came to the course having done conducting studies in South Africa. My conducting style has changed, as my singers tell me. [I am] shaping the sound and shaping the singers to get the music I want. I try to get into the shoes of the composer, and I mean that the course helped me to become an immersive conductor for myself, my singers and my listeners.'

- 'This has been singularly the most important initiative I have undertaken to further my skills and talents, due mostly to the excellent calibre of the tutors. Thank you.'

- 'Very enjoyable and instructive. Well worth the financial outlay. Certain aspects of the course have transformed my choir directing.'

Nevertheless, less experienced learner-conductors also offered positive comments on the contribution of the programme to their development as choral leaders.

- 'It was the first time I had regular tuition on conducting.'
- '[In the course I learnt]… plenty of gesturing and how people copy what you do with your body…and the different reasons why something can be wrong.'

In conclusion, learners' responses to CS2 indicated that regardless of their expertise in choral conducting, most participants seemed to have benefited from participating in the training programme.

6.2.5 Summary

CS2 was a programme on choral conducting education, at an intermediate level, offered by an independent organisation. It consisted of eight face to face practical workshops spread over the period of six months. The programme was led by three main tutors. All tutors had great experience in conducting vocal groups and two of them had received specialised training in choral conducting and singing education during their undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The learners conducted amateur choirs within educational, community and church contexts. On the whole:

1. There seemed to be a mismatch between learners' perceptions of the role of effective choral conductors and the skills that can be nurtured during choral conducting education.

2. The teaching context encouraged interaction between learners and tutors as core ingredients of the education process in choral conducting. It was also suggested that learning in-action and the use of video can enhance reflection on the learners' performance and can foster their development of craft skills and vocal awareness during choral conducting practice.

3. During the practical workshops, the learners tended to prefer a 'master-apprentice' relationship that focused on one-to-one interaction between learners and tutor, rather than reflective group discussions. However, by the end of the programme, the learners appeared to appreciate the contribution of collaborative learning and group feedback in choral conducting education.

4. Working with a choir during the training process was recognised by both the learners and the tutors as a necessary ingredient of effective choral conducting education. On the one hand, it offered opportunities for practice and development of the craft skills of rehearsing. On the other hand, it encouraged observation of other conducting models in practice.

5. Choral conducting entails craft skills, such as rehearsal strategies and exploration of gestures that can be nurtured and enhanced through regular practice with a choir during and in-between the practical sessions of a preparation programme. Absence of regular practice appeared to result in less confident responses from the learners on their perceived progress as an outcome of their education.

6. Although most learners (each individual at their own level) reported some improvement in their existing gestural vocabulary, rehearsal approaches or the rectification of bad habits such as uncomfortable body posture, some learners' self-perceived confidence development was not evidenced by the tutors and the observer on the last day of the course. It is believed that the lack of confidence was related more with the learners' general perception of themselves as less successful choral leaders, rather than the quality of the preparation itself.

6.3 Case Study 3a (Intermediate/ HE 1)

CS3a was a module on choral conducting taken, as an elective, by full- or part-time learners on an MA in Music Education programme and by serving teachers, who wanted to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in choral conducting, as a non-award bearing CPD course. The programme was offered in an higher education institution; it took place over the period of six months and comprised of four day-seminars and workshop sessions (January, March, May and June 2007). These supplemented, in principle, choral practice that was undertaken by the learners in-between the sessions. The main goals of the course, as described by the course outline, were for the participants to develop skills and attitudes for effective choral conducting and rehearsing. The education process included examination of various choral conducting techniques, gestures and language within 'an informed and critical context', as well as methods and ways of dealing in practice with singing

development, particular vocal and choral problems, achieving choral effectiveness in terms of blend, balance and intonation (Table 6.10). Moreover, the programme aimed to support the participants to reflect on the role of research in choral education through critically reviewing appropriate literature and research material and through studying models of choral practice.

The morning presentations, which were tutor-led, dealt with the concept of choral education, vocal issues and responsibilities of a choral conductor in terms of vocal development and the changing voice. The presentations encouraged discussions, where the learners had the opportunity to reflect on their practice during the practical workshops, as well as with their own choirs.

Table 6.10: Case study 3a – official course content specifications[6]

Course Content
Reflect on the role of research in choral education ♫   Critically review appropriate literature and research material ♫   Consider implications [of literature and material] for choral rehearsing, training and performing **Study models of effective practice** **Develop skills and attitudes for effective choral conducting and rehearsing** ♫   Examine various choral conducting techniques, gestures and language within an informed and critical context ♫   Consider ways and methods of dealing in practice with singing development, particular vocal and choral problems, achieving choral effectiveness in terms of blend, balance, intonation etc. **Identify areas for development in participants' professional practice and theoretical understanding** ♫   Explore the psychology of conducting and rehearsing ♫   Analyse the science and workings of the voice in order to be able to make effective technical judgments and comments in rehearsal **Evaluate models of effective practice** ♫   Critically analyse the communication and interpersonal skills of the conductor ♫   Assess the relationship between gestural and verbal language on the voice and its efficient and healthy practice **Analyse and evaluate learners' professional practice**

During the afternoon practical workshops each learner conducted for almost 10 minutes in front of the group, who acted as a choir. The music repertoire used during the first two sessions was selected by the tutor, whereas for the following two sessions, the participants brought with them music that they were rehearsing with their own choirs. A camera was located at the back of the room to record all participants conducting during the workshops. The film snap-shots were then uploaded to the

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[6] The online reference has been omitted as part of the process of data anonymisation.

course web-page, to which all participants had access for viewing and reflection. As an assessment for the course, the MA learners had to submit a 20-minute video recording of a choral rehearsal, a short reflective paper that outlined some of the technical, musical and/or communication problems and issues that they encountered during their rehearsals and a critical review of at least three different choral directors or choral situations in rehearsals over the period of the course. There was no requirement for assignments by the school teachers.

6.3.1 The learners

A great diversity, in terms of musical background and experiences in choral conducting, was observed among the learners (n=15; 4 males and 11 females) of the programme.

Table 6.11: Learners' age range

20s	4	27%
30s	5	33%
40s	4	27%
50s	2	13%
Total	15	100%

The age of the learners ranged from early 20s to late 50s (see Table 6.11). The majority (n=14:15, 93%) had a degree or other qualification in music and they had attended a conducting course before either during their undergraduate studies or CPD courses/ school workshop, summer schools, as a college course, in private tutorials and during PGCE training. With regard to their professional contexts, most of the participants seemed to operate within primary schools (n=9:15, 60%) and church settings (n=6:15, 40%), whilst a few worked in music centres (n=4:19, 21%) and secondary schools (n=3:15, 20%) (See Table 6.12).

Positive singing experiences during early years and the desire to enhance their conducting knowledge and skills, often because it was seen to be integral to their professional lives, were the main reported motivating factors that led the learners to enrol on the module.

- 'I have 3 choirs and I don't know how to conduct them.'
- 'One part of my job is to conduct a choir. I would like to learn more skills and improve my teaching.'

- '…promoting other's enjoyment of choral singing is very appealing.'
- 'Small changes in conductors' gestures can evoke large difference in singing by groups, but why does this happen? How?'

Table 6.12: Learners' conducting environments[7]

Primary school	9	60%
Church	6	40%
Music centre	4	21%
Secondary school	3	20%
Special needs school	1	7%
Institute	1	7%
Independent Body	1	7%

When asked about their perceptions of the attributes of an effective choral conductor, the responses varied. The majority (n=10:15, 67%) stressed the significance of verbal and non-verbal communication (clarity, effectiveness through personality and gestures and affirmation). A minority reported valued attributes to be aural skills, sense of rhythm and dynamics; clear and effective gesture – conducting style, personality, knowledge of vocal technique, performing style and singing skill (n=4:10, 27%), respectively. Knowledge and understanding of choral repertoire, strong leadership, ability to inspire and engage others in music making and empathy with others (n=3:15, 20%), respectively, were mentioned by an even smaller minority (See Table 6.13).

Table 6.13: Perceived most important attributes of an effective choral conductor

Communication	10	67%
Musical ability (aural skills, sense of rhythm, dynamics)	4	27%
Clear/ effective gesture/ conducting style	4	27%
Personality	4	27%
Knowledge (vocal technique/performing styles)\singing skill	4	27%
Knowledge and understanding of choral repertoire	3	20%
Strong leadership - know what you want and communicate it	3	20%
Inspire/ engage others in music making/enthusiastic	3	20%
Empathy with learners/friendly	3	20%
Teach people to sing/ learning experience	2	13%
Patience	2	13%
Kind of musical vision	2	13%
Musicianship	2	13%
Creating positive atmosphere in rehearsals	1	7%
Interest in singing	1	7%
Confidence	1	7%

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[7] The percentages of Tables 6.12 - 6.15 in CS3a do not add up to 100% because the learners have given more than one answers.

Table 6.14: Learners' expectations from the course

Conducting technique/ Technical skills	11	73%
Communication skills	3	20%
Leadership skills	3	20%
Know my weak points/reflect on my practice	2	13%
Confidence	2	13%
Rehearsal planning	2	13%
Assist the vocal development of children	1	7%
Repertoire	1	7%
Develop vision	1	7%
Musicianship	1	7%
Singing skills	1	7%
Underpin my work with some theory	1	7%

With regard to their expectations from the module, the learners primarily reported an expectation to develop gestural technique (n=11:15, 73%). Only a few mentioned communication and leadership skills (n=3:15, 20%), self-awareness and reflection on one's practice (n=2:15, 13%), confidence (n=2:15, 13%) and rehearsal planning (n=2:15, 13%) (see Table 6.14). This finding, which is similar to the one reported in CS2, shows that the learners of CS3a, who already have a degree in music and most of them have attended a similar conducting course before, consider communication skills, followed by musical-technical skills, to be the most significant attribute of an effective choral conductor. However, the fact that they reported an interest in developing musical-technical skills rather than communication skills during their own training, might suggest that either they believed, like the learners in CS2, that successful communications skills are related to some personal charisma or that these skills, and therefore effectiveness in choral conducting practice, can be the result of advanced musical-technical competence.

6.3.2 The process of preparation

With regard to the process of preparation, the findings highlighted that (i) the tutors encouraged learners' reflection on their own practice during the sessions (in-action) and in private (on-action) through video recordings that were taken from the practical workshops. The learners reported that the use of video was thought to be an effective tool towards increasing one's awareness of their own choral conducting performance; (ii) modelling, coaching, scaffolding/fading, articulation, exploration (see Chapter Three) were methods used throughout the training process by both tutors; (iii) the tutors offered regular feedback to the learners during the training sessions but also

encouraged group collaboration and feedback to the conductor from the choir. Feedback from the singers was reported not only to have enhanced learners' learning and performance practice, but also to have boosted their self-confidence in conducting in front of the group. For some learners, such a confidence boost had a positive impact on other aspects of their life outside the music area.

6.3.2.1 Reflection in-action and on-action

Like in CS2, the learners of CS3a were encouraged to reflect on their performance during the sessions (in-action) but also in their own choral environments. Video recordings were also used as a tool for on-action reflection and were unanimously considered by the learners particularly valuable but "least enjoyable" (the learners did not initially feel comfortable watching themselves). One of the tutors explained that video helped conductors improve their practice, regardless of their competence level.

> **T2**: Again, it's just about exploring stuff. And the problem with the conductor is that we don't really see ourselves. That is why it is quite useful to look at the videos and think: am I doing what I need to do? Am I efficient? Am I vocally friendly? Is what I am doing with my gestures helping and enabling the voice rather than limiting and inhibiting it? If you are copying the conductor, and I have seen examples of people copying their conductor, that can be inhibiting rather than enabling what we want to do. But we are all different shapes and sizes, so we all have different frames or ways to operate, so I am looking at the way gesture has and can impact on vocal health. And that impacts on people's attitudes towards what's music and towards singing.

A minority of learners (n=3:10, 30%) rated video recording as the second most useful element of the course, after practical workshops (see Table 6.15).

Table 6.15: Most useful part of the course

Practical exercises based on theory / actual conducting	8	80%
Use of video	3	30%
Sharing repertoire/ warm-ups	3	30%
Sharing insights from course leaders and colleagues	3	30%
Learning about the body posture and breathing	1	10%
Observing colleagues	1	10%

Comments from participants included:

- '...good learning [through] looking at the tapes and rehearing the feedback.'

- 'Video clips – it even works better than looking at the mirror on my own.'

- 'I enjoyed it. I like watching other people. People that I thought I really wanted to watch what they were doing...'

- 'Being videoed [was most useful]. Could reflect over practice and improve in private!'

- 'The camera offers the ability and time away from the course to confirm from people (tutors and other participants) on the things that you have noticed on your performance and the time to reflect. You also notice things that you cannot see when you conduct unless you conduct in front of a mirror, such as face, eye-contact. You also deconstruct through observing rehearsing and talking.'

However, some limitations of the video as a learning tool in choral conducting training were acknowledged. One learner explained that, elements such as 'manner whilst leading the choir' could not really be presented and corrected through watching 10 minutes of one's video snap-shot of a rehearsal, by which she referred to the interaction and unspoken communication between singers and conductors.

6.3.2.2 Effective teaching and learning methods

Modelling, coaching, scaffolding and fading and feedback were among the fundamental elements of the teaching process throughout the course. That is to say, T2 and T3 used scaffolding methods that allowed the learners to carry out tasks whilst receiving support from them. For example, the tutors demonstrated how learners could readjust their posture (head, shoulder or arms) and the effect that this readjustment had on the vocal outcome. As the learners progressed, the tutors reduced the amount of support (fading) they offered. Encouragement and advice continued to be offered (coaching). At this stage, the responsibility for learning shifted from the tutors to the learners, who had the opportunity to explore gestures and techniques and receive feedback from the group (singers, tutors and accompanist). The following excerpt (see Table 6.16) was one of many that demonstrated the interaction between tutors and learners during the training process. The labels in the right hand column derive from the theoretical construct of Cognitive Apprenticeship, described in Chapter Three and, in particular, the methods that this theoretical construct puts forward as effective methods of ideal learning environments.

Table 6.16: (Example from session 2) Learner (S4), T2 and T3

Learner conducts *(Learner's left hand signals to singers at the left side not to sing. After the first phrase he turns towards their side and invites them with his hand to join in)* **T3:** Great. Can you do me a favour? Because the pulse works just fine, is that when you cut us off at the phrase, use the other hand to do it. To keep the pulse going so that it's *(T3 demonstrates)* or it's there... *(T3 demonstrates)* **L4:** I couldn't figure out what was happening. **T2:** It's just getting in the way. **T3:** Otherwise it feels... *(unfinished)* and that's why you lost time. And you need to place yourself in a place where she [the pianist] is going to be able to see you as well as everybody here. **L4:** (to the pianist) Let's go back to where I can do that. **T3:** Cause I am one of these people where I had to be made a box for me to stand in when I first started. 'Don't go outside the lines'. *L4 conducts 1st verse.* **T3:** And stop there. Good. Same again. You fixed it on one place. Now I want you to find a place where your feet are solid on the ground and you are not going to *(demonstrating)*... **L4:**...move around a lot. **T3:** No moving. **L4:** Ok. **T3:**...for the moment. **L4:** (to the pianist) Same spot again. **T3:** Same place but be in that position now. ... **T3:** Brilliant. Now can I touch your arms? **L4:** Absolutely. *T3 moves to the centre, where L4 is standing and touches his arms.* **L4:** It is moving...? *(S4 moves his torso back and forth to demonstrate the movement)* **T3:** No, no...It's...For me, the neck is one of the most crucial bits because where your neck is positioned changes the quality of the sound that you make. (To L4) And particularly when they go 'Lord of all' and your head is slightly in this position *(showing bent neck –eyes looking down)* then you are going to get this kind of constricted thing *(singing to demonstrate)* whereas when this is *(having the hand on the chest)* as wide as it can possibly be and this is just functionally *(T3 touches L4's neck and tries to re-adjust the position of his neck)*. 'Move back to there...' *(L4's face has a surprised expression – singers are laughing)* **T2:** It's the re-adjustment. Isn't it? **T3:** Do you see the difference? **T2:** Yes. **T3:** *(Still behind L4's back)* I know you can feel the difference so we can do that again *(T3 re-adjusts his neck)* to here. *(T3 keeps holding his neck)* 'Now go from 'Lord of all'. Keep it in place. I'll just hold you here. **T2:** You might see it [referring to the video]. **L4:** Oh, yea. **T3:** You'll see it. *L4 conducts the phrase. After the first two bars T3 removes her hands from his neck.*	Feedback – Coaching – Modelling Articulation Coaching Exploration Feedback Coaching Modelling Coaching Exploration Scaffolding Coaching – Scaffolding Fading

During the overall training process, the tutors focused on various aspects of gestural and vocal techniques, as well as rehearsing pace. In connection to gestural technique,

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the tutors modelled good conducting posture and they demonstrated expressivity in gesture and ways of conveying the character of the music to the choir. Moreover, they emphasised the, so-called, 'body-mind connection' (T2 and T3 explained that conductor's gestures affect the sound of the choir). Finally, the tutors repeatedly stressed that there is no one way of using gesture to convey messages through music and, therefore, encouraged gestural exploration on the part of the learners.

On the topic of vocal technique, through modelling and coaching tutors focused on breathing and voice production and on how conductors can prepare themselves as singing leaders. In particular, they demonstrated and also suggested warm-ups for children and adult choirs and focused on using different vocal timbres during rehearsing. These were features of conducting practice that learners immediately applied in their own environments.

> **Q: So far, which of the things that you have done here [at the course] you could use with your choir?**
>
> **L5:** I've done, like, the warm-ups, relaxing the body, I've done the breathing techniques and so learning where we breathe from…we are not going to put our shoulders up…em…bringing them in, just actually conducting because we always have a CD, because nobody plays the piano. But even with the CD just conducting there shouldn't get them…you know, what the conductor is doing. And I've tried modelling things, you know, where I change and they have to copy what I am doing. And then I change and they have to change as quickly as they can do, you know…

6.3.2.3 Collaborative learning and feedback

The cohort of learners practised together. They cooperated during practical activities and they offered supportive and constructive feedback to each other. On the issue of feedback coming from the singers, the learners suggested that it was equally valid to tutors' feedback and that it helped them develop. However, the learners underlined that it was significant that the feedback was given in a positive and constructive way.

> **L6:** Everybody is afraid when the time comes to conduct in front of other people. You don't want to fail. You always have the doubt of the moment. So, when receiving comments you want them to be spoken out in a positive and constructive way…Feedback presented in a positive manner is always preferred to harsh criticism.

Offering feedback as a singer was a component of the course that, like the development of technical skills, was nurtured by the tutors from the very first session. The following examples are from feedback given by the singers to the learner-conductors. The intention of presenting these examples is to highlight that through feedback, the singers gradually became very active agents of the education process.

Session 2

T2: (to the singers) Ok. You tell me what was good about that. Did you enjoy that?

Singers: Yes. Good eye contact.

T2: Very good [eye contact] definitely. Tell me what we needed at the beginning.

Singers: A breath.

T2: Thank you. It was a mouth shut which **can** be a mixed message. "Oh, am I meant to sing here?"

Session 3: Feedback to L6

L7: I love her calmness.

L8: I quite like the fact that she is not stressing about mistakes. It's nice to feel that you can just sing the piece and get it wrong and then go back and try to get it right. We don't need to have a bash out by the piano or we don't need to say 'sing that line'. I would be inclined to say: 'Oh, can we do that line'....

L5: I liked your calmness in the face but didn't like when you clapped at one point. I felt like being treated as a naughty child *(comment made in a very polite and friendly way)*.

T2: I used to do that and I was told off by someone.

L6: Sorry about that.

L8: It's a non-verbal way of getting attention by saving your voice. It's like calling a pet.

Learners laugh.

T2: Yes, it's a good idea and a common thing" [to clap rhythmic patterns for kids to copy] – he demonstrated.

Session 4: Feedback to L6

T2: Feedback to yourself.

L6: I was very conscious of trying not to be copy-bound.

T2: Feedback from the singers?

L5: Expressive face.

L7: She was good at sustaining the notes in the phrases.

L9: She managed to convey the character of the music through her smile. She smiled. Singers had the expectation that it was going to be really good.

T2: She managed to convey the sense of trust to the singers.

L10: Your breathing is brilliant, fabulous. Two things I had noticed. One is that you developed a little kick, in your 2 beat which I noticed particularly at the start, which is a bit strange and off putting. And also it's a bit stiff.

Session 4: Feedback to L5

L5: It's nice. Thanks for singing that.

L7: So much more. That's amazing.

T2: I think she has moved 100 miles since we saw her the first time. That is just like a different conductor.

Learners applauded

L7: You were looking at us, smiling at us, engaging with us.

T2: And also beating 4 beats…You don't have to do any more than that. I want you to watch that. I want you to watch that [the video] and compare it with the first one. It's a great difference.

L7: And the smile showed that you were really enjoying it and when you were bringing us in. You were looking at us the whole time.

Session 4: Feedback to L7

L7: It was harder than I thought it would be. I think I know this very well so I don't need to look at the copies and I don't know why I was looking at it.

Observer: She wasn't mouthing the words.

L11: She does not move the body.

L7: I have stopped moving my head.

T2: You've come a long, long way since the last time.

L12: I liked it. I understood everything.

Joke- learners laugh.

L13: S7 has a sense of authority when she is conducting.

L4: Good sense of phrasing: crescendo and decrescendo.

T2: How did that compare to what you saw the last time?

L5: She was very relaxed but sometimes the face wasn't helping.

T2: We have to create the atmosphere of holiness with the face. Therefore, the intimacy is in the gestures; in your presentation of the music.

One of the findings that emerged from the data of CS3a was that the different competence levels of the learners enriched the dynamic of the group. That is to say, the less competent and less confident learners had the opportunity to observe in practice not only the tutor, but also their fellow and already competent learner-conductors. Furthermore, novice learner-conductors received constructive feedback that they valued, from both the tutor and the experienced learners. One learner, an

already experienced choral conductor, explained that observing novices was also beneficial for her because it made her think of ways to deal with particular issues as a potential tutor. She added that observation of other models in practice is an important method towards effective learning.

> **L9:** (novice conductor) [It is] great to reflect, watch others, learn and think about what I am doing.

> **L14:** (novice conductor) Listening and learning from others has been great benefit.
> **L6:** (experienced conductor) Some people like S5 [novice conductor] flourished. The beginners improved and developed through observing. People tend to forget how important it is to observe; to deconstruct. People like S5, for instance, were good at observing other people.

Group work at the level of feedback, as well as collaboration among the learners during the practical sessions, were highly valued by the learners and contributed to the creation of a strong bond among the member of this small 'community' of choral practice. On collaborative learning, two learners said that mirroring in pairs – when half the class was conducting whilst the other half was commenting on the performance of their pair – saved time during the teaching process and was effective, especially when working on the same piece of music. In addition, a learner stated that, within a mixed-ability group, improvement in the individuals could be observed at their level and the repertoire used was the differentiator. On the whole, learners seemed to suggest that such diverse dynamic within the group was not only interesting, but also made them think how to lead and communicate with the choir; how to 'command without commanding'.

The learners of CS3a confirmed that one-to-one instruction in the class, as well as group activities, were the most useful part of their training programme. During the sessions, the learners had the opportunities to conduct the choir but also discuss issues that derived from their conducting practice within an educational context that focused on individuals' needs. This probably suggests that although there are craft-like, relatively routine aspects to choral conducting and rehearsing that can be developed through constant practice with a choir, choral conducting training might be more effective when it is located within such an interactive context that offers guidance from tutor-experts and encourages collaboration between the learners and tutors.

6.3.3 The learning outcomes

For the purpose of gaining an insight into the perceived understanding and confidence in relation to choral conducting theory and practice that the learners developed during the course, two questionnaires were issued – one at the third and one at the fourth-final session – where the learners were asked to reply to self-efficacy statements that derived from the course outline. The responses to the final questionnaire reported some development in skills, understanding and awareness of the role of the choral conductor, as well as an increase in confidence as a result of learners' participation in CS3a.

On the topic of understanding, learners' replies (n=10 learners were present on the last day) seemed to indicate that the course helped them gain a thorough understanding of the close relationship between gesture and sound (n=7:10, 70%) and the significance of communication and interpersonal skills in choral conducting activities (n=5:10, 50%). However, gaining understanding of the science and workings of the voice seemed to be an area which needed more attention and extended practice (n=6:10, 60%) (see Table 6.17). This finding possible suggests that more time could be given to singing-related activities.

Table 6.17: Self-perceived development of understanding

Understanding of:	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
The relationship between gesture and sound	2	7	1	0
The science and workings of the voice	0	6	4	0
The communication and interpersonal skills of the conductor	2	5	3	0

On the subject of confidence development, the self-efficacy statements revealed that participants felt quite confident in gesturing effectively (n=6:10, 60%), but not so confident in choral rehearsing style (n=5:10, 50%), dealing in practice with singing development and vocal/ choral problems (n=4:10, 40%). Furthermore, four learners (n=4:10, 40%) seemed to have acquired enough confidence to explore various choral conducting techniques including entries, cut-offs and patterns (see Table 6.18). The findings seem to suggest that those technical skills related to the development of a gestural vocabulary in choral conducting were developed sooner than the confidence to engage in choral conducting activities. As a matter of fact, learners' general lack of confidence in leading and rehearsing the choir in CS3a was reported to be linked more

to their lack of understanding of vocal issues rather than their perceived incompetence in gesturing. In effect, it could be suggested that vocal education from a specialised choral conductor could benefit those individuals who are not music specialists but are interested in promoting choral activities at their schools.

Table 6.18: Self-perceived development of confidence

Confidence in:	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
Choral rehearsing style	3	5	2	0
Dealing in practice with singing development	2	6	2	0
Dealing with vocal and choral problems	1	4	4	0
Gesturing effectively in terms of blend, balance, intonation etc	1	6	2	1
Using various choral conducting techniques (including entries, cut-offs, patterns)	2	2	6	0

Learners' reflective comments at the end of the course suggested that, on the whole, each individual appeared to progress at their own level. On the one hand, the less experienced choral conductors pointed out that (i) they felt they improved their body posture through relaxing the body; (ii) they relied less on the score; and (iii) they became aware of ways to 'put the music in context to help the voice match that'. As a result of their adaptations and changes, the choir was reported to follow the conductor better; choristers seemed more relaxed and more responsible. On the other hand, the more experienced learners highlighted that through observations, they developed a more positive attitude towards 'correcting bad habits'. One learner said 'conductors tend to be led by intuition, but the course helped me understand and explain certain elements of the conducting phenomenon'. Many learners also mentioned that working within a group of such diverse experiences, level of skills in music and choral conducting and from diverse backgrounds was a learning opportunity beyond choral conducting. Comments from participants included:

- 'Initially I didn't like big range of abilities because you can't help but compare – however, was much more a learning opportunity.'
- '[I developed] more confidence in trying new skills.'
- '[I] developed more confidence so that I was able to lead a good staff INSET. [I] used techniques (e.g. warm ups) to relax reluctant staff…'
- 'The holistic view of the voice, emotion and communication has had an impact on my teaching beyond choral work.'

- '...just seeing people from different backgrounds and different countries...and everyone has got their own style and you can almost see...I hadn't expected to see my personality and their personality so strongly reflected in the conducting.'
- 'I really enjoyed singing...because I used to sing and I never sing now...I really enjoyed the fact that I was singing in a group, even I wouldn't have to practice...'

The tutors also acknowledged that being involved in choral conducting education was for them a constant journey towards development of expertise, as they had the opportunity to learn from their dynamic interaction with the learners during the process of their teaching.

> **T3**: ...And one of the things is that it [choral conducting] is a perpetual thing. I love teaching on the conducting course basically because it's the course I want to take. And means that I can keep taking it and taking it and taking it, because there is, you know, 20 new conductors every year that I get to learn something from. Because somebody will do something and [I will say] "Oh, that's good" and I will try it out on my own and then it doesn't work well. Works for him; it doesn't work for me. How can I ...? you know. Or the way somebody looks. The way they hold their body, the way they engage the people around them to make the music happen.
>
> **T2**: Absolutely. And I think I become a better conductor if I am in this sort of environment where people feed back just like this. So it's mutual.

Through their comments the tutors and learners of CS3a gave evidence of their continued desire to sustain and develop musical skills and expertise in choral conducting. On the whole, the data from CS3a identified certain teaching methods, such as scaffolding, exploration, feedback and observation (in the class and through videos) as particularly effective teaching methods for choral conducting education. What is more, the need for provision of vocal education, especially to individuals who operate within school environments, was highlighted by the data.

6.3.4 Summary

CS3a was a programme on choral conducting preparation offered by an higher education institution. The tutors of CS3a were the same individuals who led CS2 as its two main tutors. The learners comprised a mixed-ability group; some attended the programme as postgraduate learners in Music Education and some were teachers, the majority in primary schools, who undertook this training as a CPD course. Taken together, the findings from CS3a suggest:

1. Similar to the learners in CS2, the majority of CS3a learners considered communication skills as the most important attribute of a choral conductor, but they reported that their basic aim from their preparation was the development of a gestural vocabulary, which would allow them to lead their existing choirs confidently.

2. Reflection on one's practice in the class and through recorded videos from the sessions was considered a useful method towards the development of skills, understanding and awareness of choral conducting practice. Reflection in combination with other methods such as regular feedback from the tutor and group collaboration (through feedback and group practice) also appeared to nurture the creation of a community of practice that enhanced learners' learning and performance practice, as well as their self-confidence in conducting in front of the group.

3. Choral conducting education within a mixed ability group was reported to be a very positive parameter of the education programme because it encouraged the learners to observe each other. It also promoted the development of a community of choral practice where the learners supported each other.

4. The technical skills related to the development of a gestural vocabulary appeared to develop sooner than the confidence to engage in choral conducting activities. Learners gave more positive responses to questions related to their self-perceived development of understanding and skills in choral conducting than to their self-perceived confidence to apply these skills. Nonetheless, confidence development in leading choral groups was a significant learning outcome of this education programme, which, for some learners, had a positive impact on other aspects of their life outside the music area.

5. The desire for singing-related activities expressed by the learners who worked within primary education suggests that further vocal education from a specialised conductor could benefit those individuals who are not music specialists but are interested in promoting choral activities in their schools.

6. Tutors and learners gave evidence of their continuous desire to sustain and develop musical skills and expertise in choral conducting.

6.4   Case Study 3b (Intermediate/ HE 2)

Case Study 3b (CS3b) was the same programme on choral conducting training that was observed as CS3a, but one year later (February to June 2008). The year the CS3b was observed it was led solely by T2. This programme was re-visited because during the second year that it run, on-line activities supplementary to face to face practical workshops were incorporated into the education of choral conductors. Such innovative approach has never been used as part of a choral conducting programme in the UK.

The learners attended four one-day practical conducting seminars (February, March, April and June 2008). They were also required to study on-line, in the intervening periods of the course, in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). On-line activities offered the learners opportunities for reflection on their practice during the face-to-face practical workshops, as well as opportunity to upload video extracts from their own professional contexts for discussion and feedback from the tutor and fellow learners. In addition, through the on-line environment, learners retrieved other appropriate study materials and were required to peer assess and form small support groups in discussion forums (See Table 6.19).

The data from CS3b were collected through examination of the course documents from the handbook and website of the institution, handouts that were distributed during the sessions, four questionnaires distributed to each learner at the end of each face-to-face session, learners' self-reflective and self-evaluative reports posted on-line, video snapshots of their performance and critical commentaries among the learners based on their video performance. Lastly, self-evaluative reports for the final assessment of the learners were not posted on-line, but, instead, submitted to the tutor as hard-copies. These reports have also been studied thoroughly.

The learners were encouraged to reflect on their own progress through video-recordings taken of their conducting sessions that were uploaded onto Blackboard (Bb), an e-learning environment. Whilst music instruction is often thought of as being reliant on face to face contact, the current programme was sponsored and supported by a university project on Pedagogic Research to Embedded E-Learning that was being undertaken to explore the development and efficacy of a VLE, in addition to

face to face sessions, as a tool to enhance learning. In particular, the intention was to use the VLE in 2008 and beyond to enable learners to reflect on their own practice more objectively and be able, through their uploaded video material, to reflect, comment on and analyse the practice of themselves and other learners in the group.

Table 6.19: CS3b Programme Design[8]

Weeks	Activities
1-3	**Online Activity 1:** Reading homework / Sharing: introduce yourself - experience & expectations from the course/Music homework
4	**1 FEBRUARY: SESSION 1**
5-9	**Online Activity 2:** Setting a target/ Review and Reflection/ Reading homework / Music homework
10	**10 MARCH: SESSION 2**
11-15	**Online Activity 3**: Setting a target/ Review and Reflection/ Reading / Music homework/ Rehearsal recording
16	**26 APRIL: SESSION 3**
17-21	**Online Activity 4:** Setting a target/ Review and reflection/ Reading homework/ Music homework
22	**3 JUNE: SESSION 4**
September	Assessment: final submission date

6.4.1 The learners

A cohort of learners (n=19), who were a mix of those on a one-year postgraduate initial teacher education programme (PGCE) and full- or part-time learners on an MA in Music Education programme undertook CS3b programme. However some learners were auditing the course, which suggested that attendances, course work and assignments were not compulsory. All learners had a first degree in music, which made the group coherent, in contrast to the learners in CS1 and CS3a, and for the majority (n=10:19, 53%) an interest in choral conducting occurred when they realised its potential usefulness for their future careers as music teachers. Comments from participants included:

- 'Choral conducting is important to schools so I wanted to learn more about it.'
- 'Singing in choirs - composing (e.g. to be able to conduct own works) - keen to organize extra curricular activities in school and need skills!'
- 'I always enjoyed singing in choirs and would love to try and lead a choir myself. Also I think that it would be a useful skill for my future job as a music teacher.'
- 'It's one of the skills I've never had the chance to develop and I think it's crucial to be able to conduct effectively especially as a teacher.'

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[8] The online reference has been omitted as part of the process of data anonymisation.

- 'I want to have the confidence and knowledge to be able to take a school choir.'

- 'I have never conducted before and felt this would be an essential skill for my future career in teaching.'

- 'Requirement for teaching job.'

As regards the environments where they conducted, seven learners worked within secondary education (n=7:19, 37%), three conducted church choirs (n=3:19, 16%), three conducted school choirs but did not specify the type of school (n=3:19, 16%), two led community choirs (n=2:19, 11%), one conducted a primary school choir (n=1:19, 5%) and one led a brass band (n=1:19, 5%). However, almost a quarter of the learners - most of them overseas MA learners - did not conduct any choral group at the time of the programme (n=5:19, 26%) and one learner (n=1:19, 5%) did not reply to this question (see Table 6.20).

Table 6.20: Learners' conducting environments[9]

Secondary school	7	37%
No choir at the moment	5	26%
Church	3	16%
Schools	3	16%
Community	2	11%
Primary school	1	5%
Brass band	1	5%
N/A	1	5%

On the question enquiring into the most effective attributes of a choral conductor, the majority emphasised musical skills and knowledge (n=11:19, 58%), followed by communication (n=9:19, 47%) and confident attitude (n=8:19, 42%) (See Table 6.21).

Table 6.21: Perceived most important attributes of an effective choral conductor

Musical skills/musical knowledge	11	58%
Communication	9	47%
Confident attitude	8	42%
Clear gesture/ technique	5	26%
Supportive/ encouraging/ friendly/ rapport with singers	5	26%
Give clear instruction/direction	3	16%
Enjoyment/inspiring	3	16%
Relaxed/calm manners/ patience	3	16%
Body language (non-verbal communication)	3	16%
Understanding/knowledge of singing	2	11%
Humour	2	11%
Personality/openness	2	11%
Role model	1	5%
Love	1	5%
Interpersonal skills	1	5%

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[9] The percentages of Tables 6.20 - 6.22 and 6.25 in CS3b do not add up to 100% because the learners have given more than one answers.

Belief in choral conducting	1	5%
Enthusiasm	1	5%
Vision of music	1	5%
Aural skills	1	5%

With regard to their expectations from the course, the learners underlined the significance of conducting technique as gestural competence (n=10:19, 53%). A minority also expressed an interest in learning how to communicate (n=9:19, 47%) and rehearse effectively (n=6:19, 32%) and how to develop self-confidence through choral leadership (n=5:19, 26%) (see Table 6.22). In CS3b, there seemed to be a concord between learners' perception of the most important attribute of a choral conductor and their expectations from the training programme. Musical-technical skills over communication skills were reported to be considered the most important attribute of a choral conductor, a perception also shared by the learners and tutors of CS4 – a programme of choral conducting at an advanced level (see Chapter Seven). This finding might suggest that the more musically competent the participants of a choral conducting programme were, both tutors and learner, the more attention they placed on technical competence as a factor that determines expertise in choral conducting practice.

Table 6.22: Learners' expectations from the course

Basic gestures/ conducting technique	10	53%
How to communicate effectively	9	47%
How to rehearse effectively	6	32%
Leadership/ self-confidence	5	26%
Knowledge/ understanding of the voice/body	3	16%
To know myself/ role of the conductor	2	11%
How to improve singing	2	11%
Musical skills	1	5%
Make singers enjoy singing	1	5%
Experience in conducting	1	5%
Getting the sound I want	1	5%
Eliminate bad habits	1	5%
Be at ease when rehearsing and performing	1	5%
Insight from others	1	5%

Comments from participants included:

- '[I want] to know myself. What is the role of a conductor, how can I improve the singers to sing what I wanted them to sing.'
- 'Experience in 'choral conducting' in particular. Tips etc that could be used in the future in a wide variety of vocal situations.'

- 'Ability to communicate ideas through clear gestures, self-confidence - being of ease while working with a group and while conducting in a performance.'

The perceived progress of each individual, as reported by self-reflective texts, as well as commentaries from their fellow learners, was tracked down by the researcher. Such a methodological approach, also employed in CS2, CS3a and CS4, enabled the researcher to examine each individual's progress at their own level, as well as draw possible connections between learners' background, the process of preparation and the self-perceived outcomes of this preparation.

6.4.2 The process of preparation

The findings emerged from analysis of questionnaires and on-line self-reflections that learners made on their and other learners' video performances. The video snapshots were taken during the face-to-face sessions. The video camera was positioned directly behind the choir and focused on the conductor for minimal learner interaction. There were moments, however, when the camera's focus switched from the individual conductor to the whole group with the intention to capture the activities that took place in pairs or those which involved the whole cohort. The films were uploaded to the institution's internal on-line system (Bb) and could only be viewed by the participants of the course, the tutor and the researcher.

In practical music activity, especially rehearsing music, the conductor is dependent on the craft skill of responding in real time to the technical and expressive needs of the singers as they rehearse pieces of music. However, one significant feature of CS3b was the need to practise and reflect on practice through self-evaluative methods. The development of on-line supportive activity in-between the face to face teaching sessions was considered essential to the real nurturing of awareness of skills and knowledge in the area of choral leadership. As mentioned earlier, the learners were expected to use the VLE (Bb) in order to: (i) gain access to music, research and other resources; (ii) gather information on the running of the course; (iii) reflect and evaluate, from the uploaded video material from the teaching sessions, their own and others' conducting within small pre-selected groups; (iv) upload their own video snap-shots of their conducting in their own professional contexts for reflection and evaluation; (v) use the opportunity to 'chat' to the tutor and peers in the discussion forum in between the teaching sessions. The main findings from CS3b preparation

process underscored the significance of (i) reflection on practice in the sessions and on-line towards development of confidence in choral conducting practice (ii) observation of conducting models in practice, (iii) regular feedback from the singers and the tutor to the conductor during the training process and (iv) practice with a choir within an interactive environment.

6.4.2.1 Reflection on-action and confidence development

Between the face to face sessions of CS3b, self-reflective reports were encouraged as a method for sharing and discussing issues encountered during each learners' rehearsals – problems and successes in the class or in their professional environments. The learners who were on their teaching practice in schools, seemed to benefit from sharing experiences through discussion forums and self-reflective reports after the sessions. What is more, the learners who did not have a choir, reflected on their practice during the practical session through the uploaded videos that recorded the tutor's (expert) interaction with them. On the whole, the benefit from watching the videos was highlighted by all learners, as video reportedly made them notice what they did in terms of gesture and helped them identify their "strong points and their weaknesses". Similar findings on the positive contribution of video recordings on choral conducting education were presented in CS2 and CS3a.

Reflection posted on-line after session 1

- **L24**: When watching the video of myself conducting the choir, I was intrigued at what I saw. After the first face to face session, my group sat down to discuss targets that we thought would help to aid our learning in conducting. My own personal targets changed from that day because I felt the targets that I made up with the group would not have benefitted me in the long term. Instead I changed my targets into ones that I could perfect over the following years instead of the following weeks....

- **L18**: Having watched the video I was very surprised at myself in regards to how much I depend upon the use of my voice when I conduct, and although I feel that it is extremely important to express oneself emotionally I was, quite frankly, a little shocked at how much I rely upon my face in order to put across musical expression...

- **L16**: ...the video clip of myself conducting highlighted other areas I need to work on. One of the things that struck me straightaway was how 'same-y' I looked

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throughout the performance. At the time, I thought I was making some gestures to bring people in, or indicate changes in tempi/dynamics and breathing at some points but I could see none of those on the video. I tried to express the music I was hearing in my head through my gestures but I now realise my body was not communicating my ideas to the choir effectively....

Reflection posted on-line after session 3

- **L25:** Having reviewed the video of my conducting during the last choral conducting day there are certain aspects of my conducting that could be developed. As discussed in consultation with the other members of my group and as a result of feedback received at the practical session the issue of choosing a comfortable vocal range is vitally important both for the conductor as well as the choir. The key for the music that I had chosen was I felt inappropriate for me to effectively demonstrate the song. This led to a fairly lengthy discussion of voice ranges on the recording...

- **L23:** In terms of gesture, I look far more comfortable than I have in previous videos even managing to gesture a crescendo, decrescendo and an end to the piece. However, my conducting style is still very 'literal', and possesses few 'connotative' gestures. My facial expressions are non-specific and give little direction to the singers, which can be heard in the vocal outcomes of the rehearsal. During future sessions, I will concentrate on facial expression and develop the tone and pitch of my speaking voice, as I can see on reflection that I come across as perhaps 'too relaxed'...

- **L24:** I was still somewhat tense about conducting but instead of this showing in my face as it had done in the previous session it seemed to show more in the form of my rigid body. Without having the video as evidence, i am unsure as to whether I would have had an awareness of this...

The issue of perceived lack of self-confidence in choral conducting that learners experienced was often an underpinning theme of their self-reflective reports. In most cases, lack of self-confidence seemed to stem from the lack of technical skills. Some learners expressed the belief that mastering technical skills would potentially help them increase their confidence levels in choral conducting and leadership.

Reflection posted on-line after session 1

- **L23:** Confidence and a conductor's complete commitment to the moment is key when addressing point a) ["Be more confident in what I am doing"]. Having watched the video, I look like I'm half conducting and half keeping an irritating

fly away from my face. Shyness, and a lack of insight into the music are the main culprits here, and in light of the fact that one can't 'decide not to be shy', I would set myself the target of getting to know the music by ear before starting, in the hope that my overall gesture will gain in confidence, thus getting a more committed and confident performance from my singers…

…At this stage, conducting feels like walking blindfolded into a cupboard filled with percussion instruments. I keep bumping into things, and can only produce a series of bangs and crashes. Hopefully this course will show me where the shelves are, and how to control the sounds around me a little more.

- **L17:** I would like to develop my portrayal of energy and vibrancy to a choir as this had not yet been attempted by me to develop the confidence and security I need to produce that kind of music effectively. To be at a stage in conducting where I experience confidence through the enhancement of technical security but most of all the ability to immerse myself in the activity without self-consciousness would be an ongoing aim, not quickly remedied.

Other learners connected their perceived lack of confidence with lack in vocal skills. Such perception often derived from unfortunate singing experiences such as negative comments that they had received in the past.

L26: My target is to do with my own voice. As you know I am not that confident with it, I fall into the category of "was told she could not sing when she was younger".

Some others felt uncomfortable just by standing in the middle and having to use their voice and body to communicate the music. In other words, they demonstrated a general lack of confidence in interpersonal skills rather than the mere technicalities of conducting.

- **L26:** I did not feel comfortable standing in front of the class in this, the second session. Watching back the video, I could see instant signs of nervousness. My years of Alexander Technique disappeared as my body collapsed forward and my body became tense. Whilst I thought I knew this short song prior to the session, I began the demonstration too high and on the wrong degree of the scale thus creating the wrong melodic contour. Due to my lack of experience as a singer, I had previously been very unclear both about the vocal ranges of the developing voice and more importantly, the range of my own voice.

- **L27:** One personal challenge I found with working with this ensemble was how [non]-confident I personally felt in front of this particular group of people. Earlier

on in the year I felt my confidence slide standing in front of a group of very strong and capable musicians. Nerves have the ability to cancel out charisma. I felt like nerves dictated my facial expressions and that included the way I greeted the ensemble. Though I tried to smile and make welcoming eye contact, I feel that nerves more often than not got the better of me.

The lack of confidence that was experienced by the learners of CS3b in applying skills other than musical, such as leadership and non-verbal communication during the practical sessions seems to suggest that effective choral conducting education should address not only the acquisition and application of musical-technical skills but also interpersonal skills within the context of choral conducting. However, development of expertise in choral conducting would probably be a difficult task to achieve in the absence of advanced musical-technical or interpersonal skills.

6.4.2.2 Observation of other conductors

The learners reported that, through observation of their fellow conductors in the course, as well as of other conductors outside the course, they matured as choral leaders because they had the opportunity to compare the way other conductors gestured, communicated non-verbally or paced their rehearsals and to trial out what they had observed with their own choirs.

- 'From observation I have noticed use of gesture.'

- 'I learnt a lot from watching others.'

- 'It was a learning experience to observe other conductors.'

- 'I benefitted from observing other conductors.'

- 'I have taken more notice of other performances.'

- **L15:** Observing good habits [of other conductors] made me aware of skills I need to develop as a conductor and I feel I have learnt much from reflecting on and reviewing rehearsals. **(Reflection posted on-line)**

- **L16:** …It was also a useful learning experience to sing under other learner conductors' baton as it made me consciously think about what I would like from a conductor. The difficult part was transferring that information to my non-verbal communications. **(Reflection posted on-line)**

Moreover, learners who sang in choirs or performed in instrumental groups mentioned that they became more attentive of their conductors and were able to critically evaluate rehearsal strategies or the ways of communication that their conductors employed. The following example is from an observation that a learner made on her chamber choir choral conductor on a dress rehearsal. Reference is made to the mixed messages that the conductor gave which created confusion in the singers. As a result, the learner lost her trust to the choral leader during this particular rehearsal, as well as her self-confidence in her own performance.

> **L17**: During the performance the conductor in her eagerness to encourage a confident sound from the choir began bringing in entries using large gesture with both hands. This worked well for forte entries but for a piano entire mixed messages are received …so the grand gesture was hastily followed by the conductor bring a finger to her lips in a signal for quiet. As a choir member I found myself increasingly hesitant with each entry concerned I might stick out with too loud a dynamic at an inappropriate time as the gesture the conductor gave progressively lost its meaning. The chain of music making and appreciation was broken at this point…As the choir lost confidence with the conductor, their ability to communicate to the audience to the best of their ability was lost. As an inevitable consequence of this the audience's musical experience will be limited. **(Observation posted on-line)**

Another learner, a cellist, commented on the way his conductor gestured to the performers, both singers and instrumentalists, during a performance of Faure's Requiem. He put emphasis on the connection between gesture and sound and stressed that his conductor's body posture and gestures influenced the musical outcome.

> **L18**: I was able to observe the conducting of Faure's Requiem by AB…what I found particularly interesting was AB's body language when he conducts, I myself was sitting within the orchestra and found the way in which he directs from the front with an almost entirely straight arm to be most odd…This almost salute like stance is not a pose he took throughout the entire rehearsal or performance but was one that he applied when the entire choir were singing in unison particularly in the loud sections of the first movement, but perhaps most interestingly this very rigid arm movement was used again in the last movement, In Paradisum, when a far more fluid body gesture should in my opinion have been used. As a member of the orchestra I found it most difficult to follow this and as a member of the choir I can only imagine that those who are not used to AB would find this to be an almost direct opposite of what he wished to achieve. **(Observation posted on-line)**

Taken together, observation of conducting models in practice was considered by the learners a significant part of their education process. They recognised that observations of expert and less-expert conductors helped them become more reflective of their own practice and communication with their singers. The significance of observation as a method towards effective choral conducting education is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

6.4.2.3 Feedback

During the face to face workshops, the learners received direct and detailed feedback on their performance from both the tutor and the singers. T2 encouraged the singers to offer the conductor constructive feedback on why some gestures, non-verbal cues, rehearsal strategies or verbal instructions worked or not, before the tutor himself offered his feedback on each learner's conducting performance. T2 underlined from the first session that the ultimate role of the conductor is to enable expressive and comfortable singing. Therefore, validation of a conductor's practice was meaningful when it came from the choir itself, in the form of constructive criticism. Singers' comments during the sessions were articulated in a supportive way and became more focused as the course progressed. This probably suggests that offering constructive feedback within a teaching and learning environment is an ability that has to be nurtured and that it needs time to mature.

> **L19:** I was advised by the singers and the tutor that my gestures were over elaborated and fussy at certain times. Some of the singers describe my gestures as ambiguous and confusing. In order to improve this problem, I tried to reduce the unnecessary gestures and focus on the essential. **(Reflection posted on-line)**

Collective feedback, as a method used in choral conducting education, made singers more attentive to their conductor and encouraged the development of a friendly and supportive environment, where each individual did not feel threatened to experiment with gestures or rehearsal approaches in front of the group.

- **L16**: My targets that were set at the end of the session focused on the 'connotative' and 'literal' gestures, and having a third opinion by fellow learner-conductors helped me identify areas of development.

- **L20**: After reviewing the second session's recording I felt more confident with my conducting, thanks to all the love and support that the group (bigger) gave

me. I owe it to my group members too, X. and Z., who critically commented on my conducting through lunch-discussions and during the workshop sessions.

- **L21**: In my final attempt I tried to incorporate some of the suggestions given by my peers, and so I managed to prepare the choir by making eye-contact and by using the 'all-involving' gesture as well as kept the mouth open so as not to inhibit singing. **(Reflections posted on-line)**

T2 also encouraged the learners to actively engage their own choirs in the feedback process during rehearsals. The learners who trialled it seemed to have benefited from their singers' feedback, advice or suggestions.

L15: I have set up a chamber choir at PTE2 [school placement] so I will try and put these [targets from session] into practice - maybe I can even ask my 6th formers to point out the above [her targets] when I do them. **(Reflection posted on-line)**

Q: Have you noticed any impact on the responses of your choir?

- 'Positive feedback from church choir – awaiting feedback from festival performance on Thursday this week.'

- 'Peers have noticed a different in my conducting gesture range.'

Feedback from the singers was not only given during the sessions but also on-line. Through uploaded videos, learners could observe their fellow learners in action and evaluate their problems and successes, both in articulated form and internally. Groups of three or four learners were organised, where they could feel safe enough to be honest about their own and their group member's practice. Each learner then had a role to play in the professional development of their peers. The comments were offered in an informal way and were, as a rule, positive and supportive. As the course progressed and familiarity among the learners was developed, certain individuals asked for on-line comments and feedback on their targets and reflection not only from the small group in which they belonged, but also from the whole cohort of conductors.

L22 offered feedback to her on-line group-mates L23 and L15

L23 -.....I agree with your target of being more confident. You have the ability to maintain a good clear beat but rather than looking down I would love to see you engage more with your choir- especially as you have such a nice warm manner about you! You are beginning to introduce gestures with your other hand also- I think you are really going to do well at this!

L15 - ....This is tough because I thought it was really good! I kind of understand tutor's comment about possibly appearing lop sided as one arm is quite a distance from your body, but you have identified this as one of your targets. I disagree about the 'dancing and movement' target, I think you have just enough movement to create an atmosphere, you don't want to be too rigid! As discussed, you could add some gestures with the other hand now...but other than that, you look pretty natural! Hope this helps!

In return, L23 offered feedback to L15 and L22

L15 - You look very natural and relaxed in you clip, I think that's something you need to make sure you preserve whilst making all these tweaks and changes to your technique. Perhaps a more economical, precise gesture could be developed though - particularly when marking the beginnings of a beats.

L22 - Like in my video, your lack of confidence is what struck me when watching your video. You seemed to know the material quite well, so maybe try to get as much practice in as you can - even if its just you in front of the mirror. As a person you are very engaging, and the fact that you come over in your video as caring what people think is a really good thing, and again, something to preserve I think.

There were instances where less confident individuals were strict with themselves on their own performance, but their fellow learners' feedback was more positive and supportive. This possibly indicates that positive feedback given from the singers to less experienced or confident learner-conductors could help them become more positive about their own practice.

6.4.2.4 Practice with a choir and collaborative learning

CS3b – like CS2 and CS3a – considered practice with a choir during training in choral conducting a self-explanatory ingredient of a choral conducting course. T2 drew particular attention to the fact that expertise in choral conducting develops not only through study of choral repertoire and approaches to teaching singing, but also through advancing in craft skills related to choral rehearsing. Unfortunately, some learners did not have access to a choir outside the course and admitted that they had difficulty to put into practice what they had learnt during the face to face sessions.

- **L23**: Got to just conduct in the mirror at the moment - it's going to take a while to get an ensemble together at my new school - I'll do it though, even if I have to pay pupils to come. **(Reflection posted on-line)**

- **L22**: I am taking over Senior Choir at PTE2 [school placement] and also working closely alongside gospel choir, so I should have plenty of opportunities to develop and work on these areas of concern. **(Reflection posted on-line)**

During the sessions, T2 encouraged the learners to explore different gestures, use imagery and analogy as a rehearsal strategy, rehearse diverse repertoire in terms of mood and character and demonstrate vocally to the choir. Such elements were put into practice during pair or group work. Interactive activities were highly rated by the learners, who also suggested that they wanted more time given to practice within smaller groups (see Table 6.22). Comments from participants included:

- 'The part I found more useful was trying to conduct and doing it in pairs was probably less intimidating than having to conduct the whole group - so I would like to do it more often if possible.'

- 'I'd like to do more conducting as a class with tutor, little exercises etc...'

Some learners pointed out that podium time during the face to face sessions was one of the most valuable parts of the course; therefore they wanted more time to be given to each individual.

- 'Would like more in class time practicing different conducting techniques.'

- '...There was a lot of useful information of specifically choral conducting practice and more in-class time would have been valuable.'

- 'Smaller groups so you have more time conducting.'

- 'Time management of all 'round' conducting from learners seemed possibly too long to maintain focus throughout.'

- 'There seemed to be too many of us on the course, therefore limiting our experience to conduct. We often had 10-15 mins to conduct per session at the most.'

- 'Very informative, but quite drawn out - so everyone had to rehearse each session, it could be quite a long day and not always beneficial to all of us. Split rooms?'

Collaborative learning through interactive activities was also encouraged on-line. Learners commented on each others' targets or engaged in dialogues within smaller groups. Learners' comments strengthened CS3b's emphasis on practice with a choir and interactive activities during choral conducting training.

(Comments on others' targets)

L24: Hello L23, Having just watched the video of you conducting from a few weeks ago I would like to agree with all your points and targets that you have made. There is one other point that I would however like to make and that is to make sure that you do not have your hand on your hip when you are conducting! I have just watched mine and its hilarious! Hope that helps with your targets.

(Dialogue among group members)

L24: Hi L23, I think your target is a very practical one which you can easily explore in up and coming rehearsals. I found it easier to create characters for myself as the conductor so it should also be easier for your singers and yourself also.

L23: Thanks L24, that's very helpful. As for your targets, they seem very practical and let me know how they progress. As your round conducting was so effective last session - I think just the one target is all you really need to consider rather than balancing more. You were really excellent and controlled in the session - very easy to follow!

L18: Hey guys; think both your targets were well thought out and show good consideration of relevant material. I have decided to focus on clear direction and use of a more relaxed conducting style, have recently conducted a sixth form choir, the Mozart 'Ave Verum' went well, but the Rutter was a bit of a disaster, my conducting went from considered approach with clear signals to clicking my fingers when every single prompt that I'd tried seem to have no effect what so ever.

Learners appeared particularly eager to engage in discussions and offer feedback on-line. Their comments tended to address all the issues that were dealt with during the practical workshops.

6.4.3 The learning outcomes

By the end of the course, the learners were expected to demonstrate a critical awareness and understanding of their role as choral conductors in relation to the selection of music literature, verbal and non-verbal communication with the singers whilst rehearsing, and an understanding of the effect of their gestures on the choral sound. What is more, they were expected to show some level of competence in working with voices and ways of dealing with technical problems, mostly vocal.

Table 6.23: Self-perceived development of understanding

Understanding of:	A lot	Satisfactory	Little	N/A
The relationship between gesture and sound	11	4	0	1
The science and workings of the voice	4	9	2	1
The communication and interpersonal skills of the conductor	10	5	0	1

With regard to the development of understanding, responses to the last questionnaire (n=16) suggested that through the course the majority (n=11:16, 69%) had developed a good understanding of the relation between gesture and sound and the interpersonal and communication skills of the conductor (n=10:16, 63%) (see Table 6.23). However, their understanding of the science and workings of the voice was satisfactory (n=9:16, 56%), which probably suggests that more time needed to be given to singing-related activities. The learners explained that CS3b raised awareness of gesture, posture and rehearsing, timing and dynamics and the conductor's effect on the choir. Thus the learners said that they wanted more time given to gestural technique, as well as vocal consideration.

- 'I am now more aware of the range of gestures that can be used when conducting a choir.'
- 'My conducting style is still literal - no connotative gestures.'
- 'I need further development in gesture in connection with vocal outcomes.'
- 'I need to develop a range of gesture that relate to lyrics.'
- 'I have started to develop some form of expression in my vocal style and conducting technique.'
- 'Found it useful. Would have valued even more a development in specific conducting techniques - especially how to coordinate left and right hand. There was a lot of useful information of specifically choral conducting practice.'
- 'Trying to express the music that was in my head through my gestures was one thing and communicating physical cues and support in order to create that music was another matter.'
- **L22:** Through observing all three conductors, it has made me reassess my conducting strategies and using these three examples to guide my reflections, I now realise that keeping a steady beat is only the smallest part of what is actually required from a choral conductor. **(Reflection posted on-line)**
- **L22:** I have started to explore developing some form of expression both in my vocal style and conducting techniques. I have gained a number of new conducting skills from this course and I am aware that it is my responsibility as a music

teacher to ensure to seek optimal ways to allow children and adolescents to explore and extend their singing… **(Reflection posted on-line)**

On the topic of confidence development, the last questionnaire (n=16) showed that most learners had developed a satisfactory level of confidence in choral rehearsing style; dealing with vocal and choral problems; and choral conducting techniques (n=11:16, 69%), respectively. However, a minority reported satisfactory confidence to deal with singing development (n=9:16, 56%) and gesturing effectively in terms of choral sound criteria such as blend, balance and intonation (n=8:16, 50%) (see Table 6.24).

Table 6.24: Self-perceived development of confidence

Confidence in:	A lot	Satisfactory	Little	N/A
Choral rehearsing style	2	11	2	1
Dealing in practice with singing development	2	9	4	1
Dealing with vocal and choral problems	1	11	3	1
Gesturing effectively in terms of blend, balance, intonation etc	4	8	3	1
Using various choral conducting techniques (entries, cut-offs, patterns)	4	11	0	1

This seems to be linked to what has been reported earlier on the necessity for further instruction on technical and vocal-related issues. The learners' written comments were in line with the questionnaire responses.

- 'I have to build gestural technique and spontaneity in gestures will come as my confidence grows.'
- 'I feel positive at making changes to the choir's playing.'
- 'Grew in confidence in modelling singing and conducting. I have to develop my confidence for future.'
- 'I increased in confidence: I talk less during rehearsals and I have a positive body language.'
- 'I grew in confidence in demonstrating vocal characterisation.'
- 'Through the lack of confidence it is imperative that I must continue to rehearse with choirs in order to conduct with more conviction.'
- 'Conducting was an unknown skill for me and the course gave some insights and confidence to conducting a choir.'
- 'Well-delivered and interesting. Enabled me to confidently teach choral aspects in the classroom.'

The issue of confidence development was mentioned at length in learners' self-reflective reports. In particular, for some learners, CS3b was described as a unique

opportunity to enter the 'world of choral music' and develop skills and confidence in leading choral activities and using their own singing voice.

- **L26:** The final point about my progression along this course is to do with my confidence using my own voice. Having not had a single singing lesson, or ever sung in a choir, I have always felt very uneasy having to sing in front of people. In the last few months, I have discovered the range of notes where my voice is most comfortable and have generally grown in confidence with the use of it. This is clearly going to be useful as I move into a teaching job....Clearly my confidence has some way to improve yet. This has been a very useful module, as someone who started the course describing myself as "not a singer" my confidence has escalated. I now feel armed with many skills to continue after the course in running a choir. The secondary school I will be going into in September has a very strong choral reputation...With the music department being full of singers and vocal coaches; I will have many more people to continue learning from.

- **L22:** In my final conducting session I was pleased with the progress I had made which is essentially a result of increased confidence.

- **L26:** The choral conducting module has opened my eyes enormously to the world of choral music, and to what it takes to run a successful choir. Having run instrumental groups for a number of years, it is not new to me to have to stand before people and direct rehearsals. However, prior to this course, I had never sung in a choir, let alone directed one. I was also very insecure about using my own voice. This module has enabled me to gain confidence in using and looking after my own voice, learn some conducting gestures specific to vocal groups and also learn about the ethos behind why people are members of choirs and how to keep motivating them to take part.

A minority (n=4:16, 25%) particularly stressed that the use of technology, even at such basic level of uploaded videos and on-line group discussions and reflections (n=2:16, 13%), was a useful element of their education which complemented the face to face practical workshops (see Table 6.25). However, many more learners mentioned in their self-reflective reports that filming the practical workshops and watching their videos allowed them to critically observe themselves, the tutor and their fellow learners, reflect on their practice and work towards improving their practice. Comments from participants included:

- **L16:** …watching the video clip on different occasions (i.e. straight after the rehearsal, a couple of days later, and then a week later) at least gave me an opportunity to be detached from my own performance and compare it with my other performance from the beginning of the course. I could see an improvement in my 'literal' gestures and that I was now using my left hand to cue ends of phrases.

- **L24:** All three conductors that I witnessed all had very different style of conducting. All three contained some very positive parts in their rehearsal but they were also a few moments where pacing and gestural problems made the rehearsal become slightly weak. There are many things that I will take from these rehearsals to develop into my own conducting style.

Table 6.25: Most useful part of the course

Practical sessions/ People conducting in front. We learn from others	6	38%
Videos and analysing them/ Reflections on how gestures affect vocal sound	4	25%
One to one advice on conducting/ feedback	3	19%
Examples given by tutor	2	13%
N/A	2	13%
Use of Bb & assignments online / Having weekly tasks to keep on top of work and resources	2	13%
Learning about effective warm-ups	1	6%
Sessions of using the voice/ idea of gesture	1	6%

This might suggest that more initiatives in combining both approaches to choral conducting education could be taken by other choral conducting courses in the UK. Lastly, four learners voluntarily mentioned some unexpected gains that they thought they had acquired from the course. In particular, CS3b seemed to have influenced some individuals' general attitude towards teaching, enjoyment of choral music and participation in choral activities.

- 'The information was not specific to secondary teaching, but even though it was a very valuable part of the course for developing confidence and self-awareness. It was useful in my conducting of various extra curricular ensembles and it helped me to develop a calm persona in the classroom.'

- 'I learnt a great deal of skills/ knowledge and feel calmer when conducting groups now.'

- 'I listen to choral music differently.'

- 'I got involved in rehearsing choirs after I started the course.'

Such comments offered a new perspective about the possible contribution of choral conducting education in amateur conductors' life and career as music teachers within or outside choral rehearsals.

6.4.4 Summary

CS3b was a programme on choral conducting education, previously examined as CS3a, with the addition, on the second year of its observation, of on-line activities supplementary to face to face practical workshops. All learners had a first degree in music, which made the group coherent, in terms of musical background. The majority already worked or were about to start a career as music teachers within secondary education, and therefore, choral conducting was expected to be an integral part of their future careers. T2 was the only tutor of CS3b. To sum up, the findings from CS3b suggest:

1. The more the learners were advanced in musical skills, awareness and understanding of choral conducting practice, the more emphasis they placed on development of musical-technical competence.

2. The need to practice and reflect on practice through self-evaluative methods was one of the significant features of the course, as observed by the researcher and reported by the learners. On-line supportive activities were, therefore, organised in-between the face to face teaching sessions.

3. Through reflection on one's practice over time and through observation of other conducting models, the learners reported to have developed confidence in applying musical-technical and interpersonal skills such as non-verbal communication and choral leadership.

4. Observation of other conductors in and outside the training sessions helped learners become more reflective of their own practice and their communication with their singers.

5. Offering and receiving regular feedback on one's performance was an essential part of the education process. Like other skills, offering feedback was nurtured by the tutor who encouraged the singers to contribute to the feedback process.

6. Feedback from the singers during practical workshops and on-line appeared to help those less confident individuals become more positive about their own practice.

7. Collaborative learning in the class and through on-line group activities was rated highly by the learners.

8. Like in CS3a, the learners reported that their understanding of the science and workings of the voice was not developed enough. This might suggest that more time and attention needs to be given to vocal considerations within choral conducting education.

6.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented data from three case studies at an intermediate level. CS2, CS3a and CS3b were led by the same tutors (T2 and T3), who were considered experts in choral conducting education, because of their specialised academic studies in the discipline of choral conducting, as well as their rich experiences in leading choral groups in the UK and abroad. Both T2 and T3 adopted a philosophy towards choral conducting training that put emphasis on group collaboration, regular feedback to the learners from the tutors and the choir and opportunities for exploration and reflection during the training process. The tutors also gave evidence through their comments and teaching approach, which encouraged collaborative activities, of their continued desire to sustain and develop musical skills and expertise in choral conducting.

The majority of the learners who enrolled on CS2 and CS3a had some advanced qualification in music with the exception of few individuals in CS3a, who were primary school teachers with no formal musical background. On the contrary, all the learners of CS3b had a first degree in music and attended the conducting course either as postgraduate learners on a Music Education programme or as music teachers on a teacher training programme. The learners' musical background was a defining factor for the grouping of the three case studies under the umbrella of 'intermediate' level, as opposed to CS1, whose learners were considered to be at a 'beginner' level. However, a comparison across the three case studies illustrated that the more musically competent were the participants such as in CS3b, the more attention they placed on development of technical competence as a determining factor towards acquisition of expertise in choral conducting. Moreover, there was an uncertainty on what CS2 and CS3a learners comprehended as 'communication' skills, which the majority reported to be the most significant attribute of effective choral conducting practice. Yet, the same learners targeted their development towards acquisition of a gestural vocabulary. My interpretation is that they believed that communication skills are either an

attribute that cannot be developed (some kind of charisma) or that technical competence leads up to successful communication during choral practice. However, the learners of CS3b appeared to rate musical-technical skills as the most important attribute, which they also prioritised towards development over communication.

With regard to the process of preparation, it was observed and reported by the learners that reflection in-action (during the training sessions) and on-action (through video recording from the sessions) was very beneficial for their progress. Video recordings were reported to be a useful tool as they offered the opportunity for observation of one's own and others' practice and reflection or self-reflection on the strong points and the weaknesses that were detected in the brief video snap-shots. The learners underscored that observation and self-reflection also helped them improve at their own level, as well as increase in confidence to apply the musical-technical and interpersonal-leadership skills that they build up during the practical workshops. Furthermore, the interactive teaching and learning context, characterised by collaborative activities in the classroom and on-line (CS3b) and regular feedback by the tutors and the singers, was observed and reported to have positively affected learners' musical-technical skills and non-musical qualities, such as their confidence. In particular, it was reported that positive feedback from their peers helped some less confident individuals become more positive about their own practice. Finally, the existence of a choir during the training sessions gave the necessary opportunities for practice and observation, which the learners considered important.

It was also underscored by the learners, particularly of those in CS3a and CS3b that their understanding of the science and workings of the voice was satisfactory as in both courses only one out of the four sessions was focused on vocal development. This might suggest that education programmes in choral conducting need to allow more time for singing related activities and vocal considerations. What is more, most learners' modest responses to confidence development in various parameters such as rehearsing styles, gesturing effectively and dealing in practice with singing development might also be attributed to the fact that some of them did not have a choir to practise in-between the face to face sessions. Data from all three case studies seemed to underscore that choral conducting practice entails craft skills that can only be enhanced through regular practice with a choir.

Concerning the socio-cultural contexts where choral practice took place, most learners had already been leading choirs in school, community or church contexts, which gave them an idea of what skills and knowledge they wanted to acquire and develop during their training. The tutors of the three case studies put particular emphasis on improving the learners gestural vocabulary, as well as their knowledge, awareness and understanding of vocal, gestural and rehearsal techniques, so as to help them grow in skills but mostly in confidence in leading choral conducting groups in their own school, church or community choral contexts.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

III. ADVANCED LEVEL

7.1 Introduction

The last programme to be examined is a specialised choral conducting training programme for learners at an advanced level. Only one learner, selected after audition, undertook the programme on the year of its observation. The analysis of this chapter, likewise Chapters Five and Six, is structured according to five parameters towards the examination of an effective choral conducting education. These are (i) the tutors, (ii) the learners, (iii) the learning process, (iv) the perceived learning outcomes and (v) the socio-cultural context in which choral practice and education took place.

7.2 Case Study 4 (Advanced)

CS4 is a full-time postgraduate course on choral conducting offered by one of the seven conservatoires in the UK. According to the course handbook, the programme concentrated on building skills in interpretation, communication and vocal development through tailored tuition from specialised tutors. The one-to-one tuition was split between conducting and singing lessons with members of the conservatoire's vocal staff. What is more, the programme offered specialised coaching in editing, musical and managerial skills.

Each choral conducting learner rehearsed on a regular basis with a group of around 25 voices that ran specifically for their benefit, which is referred to, in this study, as 'practice choir'. This choir also offered them opportunities for performances on average twice a year. However, during the year of this study no performance of the practice choir took place for reasons that will be explained later in the chapter.

With regard to the assessment process, each learner was assessed through rehearsals. A preliminary performance examination took place at the beginning of the spring term (February 2008); it lasted around 20 minutes and it included a short choral rehearsal (c.10 minutes), an aural test, sight-singing and a viva-voce examination with

questions on rehearsal techniques, warm-ups, voice training or score preparation. The final performance took place towards the end of the summer term (May 2008) and it was a 45-minute rehearsal where choral conducting learners were expected to display technical skills, musicianship, interpretative imagination to a high level and the ability to "sustain extended spans of musical time" though unaccompanied work.

The data for this study consist of field notes that have been collected during the visits at the location in September (two visits) and October 2007, February 2008 (two weeks after the first preliminary assessment) and May 2008 (the day of the final assessment). One interview was carried out with T5, who ran the course during autumn term (July 2007) and two with T4 (February and May 2008). In addition, two hourly semi-structured interviews, one at the beginning and one at the end of the programme were carried out with the one and only learner (S28) that enrolled on the course that year. What is more, informal phone-discussions with her and one questionnaire via email were administered throughout the year.

During the last interview with L28, a fellow postgraduate learner from the same institution contributed to the discussion (L29). L29 sang in the university chamber choirs, as well as the practice choir and was planning to start the same postgraduate course the following academic year. His points of view are included in the data analysis because of (i) his familiarity with the institution (he has been studying there for two years already); (ii) his plans to pursue the same choral conducting degree after having observed the preparation of two choral conductors, as a chamber choirs' chorister and (iii) his involvement, as tutor, in the choral training of a cathedral boys' choir in a big city in UK, which offered him an interesting insight into choral education. His rich experiences as a musician, in combination with his upbringing and musical training in his country, add a new perspective to the investigation of choral activities and choral conducting education.

7.2.1 The tutors

Both tutor (T4 and T5) had a background rich in choral experiences from an early age. T4 was educated in the cathedral choral tradition and developed his interest and competence in choral conducting through personal practice. That is to say, he started singing at a young age with a skilled choir in Oxford, which helped him 'develop ears,

love of choral singing and watching the conductor' and he later studied the organ. During his years at the senior school he was given many opportunities to lead the chapel choir and through observing other conductors, taking part in master classes and practising with various ensembles he developed his technique and love for choral conducting. T4 has received no formal training in choral conducting, probably because of the absence of specialised courses offered in higher education until some years ago. However, he highlighted that he loved conducting; he engaged with it, grew into it and ended up having it as a specialism whilst practising the organ very little.

With regard to the attributes he considered necessary in choral conducting practice, T4 gave great emphasis on musical-technical skills such as aural, vocal and gestural competence. By aural skills, he referred to 'analytical ears' that allow the conductor to 'understand in an eight part chorus which part is inaccurate' and also work towards improving the sound of the choir. He clearly stated that people interested in leading choral activities should first and foremost have advanced aural competence.

> T4: …You can be brutal about it, really, by saying that if someone doesn't have a sufficiently good ear, they should not conduct. It's as simple as that. Because when you can't hear when things are going wrong or when things are going out of tune, then there is no point in standing there. And I think there are some people genuinely who think that, I'd like to stand and wave my arms in the right pattern way and then it will be overly well. But [it is] very far from it really.

As to vocal skills, T4 underlined that choral conductors have to 'build an instrument', which is the main difference between choral and orchestral conducting. That is to say, they should be able to turn the big disparate group of singers into a body, which is an instrument and added that 'if you can't build an instrument you might as well not bother to conduct, really'.

T4 also talked about conducting gestures as 'classic formulae' that allow conductors to 'use their body and their arms, their hands in a way which will encourage and also give information'. Yet, he highlighted that most of the gestures a choral conductor uses have nothing to do with time signature, but suggest to the singers various nuances in performance, such as the quality of tone and the dynamic, or they encourage expressivity.

Lastly, T4 emphasised that teaching skills and the ability to 'speak properly to the choristers' are also significant skills for a choral conductor. The tutor highlighted that the aim of verbal communication during rehearsal is to put across messages in as clear and succinct way as possible in order to keeps people's attention. Drawing from his own experience as a conductor in various choirs he explained that during his rehearsals, moments occurred when he utilized very specific types of verbal communication that dealt with what happened in front of him. In his words 'it is this kind of subtle forms of communication which make it possible for a conductor to sort of make your job much more effective…'

T4 taught during the second and third terms of the programme, whereas teaching during the first term was taken up by T5 whose first study was the violin. T5, however, had specialised in choral conducting during his postgraduate studies with T4 as his tutor and had some years of experience in teaching choral conducting in other academic institutions in the UK, as well as in CS2 as a visiting tutor. T5 explained that his interest in choral conducting was nurtured through his upbringing, studies and influence from his tutors. His father's engagement in singing had initially encouraged his participation in a church choir as a boy and later ignited a long-term interest in singing and conducting. His active involvement in ensembles, either as a singer or as instrumentalist, led him recognize that choral conducting is a discipline in itself, which requires specialised study and engagement, as it happens with every instrument.

> **T5:** … [W]hen I went to the university I started doing lots of singing in the chapel at the university for my undergraduate course…And I started to do more and more singing and I enjoyed the singing side…So I didn't come from it from the pianistic side; I came from the instrumentalist side where I sat in orchestras and watched conductors and thought 'why can't I?', 'Why don't I feel like I can play easily or why don't I feel comfortable?'. So I knew that there was a certain amount of technique involved for it all to work properly.

On the subject of the most important attributes of a choral conductor he emphasised aural skills and gestural technique that facilitates musical expression. T5 clarified that

> **T5:** …the most important attribute for a choral conductor…is that you want to see from them, in how they conduct, what they want from the music. Because that is the job of the conductor. Because if you didn't have a conductor, a certain amount of your work, especially, you know, for…..maybe sixteen singers you might not need a

conductor if they are good singers, you would be able to start together and if you are working with singers who listen to each other it would all work...

To sum up, findings related to the background of the tutors suggested that competence in aural, gestural technique and vocal skills that facilitate clear, non-verbal communication were identified as attributes of major importance to choral conducting practice. Regarding the tutors' education in choral conducting, T4 emerged from the English Cathedral tradition as a chorister and organist, whereas T5 had studied choral conducting at a postgraduate course. What is more, it was underlined that they both had rich experiences in music from an early age, which were encouraged by their environment (parents and teachers).

7.2.2 The learner

During 2007-8 academic year only one learner (L28) enrolled on the choral conducting programme in CS4. L28, who had auditioned for a place the year before, was a non-British female in her early 30s with some background in choral conducting. She started off as a pianist, took voice lessons and later got acquainted with the Kodály music educational concept. After attending a 3-week seminar in Hungary she decided to do the 2-year full choral conducting course and Kodály Pedagogy there. The course included teaching methodology within the Kodály pedagogical concept, history, musical literacy and conducting lessons. After finishing her training in Hungary she came to the UK, where she worked as the choral conductor for a youth choir.

In her search for choral conducting courses within academic institutions, the learner discovered none that offered choral conducting, as a first study, at an undergraduate level. She found, however, a couple of courses that offered focused and specialised training at a postgraduate level. Before selecting CS4 she visited other higher education institutions in the UK where, through discussions with the teaching staff, she realised that these courses offered specialisation in choral conducting to professional conductors who would work with professional singers. As conducting professional singers was not her major ambition, she chose CS4, which she thought would better offer her a 'holistic perception of what happens in real-life rehearsal situations'.

As a choral conductor, L28 admitted being confident with her skills, both her conducting style and aural competence before starting the postgraduate programme, which was also acknowledged by T4. Therefore, her expectations from the course were mainly to acquire (i) more practical experience through conducting the institution's choirs; (ii) a firmer knowledge of the choral repertoire, in particular contemporary English repertoire; and (iii) to maximise her rehearsal technique through receiving 'time saving tricks', for she stated that conductors are always 'haunted by some clock'. At this very prospect she selected CS4 because it was 'a small school and there was a lot of flexibility where one could personalise the course'. Furthermore, a practice choir was offered to her for practice on a regular basis. This was a significant consideration for the selection of this programme over others, which had no choir but instead encouraged a cohort of conductors to sing for each other.

On the topic of the important attributes of a choral conductor, L28 put emphasis on vocal skills and gestural communication. She suggested that being able to give advice on vocal technique should be an important part of every choral conductor's education as it is not always the case that one will have professional singers to conduct. Furthermore, she stressed the every conductor should study the technical side of gestural communication and not rely purely on one's knowledge and feeling of the music for effective rehearsing and performing.

> **L28**: ...a lot of people say that, you know, if you are well prepared and if you know the music and if you understand [it] then a lot of the gesture would come naturally. And that's true. I agree with that. But, you know, you need to know some gestures and when you are to apply them then it will come naturally if you know the music well. But it can't be that without.

Finally, L28 underlined that a successful choral conductor is the one who has such a personality that makes singers to want to sing for them. The issue of personality versus interpersonal skills, as an attribute of an effective choral conductor, will be discussed in detail in the Chapter Eight.

7.2.3 The process of preparation

The findings from CS4 summarise some of the ingredients of effective choral conducting education that have already been examined in previous Case Studies. These suggest that (i) regular practice with a committed choir is an essential condition for effective training in choral conducting, (ii) performance opportunities should be

complementary to rehearsal practice in a practical, musical activity such as choral conducting and (iii) regular feedback should be a necessary ingredient of teaching and learning environments in choral conducting education.

7.2.3.1 Regular practice with a choir

T4 drew particular attention to the fact that the ideal environment for training conductors is with a choir and more often than once a week, which was the time the practice choir rehearsed with the learner conductor. Therefore, in order for the choral conducting learners to be offered enough 'podium time' for practice, the institution selected maximum three individuals every year. As an alternative training situation, T4 referred to a cohort of learner conductors who form a choir among themselves that potentially offers opportunities for practical training of high quality. However, he admitted that such a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' happens only in American colleges, where there is a big number of learners taking up specialised programmes in choral conducting.

With regard to the standards of the choir with which the conducting learner rehearsed, T4 admitted that the practice choir was not as good as the main chamber choir of the institution, which regularly performed in concerts and had completed a number of recordings. Nonetheless, T4 defended its role at the institution by saying that the practice choir was a 'fodder' for the choral conducting course and helped the learner develop a variety of other skills such as patience, resilience and the ability to deal with remedial situations, which in the future could prove useful skills to have.

L28 was at times disappointed by the practice choir mainly because of the 'irresponsible' behaviour that the singers displayed in relation to their participation in the choir. For instance, few singers turned up to sing in her final examination. That she found frustrating and explained that it was not solely her responsibility to motivate singers to commit to the choir. Reflecting these concerns, L28 stressed that having a choir to apply the knowledge from the face to face sessions rather than no choir at all, was one of the strongest features of the course. In a word, it was highlighted by both the learner and tutor that practice with a choir is a necessary ingredient of a course on choral conducting education.

7.2.3.2 Performance opportunities

The second finding addressed the issue of performance opportunities as a way to help learner conductors enhance their skills in rehearsing and performing. L28 repeatedly stated that the course offered her 'zero performance opportunities' as a conductor and expected her to create her own opportunities. Despite performing with the main chamber choir as a singer, there was no other occasion, not even as an assessment, where the learner conducted a choir in public.

> **L28**: …The [institution] this year, as a conductor, gave me zero performance opportunities. Zero! And that little performance class that I did with the [chamber] choir on the 2nd of April it's not integrated. It was only 15 minutes, it was part of a performance class, you know. It was not an independent… and all the other postgraduates did two performance classes all year, you know…they only gave me one…I sang in the chamber choir so we had performances with them but that's singing! That's not what I do. And…so yes…I mean, they kind of expected me to create my own opportunities but I wouldn't have paid that much money to come here…

L28's previous years of choral conducting preparation in Hungary were a reference for comparison between the choral education traditions of the two countries where she has studied. In Hungary, as she reported, choral conducting learners were given opportunities to rehearse and conduct the university choir together with their tutor. This was part of their assessment for the course. T4, however, believed that the 'real test for a conductor is the ability to take an effective rehearsal' and therefore he did not appear to consider assessment in performance as valuable as in a 'real' rehearsal situation.

Certainly, one would expect music learners who receive training in a practical discipline, such as performance practice, to be given opportunities to perform in public, as a preparatory stage to their future careers as professional performers. For example, it seems highly unlikely that an oboist, violinist or probably orchestral conductor undertaking a postgraduate course in a conservatoire will not be assessed on their formal or informal public performances during their year of study. The fact that the only choral conductors in CS4 was not given such opportunity raises questions related to the status of choral conducting, also in comparison to orchestral conducting, in UK higher education.

7.2.3.3 Regular and detailed feedback

Detailed feedback on her rehearsals with the practice choir was given to the learner only by T5 during the first term of the training programme. In particular, T5 observed every rehearsal and offered detailed feedback during the face to face choral instruction sessions that followed the rehearsals. The feedback consisted of comments on rehearsal technique, such as the warm-up preparation, ways of engaging the whole choir whilst working in sections, oral instruction, gestural and vocal demonstration. According to L28, the feedback that she received during the first term contributed significantly to her rehearsal skills' improvement.

> **L28**: [After first term] I talk less and can achieve more in less time. I am finding ways to establish a more efficient code of communication with my singers during both the rehearsal and the performances.

However, the routine of training changed under the baton of T4. The face to face choral instruction sessions took place after T4's rehearsals with the main chamber choir, in which the conducting learner sang and had the opportunity to observe her tutor in action. As a result, the issues of discussion after the rehearsals revolved around the tutor's approach to rehearsing rather than the learner's rehearsal practice. In particular, T4 put emphasis on the study and interpretation of the repertoire, as well as the observation of other conductors, as two powerful aspects of the training process. On the topic of repertoire interpretation, T4 underlined the significance of a thorough understanding of the musical pieces that were studied by the S28, such as Britten's *Choral Dances from Gloriana*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Durufle's *Requiem*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Bach's *B minor Mass*, Bruckner's *Mass in E minor*, Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* and Handel's *Dixit Dominus*, in terms of phrasing, articulation and breathing, as well as thinking about 'not always taking composers marks as gospel'.

> **T4**: …[O]ne of the things which I think people find very difficult when they come into this course is the fact that they are inexperienced in taking a piece apart and making something of it that will stand up as a really musical performance… You can make interpretational things really work which are totally different from what is sometimes on the page. So there are lots of things…which we've been going into during this time which… hopefully she [the learner] will go away with a greater sense of the possibilities of what she can do.

With regard to the quality of instruction, the learner acknowledged T4's high level of experience and natural musical intuition, but expressed her preference to the detailed

feedback that she received during the first term. This finding highlights that even choral conducting learners at an advanced level seek for feedback from their tutors that reassures them that their existing conducting practice is effective, as well as guides them towards perfecting their practice further.

7.2.4 The learning outcomes

L28 successfully completed her MMus postgraduate course on performance practice – specialised on choral conducting performance, by submitting written assignments on four modules, which were compulsory and common for all postgraduate learners on a MMus programme and by undertaking two performance exams (a preliminary and a final assessment). These performances were evaluated by a panel of tutors from the conservatoire. However, with regard to the perceived outcomes of her preparation, the learner appeared very critical of the fact that some of her expectations from this particular training course were not met although the conservatoire course documents appeared to suggest the opposite.

To start with, L28 underlined that her initial expectation to study a wide range of music repertoire was fulfilled. However, she underscored that she did not have much opportunity to enhance her already advanced rehearsal skills, as she worked with a 'practice choir' whose members neither attended the rehearsals regularly nor studied the music. In addition, she stressed that although she was supposed to perform with the practice choir, as it was suggested by the course documents, she was given no performance opportunities. Finally, she was critical about the fact that was did not receive instruction in gestural technique. L28 explained that, whilst T4 encouraged her to put emphasis on observing him and other expert conductors in rehearsals and concerts, instruction in gestures was absent from her training. L28 said that T4 thought that she did not need further gestural instruction, whereas she attributed the absence of gestural instruction to T4's possible insecurity to advise her on conducting technique because he had developed his own technique through personal experience and not formal education. On the face of it, she contrasted her current course with her choral conducting studies in Hungary where instruction in technique was a fundamental element of the conducting workshops. L29 also agreed that technical guidance is needed even at advanced level choral conducting education. On the whole, L28's personal reflections on her training process and its perceived outcomes

suggested that although she did believe that she developed musical-technical skills through observing other expert conductors and through studying demanding music repertoire, she expected the course to offer her more performance opportunities to apply her knowledge and skills.

7.2.5 The socio-cultural context

T5 expressed his disappointment about the fact that choral conducting, as opposed to orchestral conducting training within higher education in the UK, is often treated as a discipline where technique 'bypasses as fundamental'. This point of view was also shared by T1 in CS1. T5 attributed that to the 'psyche' of the UK as a country where choral conductors within a strong cathedral choral tradition are expected to start as organists. He added that, whilst the organists would spend hours on rehearsing how to play the organ, 'it is just assumed that they can conduct as well'. T4 agreed that there is, indeed, such false perception which he described as 'a sort of folklore'.

> **T4**: …the boys are coming up through the cathedral choirs and…the college choirs, would then get a passion for it [choral conducting]. [They] would learn the organ and then they would want to get into this but they also have this feeling for conducting. And they [would have] watched and… learnt from extremely good people who have watched and learnt from good people who have watched and learnt from good people….And it's sort of folklore and I think that's all you can say…

Concerning the socio-cultural environment where UK choral education is embedded, findings from CS4 seemed to suggest that the cathedral choral tradition exerts, even today, great influence on the education of choral conductors. This point of view was also shared by L28 who, during her two-year experience as a choral conductor of amateur choirs in the UK admitted that, especially within church environments, choral leaders seemed to have grown up being in the choirs as singers, later became organists and some of them took up the role of conductors without any further education. What is more, L28 added that the absence of choral conducting courses as an undergraduate principal study in the UK possibly implied that individuals who wanted to become choral conductors had to learn it empirically.

The different training approaches to choral conducting instruction, at an advanced level, used by the two tutors could potentially reveal a connection, as observed in CS1, between tutors' musical background and experiences and their teaching methods. To begin with, the philosophy of the course, as expressed by T4, stressed

that choral conducting learners do benefit from observations of other expert conductors, often as singers in their choirs. He explained, therefore, that L28 had opportunities to sing in the main chamber choir, as well as another choir outside the institution, and observe other models of choral conducting expertise during rehearsals and performances. T4 reasoned that observation of other conductors and participation in choirs were equally important for the refinement of her already developed aural and rehearsal planning skills. His approach to training seemed to be very much influenced by his own personal experiences as an apprentice conductor, who emerged from the cathedral choral tradition. However, he stressed the significance of formal and structured choral conducting education.

> **T4:** …the fact that we've always done that [conducting choirs] doesn't actually make it any more valid or way of going about it. And that's why I think that, you know, we are gradually coming round to this fact that it's a good thing to teach people rather than just rely on people watching how it's done in practice, though I think that is an incredibly valued part of it and that's why masterclassing is important…

Although he considered himself a child of the cathedral choral tradition, he criticised the absence of structured choral conducting training in the UK as a 'kind of irony and anomaly' in a country with such a strong choral tradition.

> **T4:** …I was quite serious when I was saying that it is one of the strange kind of…it would be better if you call it an irony or an anomaly in this country that we've had such a strong choral tradition over many, many centuries, well, in fact that's I suppose eight centuries; it's very, very ancient tradition and yet nobody has ever been taught… I suppose the only thing you could say is that people who take it up and have done very well over the years, if you think of the famous people like David Wilcox or George Guest, sort of famous boys' choir conductors of two generations ago or something, you know, that they, like a lot of people in their position, learnt possibly the best way by watching and by being enthusiastic in themselves.

T5 seemed to have adapted his teaching approach to his own experiences as a choral conducting learner at a postgraduate level. During his postgraduate programme he led choral rehearsals, which were observed by his tutor. He also received individual lessons during which he was offered detailed feedback and comments on his rehearsals. This model of instruction he perpetuated as a course tutor himself during the first term.

In contrast to the lack of structured choral conducting training in the UK, S28 brought forward the example of Hungary, a country with great tradition in singing, where she

had studied. In Hungary, choral conducting is part of the Music Education degree. The course lasts five years and the demands of musicianship on the conductors are specifically high due to the fact that the graduates later become the teachers of the new generations of musicians of the country. In particular, L28 explained that the Liszt Academy has very demanding entrance exams, which include atonal dictation, atonal sight-reading, sing and play five parts and all by memory. As for the final assessment of the choral conductors, both the conductor and choir perform from memory because of their consistent and structured education which they have been receiving from a young age and gives emphasis on musicianship development.

Musicianship development appeared to be a key concept towards the establishment of sound choral education in the UK, by which L28 and L29 referred to reading, aural, singing skills and music theory. As far as the conductor was concerned, it was indicated earlier that although aural skills' training was not part of the choral conducting training process of CS4, it was assessed during the preliminary assessment. This suggested that aural proficiency was taken for granted at this level of study and in this particular discipline. As far as choral education was concerned, L28 and L29 expressed the opinion that choral singers in the UK are not given systematic musicianship training from a young age. They both compared the non-structured choral education in the UK with the structured musicianship training within the Kodály education concepts[1] offered in Hungary, with which both were familiar. L29 emphasised that cathedral choirs in the UK tend to select the gifted singers, whereas music education in Hungary caters for everyone and not just the gifted.

> **L29**: …At first, before I came to England I thought, you know, they have… a very long choral tradition there, so you know, the choirs have to be good. And it is so mediocre. And I think that now, I am starting to understand that it's like all this elitist attitude; so you have…the Cathedrals, where they have excellent results and very good choristers but those are very carefully selected; they are auditioned. So, if you are gifted [you are selected]…But if you are gifted you are going to do it anyway. …But they don't cater for everyone to do [singing] and that's the difference that I saw in Hungary… Yea, they have the schools for the gifted. They do have that. [But]

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[1] The Kodály approach to music education is based on teaching, learning and understanding music through the experience of singing. Through unaccompanied singing and active participation a learner can begin to acquire skills essential to all musicians, such as musical memory, inner hearing, true notation and harmonic hearing. Central to Kodály work is the development of inner hearing (the ability to imagine sound) through a combination of singing, rhythm work, sol-fa hand sign work, stick notation, memory development, part work and improvisation (Retrieved from http://www.britishkodalyacademy.org/kodaly_approach.htm in October 2008).

everyone is doing reading from first grade, you know, from year one. And they don't become perfect musicians or anything but they can find their way around the score. And they will have problems and you will work for them, but you can take some things for granted. And there is, you know, that difference between the professional and the amateur.

What is more, L29, who regularly rehearsed the boys of a cathedral choir, described music education in the UK as 'performance driven', which does not give time to the learners to receive training in musical skills (aural and reading skills). He also revealed that he was often advised by the artistic director of the cathedral choir where he worked not to spend time in teaching theory during rehearsals but instead rely on the singers' ability to memorise the music. L28 advocated that music theory should always be ahead of one's practical skills if choral education is to be founded on stable grounds. Both L28 and L29 suggested that music education, in general, and choral education, in particular, would benefit from systematic instruction in musical literacy that includes music theory, reading, aural and singing skills.

In connection with effective choral conducting education, both learners identified two necessary ingredients: (i) guidance from an expert tutor and (ii) learners' musicianship development. They explained that in the absence of guidance, a choral conductor could only manage to lead rehearsals effectively if musicianship is highly developed. L28 and L29 concluded by emphasising that unless the demands on musicianship are raised in UK schools and higher education institutions, not much is going to change in the training of musicians and particularly choral conductors.

7.2.6 Summary

CS4 is a postgraduate programme on choral conducting at an advanced level, offered by a conservatoire. The findings of the CS4, analysed through the lens of a suggested framework of an effective process in choral conducting preparation, revealed the following:

1. As regards the attributes of an effective choral conductor, the two tutors (T4 and T5) and the learner (L28) expressed a unanimous agreement that musical-technical skills, such as aural, gestural and vocal competence are fundamentals towards effective choral conducting practice at an advanced level.

2. Regarding the background of the tutors, both tutors were very competent and accomplished musicians and they had great experience in leading professional

and amateur, vocal and orchestral ensembles. However, it appeared that their teaching approach towards effective choral conducting instruction was a reproduction of their learning approach as learner conductors or apprentices. In other words, the tutors tended to teach the way they were taught. Nevertheless, they both put particular emphasis on the necessity of formal choral conducting education in the UK.

3. Regarding the process of preparation, it was found that regular practice with a choir is a necessary ingredient of effective choral conducting training at an advanced level.

4. Although performance opportunities were acknowledged as a significant element of choral conducting education at an advanced level, during the year that the course was observed no such opportunities were offered to the conducting learner.

5. Regular and detailed feedback was highlighted by the learner as a significant component of the process of preparation at an advanced level. Nonetheless, L28 expressed her disappointment about not receiving such feedback throughout her training.

6. With regard to the socio-cultural context in which choral practice and teaching took place, it was highlighted that choral education would benefit from systematic instruction in musical literacy (music theory, reading, aural and singing skills) that should be available to all learners from a young age and not only to the gifted singers.

7. It was also found that guidance from an expert tutor and emphasis on choral learners' musicianship development could result in effective choral conducting education.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that emerged from the examination of five programmes on choral conducting education (Case Studies 1-4) in relation to the existing literatures on choral education and the two research questions that have instigated this study. This thesis began with an enquiry into (i) the nature and process of choral conducting preparation (the case studies that were observed were from programmes in England) and (ii) the learners' perceptions of their development and their programme's effectiveness. For the exploration of these two research questions the current study analysed learners' personal responses to interviews and questionnaires, as well as personal narratives and self-reflective reports produced by the learners on their perceived development over time. Such an approach was believed to be appropriate for two reasons.

Firstly, empirical evidence from people involved in choral conducting education programmes could potentially benefit the design of teaching and learning environments that focus on choral activities and the education of its agents. Entwistle's study (2007) on student learning and university teaching underlines that understanding of the ways in which learners or young professionals deal with learning, studying and preparing for their future professional roles comes when exploring how teaching and other aspects of learning environments influence those activities. Pitts (2005) also argues that, from a pedagogical standpoint, it is crucial to understand learners' perceptions of music in order to develop their learning and attitudes, especially in higher education. She adds that, although perceptions may not be easily accessible to measurable educational validity, they can have a substantial long-term impact and 'make a vital contribution to the sustaining of musical life well beyond educational settings' (Pitts, 2005, p. 135). What is more, research evidence from the data presented earlier, as well as other studies (Chorus America, 2009; 2003; Kennedy, 2002) have so far indicated that participating in choral singing activities can have a positive influence on people's lives within or outside choral rehearsals.

Secondly, given that programmes on choral education in the UK are limited (see 4.4, Table 4.1) and the number of people taking them is relatively small, it was possible to monitor individuals' experiences and development on example choral conducting courses in England over the period of the education programmes. This offered a unique opportunity to investigate teaching and learning as an interactive system that depends on, and is influenced by, the characteristics of the learners, their tutors, the specific nature of the subject matter and the socio-cultural contexts, including the teaching contexts, where choral training and practice occurred. Due to the small number of participants, a quantitative research approach for the examination of the process and the outcomes of these courses would probably appear inappropriate. The fact that only one learner enrolled on the programme accounted for in CS4 during the year of the visits could offer an indicative example that choral conducting education in England is relatively rare and innovatory.

The elements of the theoretical framework on effective choral conducting education that was described in Chapter Three provided a structure for the analysis of the data in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The following paragraphs discuss the issues that emerged from the data analyses through the lens of the theoretical constructs that have been hitherto examined. The framework also draws on educational research within higher education (Entwistle, 2007) and the workplace (Eraut, 2007) and is believed to offer a systemic view of the continuous interactions among its elements.

8.2   Choral conducting teaching and learning – tutor perspectives and pedagogical approaches

The overall professional profiles of the tutors in the five case studies were diverse. Four out of the five tutors had studied music at a post-graduate level; three tutors had specialised in choral conducting and one tutor had a first degree in music. However, it was found that all tutors reported that they had acquired their perceived expertise in choral conducting 'on the job', drawing heavily on their own experiences as learners. This might indeed underline the craft knowledge nature of choral conducting practice, which can be developed through constant engagement in choral conducting activities. In fact, Lehman and Davidson (2002) have identified specificity, adaptability and

developed problem-solving and memory skills (see Chapter Three) as three particular characteristics of musical expertise. At the same time, the significance of deliberate practice towards the acquisition of expertise was emphasised by studies in expertise development (Lehmann and Davidson, 2002; Lehmann and Gruber, 2006). Clearly, only through constant rehearsing and performing with choirs can a choral conductor develop characteristics such as adaptability, problem-solving and memory skills, as well as refine already existing musical-technical skills. What is more, the findings from the data revealed that the choral conducting tutors tended to adopt a similar teaching approach in their teaching environments to the one that they experienced as learners or apprentices.

8.2.1 The tutors' background and attributes

The data from the five case studies presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven offer detailed information on each tutor's biography. In particular, data from observations of the training process seemed to suggest that all tutors possessed (some individuals more than others) at least basic musical-technical skills, interpersonal skills and an awareness of the role of a choral conductor within education. In fact, T2, T3 and T5 had studied choral conducting and choral education, whereas T1 and T4 had developed their expertise through practice and experience. What was particularly noticeable, however, was that through informal interviews with T1 and T4 repeated references were made to 'charisma' as a factor that significantly influenced successful choral conducting practice. T1's and T4's perception of charisma in relation to the skills that can be nurtured within choral conducting education contexts are discussed in the following paragraphs because it is believed that their perception has been influenced by their own experiences as learners and practitioners.

8.2.1.1 Charisma and choral conducting practice

There seemed to be a predominant perception, articulated by T1 and T4, who had not themselves received formal training in choral conducting, that some nascent talent had to be in place for the achievement of expertise standards in choral conducting. The notion of charisma in choral conducting potentially challenges the possible ways of developing choral conducting expertise through education. Apfelstadt (1997) argues that to suggest that choral leadership is entirely inborn 'is to deny one of the

fundamental premises of teaching, that education is a vehicle for change' (Apfelstadt, 1997, p. 23). Although Apfelstadt recognises that some people achieve or naturally possess a leadership characteristic that is difficult to label, which is probably an 'artful fusion' of both musical (artistic intuition, musicality/ expressiveness, aural sensitivity) and extra-musical (articulateness, confidence, effort, enthusiasm, initiative) characteristics (Apfelstadt, 1997, pp. 26-27), she underlines that some aspects of leadership can be taught and learnt. Broomhead (2006) in his study of instructional strategies for teaching expressive performance in the choral rehearsal also argues that, although expressive performance itself is 'ill-structured and illusive, no such claim is made concerning its instruction' (Broomhead, 2006, p. 18).

In particular, T4 mentioned that individuals either have an aptitude to become successful choral conductors or not. In his case, it was perceived to be his inborn strengths, as well as the support from his parents and teachers, that provided the grounding for efficient deliberate practice. The significance of the cultural context of home and the wider environment on the music education of children has been emphasised by numerous studies (Burland and Davidson, 2004; Moore, Burland and Davidson, 2003; Sichivitsa, 2003). Sichivitsa (2003) pointed out that children tend to develop better self-concepts of musical ability and be motivated in music when their parents display interest for their musical activities, either by attending their concerts or by talking about the music with their children. In addition, Moore et al. (2003) added that the amount of parental involvement in children's music lessons, along with having a friendly teacher were critical in determining whether children continue to be musicians or give up.

Likewise, on the issue of development and charismatic individuals, Burland and Davidson (2004) stressed that, although there is evidence suggesting that the experiences of individuals from an early age shape who they become, environmental influences are equally important.

> The underlying argument of any discussion concerning development is that of the nature-nurture: is development caused by innate, genetic factors or it is influenced by the environment? The study of giftedness and talent is no different in this, and psychologists seem to agree that whilst innate factors may have some role to play – such as an inherited potential for a particular quality – there is little evidence to confirm the suspicion.　　　　　(Burland and Davidson, 2004, p. 225)

Similarly, T1 expressed the belief that, as a tutor, he could teach all the skills a choral conductor needs, but he could not teach a person to be a 'charismatic personality that has genuine rapport with the singers'. One possible challenge in T1's perception of the connection between charisma and a conductor's interpersonal skills during rehearsing and performing may be found in a research study by MacNamara et al. (2008) who sampled world-class musicians to examine the role of psychological characteristics of developing excellence. The study advocated that talent is a 'dynamic and multidimensional conception with a parallel awareness of an array of factors (e.g. environmental, social, psychological, support) that contribute to the realisation of potential' (MacNamara, Holmes and Collins, 2008, p. 335). The results of the study suggested that it is the development and employment of psychological characteristics such as dedication (belief that one can excel), determination, adaptability, a learning attitude, self-belief, social skills, coping skills and realistic performance evaluations, rather than charisma that help aspiring elite musicians realise their potential and achieve success and recognition within their own musical environment.

Correspondingly, numerous research studies on the development of expertise suggest that an expert is made and not born (Chi, 2006; Ericsson, Prietula and Cokery, 2007; Feltovitch, Prietula and Hoffman, 2006; Hunt, 2006; Lehmann and Gruber, 2006; Zimmerman, 2006). Eraut (2007) also explains that whilst 'competency' refers to 'a person's capability or personal knowledge' and is therefore treated as an individuals characteristic, the term 'competent' is not individually, but socially defined and 'refers to being able to meet a socially defined standard of performance'. He points out that

> '...judgements of competence vary according to context and over time, and are influenced both by allowances for the experience of the performer and by the prior experience and perspective of the judge(s)' (Eraut, 2007, p. 120).

Furthermore, a potential lack of explicit relationship between developing effectiveness in choral conducting practice and the role of education is particularly disturbing, for it suggests that imponderable factors such as charisma might be responsible for one's achievements or not in choral conducting practice. Although there is anecdotal evidence that conductors might possess some special 'gift' or

'talent'[1], the skills that the literatures on choral conducting consider as key attributes (Chapter Three, Table 3.2) are indeed part of the curriculum of courses offered within higher education. The informants of all five programmes that were observed reported that aural, vocal, technical and gestural skills were amongst the fundamental attributes of a choral conductor, characteristics that have also been identified by the literature (Cofer, 1998; Durrant, 1994; 2003; 2006; Leman, 2000). Such skills can be developed through deliberate practice and specialised tuition. What is more, Apfelstadt (1997) argues that teachers of conducting can address both musical (artistic intuition, musicality/expressiveness and aural sensitivity) and extra-musical (articulateness, confidence, effort, enthusiasm and initiative) factors in class. She points out that whilst it may take longer with some learners than with others who seem to possess them naturally, each of the characteristics mentioned can be learnt.

8.2.1.2 Interpersonal skills and choral conducting practice

The term 'interpersonal skills' appeared to be misconstrued and confused by both T1 and T4 and also by some learners, who connected it with personality features such as 'humour' (CS2), 'patience' and 'empathy with learners' (CS3a). T4 argued that a choral conductor should possess patience, resilience, ability to speak properly and communicate effectively through non-verbal means and an ability to encourage and inspire the singers; skills also required by effective teachers. He believed that some of these skills cannot be taught, but that learners can 'get over that hump' and become confident and autonomous conductors through mastering conducting technique.

In the context of this study, the term 'interpersonal skills' refers to qualities such as non-verbal communication through vocal modelling, sustained eye-contact, encouragement and motivation, quality feedback, enthusiasm, effective rehearsal pacing and planning, clear communication goals and general leadership. This study strongly advocates that such skills can and should be nurtured within choral conducting education environments. Reflecting these concerns, Gumm (1993) identified eight approaches, termed as 'dimensions', of choral music teaching style

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[1] Norman Lebrecht wrote in the introduction to his book *The Maestro Myth*: 'Historically, what most conductors have had in common is an acute ear, the charisma to inspire musicians on first acquaintance, the will to get their own way, high organizational ability, physical and mental fitness, relentless ambition, a powerful intelligence and a natural sense of order which enables them to cut through thousands of scattered notes to the artistic core' (in Durrant, 2003, p. 67).

and argued that, like music teaching skills, music teaching behaviours also need to be taught, observed and practised within the context of the intended learning outcomes.

> Needed to be promoted is a more thorough set of music teaching skills within teacher-dependent, independent, interdependent, behavioural conceptual, affective, creative, artistic and social learning contexts.   (Gumm, 2004, p. 20)

A later study (Gumm, 2007) asked learners to rate very specific qualities in relation to their conductors' effectiveness, such as the method that they used during rehearsals, as well as their sociability. Learners rated highly the conductors who (i) presented the course material well in terms of time efficiency, positive learning environment and artistic music performance; (ii) were well organised and prepared for the rehearsals and (iii) were assertive leaders who encouraged learner independence during rehearsals. What is more, these conductors were also respectful of the learners, accessible and enthusiastic. Elements such as clarity, structure, level, pace, empathy and enthusiasm, which were highlighted in Gumm's (2007) study have also been described by Entwistle (2007) as generic attributes of effective learning environments in higher education and, accordingly, this research has incorporated these elements in the proposed framework of effective choral conducting education (see Figure 2, p. 281). Preparation, presentation and evaluation were also identified by Apfelstadt (1997) as three key skills for effective choral conducting practice that can be teachable. Finally, Hamann et al. (1998) highlighted that successful teaching and choral conducting demanded high levels of emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity and social control. This doctoral research suggests that these attributes can be fostered through effective instruction and 'hands-on' experience, as was applied in CS2, 3a and 3b. In these Case Studies, the tutors offered the learners ample opportunities for exploration of gestures and rehearsal techniques, observation of different choral conductors and self-reflection, during the practical workshops and the in-between periods.

Moore (2000) advocated that teaching is always something of an 'act' and a quote from a CS3b learner suggested exactly that;

> **L26:** There are two other ways that I have been working on to express the music. Firstly,…the character of the music should…be expressed through the conductor's face. Clearly, this requires a level of acting skill…However, even with the acting ability, and the collection of real emotions, the key to this has to be in the preparation. The conductor must know exactly what he wants to express before entering the

rehearsal, and have practised the faces in front of the mirror. Beyond this, the conductor must know the whole score inside out.

The data presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven with most participant learners working as choral conductors within educational, church or community contexts, confirm the proposition made by Hamann, et al. (1998), Moore (2000) and Gumm (1993; 2004; 2007) on the importance of communication and presentation skills of choral conducting leaders. Communicative teachers, like successful choral conductors, plan before each lesson (a behaviour particularly observed from T1, T2 and T3), listen carefully to their learners and remain sensitive to what the learners say and how they interact with each other or express the music and evaluate after it. These behaviours were observed across the case studies, more on CS2, CS3a and Cs3b than in CS1 and CS4. This probably happened because, as it will be discussed later, choral conducting training at an intermediate level, as opposed to beginners (CS1), allowed for greater freedom of instruction since basic musical knowledge and some basic technical skills already existed. Finally, it has been found that effective teachers use appropriate body language and they know when to talk, when to listen and when to interact. As was expressed by T3 (see CS3a), choral conducting programmes offer a unique opportunity, not only to the learners, but also to the tutors to observe and identify trouble-spots in the teaching and learning process that could alert them to their own as well as their learners' difficulties with understanding and application of choral conducting practice.

Although this study cannot deny that some individuals, more than others, might have more advanced communication skills or the ability to work well with other people developed at different levels, probably due to influences from their local (family, school and peers) and their wider cultures (community and culture), it strongly advocates that an effective choral conducting education can nurture all the necessary attributes (see Chapter Three, Table 3.2) that choral leaders need for effective practice.

8.2.2 The tutors' pedagogical approach

The pedagogical approaches that the five tutors adopted in their teaching environments are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. Two types of instruction; a teacher-focused and a learner-focused have been identified.

8.2.2.1 A teacher-focused approach

T1 in CS1, who had obtained his training in choral conducting through masterclasses and personal practice, appeared to promote an 'instructive' model of teaching and learning, where the role of the tutor and learners were clearly defined in a more traditional 'master-apprentice' manner. T1 instructed the learners on what he considered effective and non-effective conducting gestures and he chose the pieces of music that each learner was expected to rehearse during the in-between periods of the practical workshops and to present in the class on the day of the next workshop. He even demonstrated the exact sequence through which conductors could 'effectively' teach the singers new pieces of music regardless of the singers' age or musical competence[2]. Moreover, in order for the learners to achieve what he considered an 'effective independence of hands', the tutor did not only model, but also physically led a learner's hand. For example, the learner kept the pulse of the music with one hand whilst the tutor shaped the phrasing of the music with the learner's other hand.

T1 had structured the training process quite rigidly, in the sense that group interactions through feedback or comments from the fellow learners and/or collaborative activities among the members of the group were actively discouraged. Instead, he was monitoring and correcting learners' practice to conform to his agenda. Gumm (1993) describes this dimension of choral music teaching style as 'Teacher Authority', which is characterised by the teachers' attempt to assert and maintain a controlling role in the music classroom. T1 did monitor learners closely and indicated that learners should carry out his suggestions. Therefore, a 'master-apprentice' relationship flourished during the training process, which was probably attributed to two factors. On the one hand, the tutor possibly believed that, due to time limitation, he ought to have absolute control of the training process in order for a structured curriculum to be covered. However, teaching that becomes 'a frantic scramble to "cover" all the listed topics' (Biggs, 2003, p. 275), often results in superficial coverage, which according to Gardner is 'the greatest enemy of understanding' (in Biggs, 2003, p. 275). On the other hand, the 'master-apprentice' relationship observed in CS1 seemed to match a model of apprenticeship also described by Gaunt (2006, p.

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[2] The tutor promoted a teaching approach of canons and rounds through patterning to indicate the level of the pitch. The suggested strategy for teaching the following: ABC, A, AB, C, BC, ABC; where A, B and C were phrases of the canons or rounds. The tutor underlined that this approach could be used with any kind of repertoire and, potentially, at any level of rehearsing.

55) with content and teacher having a 'clear sense of an established body of wisdom and knowledge being passed down to the next generation', as the dominant elements of the teaching and learning process. In CS1, choral conducting training was organised in a linear progression; the tutor set the rules and the learners applied them without any observable creative engagement, such as discussion, reflection or exploration. Gaunt (2006), in her study on instrumental and vocal tuition within a conservatoire environment, put particular emphasis on the limitations of this apprenticeship model of teaching and learning in the twenty-first century. She explained that within the field of music performance the concept of linear apprenticeship is problematic because it suggests that creative engagement can only occur once considerable skill is accumulated.

> Without creative engagement in both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action in ongoing interrelated cycles, it becomes more likely that the professional practicum…would become an inward looking learning environment where challenge and the continual development of new practices are not stimulated.
>
> (Gaunt, 2006, p. 59)[3]

The apprenticeship environment that was nurtured in CS1, where choral conducting education was offered at an initial level, did not appear to encourage learners' learning strategies and independent thinking as they were expected to respond to the tutor's agenda. Prosser et al. (2007) explain that the way academic tutors' understand their subject matter is closely related to the ways in which they represent that subject to their learners and ultimately how effectively their learners learn that subject. T1 did indeed describe his role, not so much as a teacher but as a head of conducting training of the independent body where he worked, as quite 'dictatorial' in terms of how the syllabus had to be applied and followed. His teacher-focused approach and quite rigid instruction was revealed throughout the training process. Prosser et al. (2007), however, report that the learners of tutors who use teacher-focused approaches to teaching have a greater tendency to adopt surface approaches to learning and to reach learning outcomes of less quality. On the contrary, the tutors who use learner-focused approaches (like the ones described in CS2, CS3a and CS3b) have learners more likely to adopt a deeper approach to learning and higher quality learning outcomes.

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[3] This conception of instrumental learning, however, is culturally located, that many Asian and Eastern musical genres are characterised by an ongoing dominance of the master-apprentice model (e.g. India, Japan, Indonesia, China) (see Chapter Three, 3.4).

A teaching approach that closely imitated the 'expert-apprentice' model was also observed in the conservatoire environment (CS4), where choral conducting instruction was at advanced (Masters) level. Conservatoire contexts generally select their learners very strictly and, therefore, provide them with more advanced practical training as their learners tend to subsequently pursue professional careers in music performance or composition. T4 appeared to adopt a slightly different apprenticeship model of teaching than the one observed in CS1. His teaching approach was based on observation of other conductors and the meticulous study of music repertoire. As he admitted, this was the learning approach that he was familiar with as an apprentice choral conductor himself. T4 tended to focus a lot on the aesthetic, artistic and expressive performance of the music rather than basic gestural or music instruction, as it happened in CS1 and CS2. Gumm (1993) describes this type of teaching style as 'Music Performance Oriented' at an 'Aesthetic Music Performance' dimension of choral music. The conservatoire environment in which T4 operated enabled him to deal with music in fine detail, because the level of the conducting learner was advanced. What is more, the learners' technical 'know-how' (i.e. the skills and knowledge involved in performance) and 'aesthetic knowledge' were highly developed, too, which allowed learner and tutor to engage in relatively deep conversations on the role of the conductor as an interpreter of the music and mediator between the music and the audience.

The apprenticeship model observed in CS4 does not, however, bear similarities with the notion of apprenticeship within a situated learning environment, as described by Lave and Wenger (1991). To illustrate, S28 of CS4, also a singer of the conservatoire chamber choir, observed the choral practice of her tutor (the expert); his communication with the singers, his leadership of rehearsals, the planning of concerts and the selection of the music repertoire. But, she had no opportunity for regular Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in the practice of the expert, for her role in the choir which the tutor led was that of a singer. She did have, however, the opportunity to rehearse with other choirs; either on her own or under the observation of her tutors. Also, she was given no performance opportunities the year of her studies.

The 'master-apprentice' model of teaching and learning in music performance within conservatoire environments has been studied by Hays et al. (2000) and Gaunt (2006). Hays et al. (2000) talk about mentorship and its meaning for musicians. They suggest that mentorship is essentially about 'interpersonal relationships that extend beyond the normal teacher/learner interaction' and that the term mentor 'implies more of a commitment to the learner/ teacher relationship' (op cit. 2000, p. 4). Yet, it is argued that, in the conservatoire tradition, learners are taught by an expert player, singer or conductor, so-called 'maestro', who is often highly authoritarian because he is not expected to qualify or defend decisions or instructions. Although no such authoritarian figure was observed in CS1 and CS4, T1 and T4, like the participant tutors in Gaunt's study (2006) tended to adopt an apprenticeship model of instruction, which was a route that they themselves had followed as learners. Their perceived expertise in choral conducting education was, therefore, a consequence of years of engagement in teaching and not through teacher education. This research data also confirm Gaunt's (2006) and Prosser et al. (2007) studies – that there seems to be a link between tutors' enculturation and background in music that informs the way that they teach and perceive their expertise in choral conducting.

8.2.2.2 A learner-focused approach

Contrary to the apprenticeship approach followed by T1 and T4; T2 and T3 in CS2 – CS3b and T5 in CS4, were more flexible in their teaching approaches. They encouraged learner independence and autonomous learning by allowing the learners to articulate how they felt about the music that they rehearsed and to reflect on their practice in and outside the training sessions. T2 said 'I am not telling them "do this", but I am saying "start that bit again and give us some clues to what the piece is about with your face or hands'. Likewise, T3 tended to interact with the learner without offering answers but rather through encouraging repetition and exploration.

> **Excerpt from CS3a (Practical workshop 2)**
>
> **T2** (to the choir): Why do you think she needs to do it in four [beats in a bar] there?
>
> **L11:** Oh... *(looked puzzled)*
>
> **T2:** I am just asking a question. I am not saying 'you don't do it in four', just why do you think that you need to?
>
> **L11:**...*(Still puzzled)*
>
> **T2:** To make it more rhythmic. Isn't it?

L11: More rhythmic and clear for the lower parts

T2: Lets all sing it. *T2 sings the melody and conducts in four beats.*

T2: Now do two [beats in a bar].

Group and tutors sing and conducts in two.

T2: Fine. I am not saying what's right or what's wrong. I am just saying getting the result you want to.

T3: *(to the choir)* Which one is clearer? You don't have to say the same one.

T2 and T3 created a positive learning environment through being sensitive and accommodating to learners' fatigue or frustration. When the learners felt that they were not good enough, the tutors offered formative and mostly positive feedback which varied according to the perceived competence of each individual. A strong feature of the teaching approach that T2 and T3 adopted, which could be attributed to the fact that they were very familiar with choral conducting preparation within educational contexts, was the fact that they put emphasis on group efficiency and group dynamics. In particular, the learners of CS2 and CS3b had the opportunity to collaborate in group activities, such as to practise in pairs or within small groups of three to four individuals.

On the whole, it was found that the teaching approaches of the five tutors were very much influenced by their own experiences as learners within formal education (T2, T3 and T5) or through apprenticeship (T1 and T4). The former encouraged a cooperative atmosphere among the participants (learners and accompanists) in which the goal was to help each individual improve at their own level, as well as contribute to the group development. The latter worked either with very 'novice' musicians (T1) that had 'minimal exposure to the domain' of choral conducting (Chi, 2006, p. 22), which gave them less freedom of instruction or with quite expert learners (T4) – what Chi (2006) would call 'journeymen', in a one-to-one relationship.

8.3 The learners

With regard to the learners, this research collected data on their background knowledge, abilities and experiences in relation to choral singing and conducting. It also inquired into their expectations and aspirations from the programmes they enrolled on. Questionnaire responses, observations and interviews with individual participants revealed a connection between learners' perceptions of the role of the

choral conductor (subject matter) and their conceptions of the learning contexts, which subsequently affected their expectations from the training process.

Concerning their background, a broad spectrum of musical knowledge and skills was observed among the learners. To start with, the learners of CS1 appeared to lack some necessary musical and technical background knowledge and skills. They also tended to perceive the role of the choral conductor as one restricted to very basic functions, such as starting and stopping the choir or teaching the music. What is more, they appeared to downgrade or ignore the significance of philosophical principles, such as an awareness of how the voice works and develops, or knowledge of choral repertoire. That is to say, although, they talked about the necessity of understanding how the voice works it was not clearly demonstrated whether they really understood how these skills could be used or whether they expected to receive instruction on vocal education or repertoire selection during their training. On repertoire selection, L1 explained, for example, that she tended to select pop, jazz or gospel songs over classical songs because she believed that the audience would be particularly interested in this type of repertoire. Her response parallels findings by Forbes (2001) and Reames (2001) who revealed that, whilst the conductors nominated by their colleagues as outstanding tended to select more classical, folk and non-Western repertoire for their choirs, the non-nominated directors, or directors with less years of experience, tended to choose more popular/rock music. However, other research suggests that both the singers and the audience do appreciate diverse and challenging repertoire (Apfelstadt, 2000; Durrant, 2003; Persellin, 2000; Turton and Durrant, 2002). On the whole, no guidance on repertoire instruction was observed during the training in CS1 other than promotion of some singing material published by the organisation that provided the training.

A mismatch between course expectations and CS1 learners' perception of their learning environment was also demonstrated. Despite the absence of very basic musical skills (such as aural and singing skills) by some participants, the perception that general experience in teaching could compensate for the technical weaknesses, did not appear to discourage some individuals to enrol on a course on choral conducting. On the topic of background knowledge and abilities, Campbell (1991) put

particular emphasis on the fact that advanced musical skills are a prerequisite for every teacher-conductor.

> Music learning in ensemble classes is dependent on conductor-teachers who by necessity are first musicians. They fulfil this role as they apply a diversity of skills that focus on their own performance and aural abilities. They must be able to teach through demonstration – baritones who will sing soprano parts, or trombonists who can play phrases on the flute. They must be detectives of errors, with ears that are fine tuned to hear an F sharp when it should be a natural or to realise that it is the sagging tenors who are causing the ensembles intonation problems. They must possess the skill to think quickly in the resolution of problems and should know remedies for such matters as inaccurate fingerings, poor breath control, rhythmic errors and sloppy articulation.   (Campbell, 1991, p. 246)

The data analysis from the choral conducting course at an initial level contributed to the understanding that choral conducting education needs the application of already mastered musical skills and knowledge.

With regard to learners' approaches to studying and their perceived learning context, Richardson (2007) suggests a possible connection between the two factors. The findings of his study (see Chapter Three, 3.7.2) revealed that approaches to studying are, to some extent, driven by learners' perceptions of their academic environment. To illustrate with data from this research, it was revealed that the learners in CS2 tended to prefer a 'master-apprentice' relationship that focused on one-to-one interaction between learners and tutor. Group practical activities and reflective group discussions that were planned and implemented by the tutors were initially described by some learners as activities that 'lacked direction' and their attitude towards them was predominantly negative. This probably happened because the learners expected more intensive, highly individualised conducting practice. Also, such an approach may potentially have made them feel more secure and prevented them from over-exposing their lack of musical or other skills. In addition, their perception might also have been coloured by certain weaknesses in planning and preparation of the sessions, as reported by the learners. Efficient instruction based on a 'master-apprentice' model was expressed by the learners in Gaunt's study on one-to-one instrumental and vocal teaching and learning in conservatoire contexts (Gaunt, 2006; 2008). Gaunt's study showed that conservatoire learners expected their tutors to show them how to perform,

to observe their practice and feed back to them, without allowing time for reflective discussions. On the contrary, T2 and T3, with many years of experience in teaching music within education, induced whole-class learning situations with learners exploring the different characters of the same piece and/or different gestures for effective ending or beginning of a piece of music and expected the learners to draw comparisons between the different musical examples that they modelled. By the end of the programme, the same learners who previously favoured a 'master-apprentice' instructional model appeared not only to enjoy, but also to value group feedback and collaborative learning activities. The learners of CS3b, in particular, highlighted that discussion groups in the class and on-line were extremely beneficial and helped them improve.

Finally, CS2 and CS3a learners' perceptions of what they considered to be a conductor's most significant attribute often appeared to clash with their expectations from their education process. For instance, although they identified interpersonal – communication skills as the most salient attribute of a choral conductor, they expressed the expectation to receive technical training in conducting, more than anything else. As a matter of fact, there seemed to be a general misunderstanding of the term 'interpersonal skills' in choral conducting practice, as some learners linked these skills with personality traits such as empathy, humanity and humour, which they considered difficult to develop through choral conducting training. Another possible explanation might be that, like T1 and T4, some learners considered communications skills as characteristics of 'charismatic' individuals difficult to be nurtured during choral conducting training. In addition, some learners connected their perceived lack of confidence with a lack in vocal skills. Such perception, as they explained, often derived from unfortunate singing experiences such as negative comments that they had received in the past (Richards and Durrant, 2003; Welch, 2001; 2006)[4].

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[4] The following comment was made by Mark, L, an applicant 86 years old, who wanted to join a new community choir for 'non-singers': 'As a child. I loved to sing. I sang all the time. One day the music teacher at school had us sing for her by ourselves, and she divided us up into two groups – the bluebirds and the crows. I was a crow. Well, I grew up on a farm and I knew what crows sounded like. I haven't sung since. But I guess that before I die, I want to learn how to sing' (Welch, 2001, p. 15).

8.4   The process of preparation

The theoretical framework, proposed in Chapter Three (see Figure 1, Chapter Three) and developed in this Chapter (see Figure 2, p. 224), provides an overview of five parameters that can affect teaching and learning processes in choral conducting education. This framework illustrates an interactive system constantly evolving. Learners' and tutors' experiences, expectations and perceptions of choral conducting as a discipline feed into the actual process of training as designed by the higher education institutions or the independent bodies, which are also influenced by the socio-cultural contexts and the teaching contexts where choral practice is embedded. Attributes such as empathy, enthusiasm, explanation, clarity, structure, level and pace, from Entwistle's heuristic model (2007) are incorporated into the suggested framework because they have been identified by this study during data collection and analysis. However, evidence from the current study suggests that 'structure' during the teaching process was often neglected (i.e. in CS2 and CS4) and that learners' perceived competency level (CS1) affected the level of instruction, which consequently influenced the outcome of training.

8.4.1   Attributes of effective learning environments

Entwistle (2007) proposes a set of seven concepts (empathy, enthusiasm, explanation, clarity, structure, level and pace) that can describe the (effective) interactions between learner characteristics, subject-based teaching activities and other aspects of the overall teaching and learning environment provided for learners and experienced by them in different ways (Entwistle, 2007, pp. 12-13). This study provides examples from the data to identify the concepts that dominated the teaching and learning process of choral conducting education in the five diverse contexts that have been examined.

8.4.1.1 Empathy, enthusiasm and explanation

Entwistle's 'three Es' were observed in all five case studies. On the one hand, the learners attended the programmes out of pure intrinsic motivation – they wanted to improve their practice so as to benefit their own choral environments; their school, church or amateur community choirs. On the other hand, the tutors have been working with trainee choral conductors for years and were well aware of the hurdles that

learners encounter, particularly in relation to the craft side of choral conducting practice. Although the tutors were encouraging and enthusiastic about the potential achievements of their learners, they underlined throughout the training programme that improvement could not happen overnight. In particular, T1, T2 and T3 (who worked with beginners or learners at an intermediate level) created a positive learning environment during the practical workshops, which made the learning process appear appropriate to the learners. That is to say, they ensured that learning occurred in a positive manner through setting a positive mood and through positive feedback (often exaggerated by T1 considering the musical competence of the learners in CS1). A learning context as exemplified here, was described by Gumm (1993) as 'Positive Learning Environment' for choral practice. In detail, the positive learning environments observed were characterised by clarifications of information that learners were uncertain about (explanation); a sensitive and accommodating attitude towards learners fatigue or frustration (empathy); support and caring about learners' opinions and feelings, and praise of learners' achievements at their own level. On the contrary, T4 and T5 worked within an environment that took for granted learners' competence and understanding about performance at an advanced level. Therefore, less time given to explanation on behalf of the tutors was observed. However, both tutors were enthusiastic and encouraging and supported the learner's development through giving her (L28) greater independence to be imaginative and creative and through discussions during the training process rather than one-way lecturing.

8.4.1.2 Clarity, structure, level and pace

Perkins (2007) suggested that clarity and structure affect learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of their training. For instance, in CS2, learners appeared frustrated by the fact that there seemed to be no scheme of work which would clearly describe the sequence of activities in connection to the aims of the course and they considered this to be a weakness of the programme in terms of planning. On the contrary, CS1 appeared to have a highly structured curriculum and explicit targets to be achieved by the end of each session. However, the level of the skills that were aimed to be developed, as well as the pace of the practical workshops (too many elements to be covered at a short period of time) appeared to be a real challenge for the learners at an initial level. This may be attributed to the lack of musical skills that most of CS1 learners had in the first place, which made them insecure about leading the choir and

teaching the music. With regard to musical background as a factor that affects the quality of music performance, Olsson's study (1997) revealed that the tutors who auditioned performers who themselves could not fully control their technical skills tended to consider it useless to assess any other parameters of their performance, such as interpretation of the music, communication skills (from the performer to the audience) or personality (individual's ability to express oneself musically, body language and communication with the audience).

The learners of CS3a and CS3b, who did have the musical knowledge and experience that allowed them to comprehend better what could be covered during the training programme, appeared to focus more specifically on particular aspects of choral conducting technique and practice and, therefore, expressed higher levels of satisfaction, as well as demonstrated higher levels of progress to the observer.

As far as clarity and structure on the part of the tutors are concerned, Madsen (1990) emphasised that tutors must have a good sense of timing and an immediate and ubiquitous sense of learner attentiveness, because 'unlike the entertainer, the teacher must have a solid subject matter whose presentation is temporarily sequenced for maximum learner participation and achievement' (op cit. 1990, p. 45). Structure, level and pace as described by Perkins (2007) were also addressed by the theoretical construct of Cognitive Apprenticeship (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) under the heading 'Sequence'. 'Increasing complexity' and 'diversity' of tasks during choral rehearsals were described by the tutors and learners as an integral part of a conductor's practice. It was, hence, emphasised by the participants of this study that complexity and diversity of repertoire and rehearsal techniques very much depended on the level of their choirs. To sum up, the structure, level and pacing of choral conducting education processes were very much influenced by the perceived and actual musical competence of the participant learners.

8.4.2 The pedagogical context of Cognitive Apprenticeship

The pedagogical context of Cognitive Apprenticeship (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) is proposed by this study as a likely pedagogical context for effective learning in choral conducting. This training approach combines working on craft skills related

to conducting practice (like an apprentice conductor would work with a choir) and the development of knowledge often disseminated within university environments, primarily associated with publications in books and journals. This type of knowledge, termed 'codified knowledge' by Eraut (2007), is given further status within higher education (as in the CS3a, CS3b and CS4 contexts) by incorporation into educational programmes, examinations and qualifications. Eraut also identifies (i) confidence and commitment (personal agency), (ii) feedback and support and (iii) challenge and value of the work as favourable conditions for learning from experience, other people and 'on the job'. The following paragraphs examine these three conditions together with the conditions of ideal learning environments identified in the Cognitive Apprenticeship framework. Although most of the characteristics of a Cognitive Apprenticeship context (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989, p. 476) have been identified within the programmes that have been observed, it was evident from the data that particular methods, such as reflective practice in the class and/or through video recordings and feedback, were considered by the learners as particularly effective in nurturing their skills, awareness and understanding of choral conducting practice. Table 8.1 parallels (i) the attributes of ideal learning environments suggested by Cognitive Apprenticeship, (ii) with Eraut's (2007) criteria of effective learning factors in the workplace and (iii) the data gathered across all five case studies.

8.4.2.1 Content

The content knowledge and skills were common across all five environments. This suggests that there are particular attributes related to choral conducting; musical (i.e. vocal skills and technical gestures) and non-musical (interpersonal skills) that, regardless of the level of the learners, they constitute the core of choral conducting training. However, studying choral conducting at an initial level did appear to have a bearing upon the development and practice of strategies such as problem-solving and reflective practice.

Table 8.1: The observed process of choral conducting education

Characteristics of Cognitive Apprenticeship contexts and the workplace	Choral Conducting instruction characteristics	Programmes				
		1	2	3a	3b	4
Content						
Domain knowledge	Gestures, Vocal instruction and Rehearsal strategies	√	√	√	√	√(no instruction on gestures)

Heuristic strategies	Rehearsal 'tricks'	√	√	√	√	√
Control strategies	Problem-solving strategies in rehearsals and performances	X	√	√	√	√
Learning strategies	Reflective practice	X	√	√	√	√
Methods						
Modelling	Demonstration	√	√	√	√	X
Coaching – *Feedback* (Eraut, 2007)	Feedback	√	√	√	√	√ *(T5)
Scaffolding/fading	Demonstration/fading	√	√	√	√	X
Articulation	Discussion & Reflection 'in-action'	X	√	√	√	√* (in theoretical sessions)
Reflection	Reflection 'on-action'	X	X	√	√	X
Exploration	Exploring gestures and rehearsal techniques	X	√	√	√	√
Sequence						
Increasing complexity – *Challenge and Value of the work* (Eraut, 2007)	Increasing complexity (gestures, repertoire)	√	√	√	√	√
Increasing diversity	Rehearsal strategies	X	√	√	√	√
Global before local (clear targets of what to achieve musically)	Rehearsal strategies	X	√	√	√	√
Sociology[5]						
Situated learning	Practice with a choir during training	√	√	√	√	√
Culture of expert practice	Observation of other conductors	X	√	√	√	√
Intrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation	√	√	√	√	√
Exploiting cooperation and competition	Collaborative learning	X	√	√	√	X

The learners of CS1 could not employ a wide variety of strategies and skills in solving problems during rehearsing a choir as their musical and technical know-how was still developing. Therefore, maximum time was given to the development of technical competence as opposed to control strategies or reflective practice. What is more, due to the fact that the learners of CS1 formed a small group (eight participants) who also acted as the practice choir, it was not feasible for the programme to offer them a realistic experience of conducting a 'real' choir during the workshop sessions. On the other hand, the learner in CS4 had a practice choir to practise with but, there was no time given to technical instruction as it was taken for granted that her technical competence was at an advanced level.

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[5] For the purpose of this research the term 'sociology' is used to denote the micro socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts and elements within these contexts that potentially influence choral conducting education.

8.4.2.2 Methods

As regards the methods of practical education, the level of the learners also appeared to influence the methods used. For example, L28 (CS4) did not receive technical training (gestures) because it was taken for granted by the conservatoire that she already possessed the knowledge and awareness of gesture and its effect on the sound before she started the postgraduate programme. What is more, during her rehearsals with the practice choir, L28 did not have the opportunity to reflect on her practice. Instead, she focused on the performance of the singers (product-oriented rehearsal) and interacted only to improve the sound and expression of the music. As often happens reportedly within conservatoire environments, the conductor has limited time every week to rehearse with the singers and, therefore, time for self-reflection during rehearsal is not encouraged as such (Gaunt, 2008). Likewise, learners at an initial level were not given the time during the sessions to reflect on their practice because the training programme was short (only five sessions) and, according to the curriculum of the organisations (CS1), there were many parameters of choral conducting practice to be covered during the practical sessions. What is more, only the learners of CS3a and CS3b had the opportunity to reflect on their performance, both in the class and in private, through watching video recordings of their performance. The use of video recordings as a tool for reflection was embedded in the practice of these two programmes. The following paragraphs discuss the contribution of (i) reflective practice and (ii) feedback on effective choral conducting education as it was observed in CS2, CS3a and CS3b.

8.4.2.3 Reflective practice

Reflection is integral to any professional development. Musicians often work in isolation in their schools and other situations; this is particularly so in the case of choral conductors because there is only one in each ensemble. From the five case studies observed, CS3b appeared to have fully utilised reflective practice as an effective approach to teaching and learning. Here, the learners reflected 'in-action' after exploring conducting gestures and rehearsal approaches during the practical workshops, as well as 'on-action' through retrospective on-line activities. Reflection appeared to have increased learners' understanding of

  (i) *self* ("I developed more confidence in trying new skills" - CS3a),

(ii)   *choral practice* ("My targets are: to have a more flowing beat...and remember to breathe with and for my choir members both at the start of a piece and also at the beginning of phrases"- CS3b) and

(iii) *broader educational issues* ("Some instructors speak too much, it doesn't add to the quality of information" – CS2).

T1 talked about a 'lack of awareness' often displayed by choral conducting learners and choral conductors, in general. He pointed out that there is often "a big gap between perception and reality about choral conductors" and whilst some individuals think that they are successful choral leaders, they are actually not as efficient as they think they might be. Despite T1's acknowledgement of some conductors' false self-perceptions, he did not encourage reflection in CS1. The training context in which he taught consisted of learners with very basic musical skills, awareness and understanding of choral conducting practice, in which case self-reflection could prove to be an effective tool for learning.

On the contrary, when T2 and T3 talked about learners' lack of 'awareness', they referred to an awareness of the skills underpinning choral conducting practice rather than learners' own perception as conductors. In particular, T2 mentioned that learners often 'don't know what they don't know'. For this reason, the participants of CS2, CS3a and CS3b engaged in the process of reflection by observing, analysing, exploring alternatives and experimenting. To illustrate, *Ave Verum Corpus* by W.A. Mozart was one the pieces used in CS2-CS3b because most choral learners knew it. The learners were encouraged to explore gesture in relation to dynamics, time signature (conducting two or four beats in a bar), articulation (different gestures to make the singers conclude the 's' at the end of the phrases together) and rehearsal ploys (which phrases are likely to require more rehearsal time and what vocal or other issues might be encountered). During the training process, T2 and T3 modelled gestures and interacted with the learners. However, they stressed that each individual could try out, in private, different gestures and rehearsal approaches and adopt those that they believed that best suit their practice in their own choral environments.

It has also been recognised that learners do not automatically engage in reflective thinking (Leglar and Collay, 2002). Reflective thinking is a learnt process for some, if not all, and, therefore, the tutors have to take up the role of facilitators. That is to say,

to take responsibility for creating a comfortable environment, as it was observed in CS2, CS3a and CS3b where the tutors asked questions to prompt thinking and used discussion and dialogue instead of one-way instruction.

It has been argued, however, that a reflective approach to teaching might not necessarily be more successful than an approach close to an apprenticeship concept. Cain's study (2007) on preservice music teachers showed that the reflective approach to mentoring was less successful in comparison to the 'apprenticeship-concept' model. Cain reasoned that not all preservice teachers reflect enough and, if they do, their reflection is often superficial. Stegman (2007) suggested likewise when he explains that the more experienced the teacher, the deeper and higher the levels they reflect. Nevertheless, the data reported in this research contradict Cain's findings. Data from the intermediate-level courses (CS2, CS3a and CS3b) demonstrated that the training process was not dominated by the teacher, but collaborative reflective activities engaged the learners in a creative learning process. Furthermore, self-reflective reports produced by CS3b learners, as part of their course assignments, helped them, as they themselves admitted, to monitor progress, analyse their strengths and difficulties and consider implications for future choral practice. Through reflection 'in-action' and 'on-action', the learners of CS2, CS3a, but primarily CS3b, had the opportunity to consider critically why certain things worked or did not work during their practice in the teaching sessions. As data revealed, these programmes did not place so much emphasis on the acquisition and development of musical-technical skills *per se*. Instead, they focused on nurturing the metacognitive skills that would help the learners to reflect constructively on their on-going experiences as a way of developing knowledge and improving the quality and effectiveness of their existing practice. The reflective environment created in CS3a and CS3b encouraged learners to reflect on their practice during the sessions, taking into account their prior experiences and the contexts in which they operate.

When reflection 'in-action' occurred during the sessions, learners related their performance with their practice in their own environments. To illustrate, the following example is from a dialogue between tutors and learner. The learner, who worked with children, tended to lean towards the choir in order to compensate for the height difference. She also tended to gesture excessively.

T3: It [moving both hands all the time] doesn't help.

T2: It doesn't do anything. And you may be not as tall as me, for example, but it doesn't make any difference. Make them come to you. So by bringing things [gesture] in, you are making them come to you rather than feeling you are reaching out all the time. And it can be with tiddley kids, big kids, old-age pensioners…

L7: Yea. This is it. I think it feels quite unnatural to me because I think most of the conductors I have seen over recent years have been so, kind of, large and energetic and amused and also I think perhaps of confidence to compensate for example when someone is conducting kids. You sort of feel like, that you have to do everything for them (CS3a).

The use of video as a tool for reflection 'on-action' was singled out by the learners of CS2, CS3a and CS3b as one of the strongest features of their course. The videos were described as a direct tool for improvement; through 'rehearing the feedback', the learners could develop their own interpretations, which in turn helped them 'improve in private' and promoted autonomous learning and self-confidence. Eraut (2007) emphasises that a tool that 'triggers reflection and self-evaluation or observation of a more experienced group of learners', such as the use of video, offers higher education the opportunity to support learners' development, in particular when the learners are doing joint work in stages and discuss their on-going progress at regular intervals. Consistent with these findings is Stegman's study (2007) on reflecting dialogue between learner teachers in music and their cooperative teachers, which underlined that videotapes prove very instructive in identifying overlooked musical concerns and generating ideas for addressing them in the future. The observation of the videos of their own and others' performance is believed to have provided the learners of CS2-CS3b with a structure to help them make sense of the feedback they received from the tutors and the singers.

On the whole, the current research advocates that regular monitoring of learners' choral conducting practice through video recordings can be an effective tool during the process of choral conducting preparation, because it allows observation of oneself, the tutor and other conductors and their interactions. However, in the fieldwork, the contribution of video recordings was not restricted to observation of conducting models in practice. It also stimulated reflective dialogues among the learners, on-line (CS3b) and in the classroom (CS2, CS3a). From the learners' self-reflective reports and the examination of their videos, it has become evident that CS3a, but mostly

CS3b, achieved a subtle balance of reflection 'in-action' and reflection 'on-action', which is important in enabling leaps into using existing skills in new contexts and developing new possibilities (Rogers, 2002). Reflection on-line has also indicated that, once the groundwork was laid and adequate time was given to the learners, they could reflect in the absence of the tutors. Arguably this gave them greater ownership of their learning. Taken together, both the learners and their tutors found the process of reflecting 'on-action' and 'in-action' to be helpful, albeit to varying degrees and to different ends. What learners found more meaningful and beneficial was regular reflection, initiated by the tutors and enriched by tutors' related experiential advice. These characteristics also appeared to advance the relationship between choral conducting learners and tutors beyond that of apprenticeship towards one of collaboration.

8.4.2.4 Feedback

The data reported in this study highlighted that feedback is a necessary element of effective teaching and learning across all levels of educational practice. Eraut (2007) explained that 'continuing feedback on both specific and general progress is important for sustaining morale throughout the early career stage' (Eraut, 2007, p. 129) but is often in short supply. Ericsson et al. (2007) stress that the development of expertise requires tutors who are capable of giving constructive and even painful feedback to their learners.

The data from CS2, CS3a and CS3b, where feedback was utilised throughout the training process and came from two directions (peers at one end of the spectrum and tutors at the other), demonstrated many instances where feedback was supportive, but often painful. Tutors' feedback was (i) verbal (with comments such as "Well done", "Watch the head", "Beautiful", "Use smaller space [hand gestures] for the moment"), (ii) musical (by conducting a particular phrase to show the learner how it should be performed), (iii) visual (through smiles, nods, facial and bodily gestures), or (iv) kinaesthetic (extending the neck to improve posture, gently shaking tension from the learner's shoulders). T2 and T3 tended to interact more often with the less experienced and less confident learners; they asked them to adapt some behaviour or other: for example, to change their body posture, hand position, gestures; improve their non-verbal communication through more intense eye contact, avoid mouthing or

singing the words of the songs whilst conducting the choir. What is more, interaction with others at the level of offering and receiving feedback brought more diverse perspectives into play for each individual and seemed to reduce levels of self-criticism and fear. Paradoxically, the learners of CS2, unlike CS3a and CS3b, often found it hard to trust the support of their peer group and they generally expressed a desire for more one-to-one feedback and fewer discussion sessions. This possibly indicates that offering and receiving feedback as a method for effective teaching and learning in choral conducting needs to be encouraged by the tutor in parallel with other methods such as reflection, modelling or exploration. Trust needs time to grow.

The practical sessions at the initial level demonstrated predominance of approval reinforcement. An abundance of "Fab[ulous]", "Brill[iant]", "Bravos" and "Excellents" were evidenced, even when the performance was far from satisfactory. This finding parallels Yarbrough and Madsen's reference (1998) to high degrees of positive reinforcement offered more in lower grades and secondary school choral rehearsals, compared to university rehearsal situations. It also corresponds to studies indicating that, although enthusiasm may be an essential indicator of 'high intensity' teaching, no amount of it will make the teaching ultimately successful if the tutor has inadequate or limited knowledge of the subject matter (Byo, 1990; Cassidy, 1989). T1 did demonstrate adequate knowledge of choral conducting practice that he obtained through experience, however, it has been highlighted in Chapter Three (see Table 3.3) that choral conductor educators also need skills other than musical for their role as effective tutors.

Observations of CS4 and the learner's reports and interview responses indicated that feedback was given to the learner only during the first term of her studies, from T5. Instruction in the two following semesters entailed the study of music repertoire and observation of T4's choral rehearsals. This situation parallels the research findings by Gaunt (2006; 2008), which revealed that tutors within conservatoire environments tended not to discuss the processes of feedback with their learners in much detail. A study on mentorship relationship for musicians by Hays et al. (2000) also demonstrated that music education, especially within the conservatoire tradition, is founded on the premise that learners are taught by the expert player or singer, often in a master-apprentice relationship. Hays et al. (2000) advocated that the mentor

supports and challenges the protégé to professionally develop as a person by providing on-going assessment and feedback.

> An important aspect of this work [being a mentor] is to allow protégés to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, while developing their skills in a rigorous but nurturing environment. The relationship often tends to be exclusionary and discriminatory in nature, allowing for high level cognitive and technical skills to be cultivated by the close and involved one-to-one relationship between mentor and protégé.   (Hays, Minichiello and Wright, 2000, p. 4)

The learners and tutors of this study thus reported that, regardless of their competence in music, all learners needed to feel safe and protected whilst developing professional skills in choral conducting and this includes the process of receiving feedback. Previous research on the benefits of offering feedback on music performance (Price, 1983; Stegman, 2007) have revealed that giving the highest quality feedback on learners' performance is an effective way of increasing their attentiveness, motivation and positive attitude towards music performance.

CS4, where direct feedback to the conductor was scarce, was identified by the observer as particularly non-motivating environment for the participant singers. To start with, the singers of the 'practice choir' appeared quite unresponsive to the significant role they could potentially play in the education of their conductor. To illustrate, apart from the fact that some singers did not spend time in preparation for the rehearsal, others did not even turn up on the day of her preliminary assessment. T4 suggested that a cohort of choral conductors could potentially offer a more supportive environment for each conducting learner as during rehearsals constructive feedback among the members of the group is exchanged. Although T4 proposed cohort training as an alternative teaching approach to the existing one-to-one tuition, he missed the opportunity to take advantage of the experiences and critical observation of the 'practice choir' and use the singers as a validation-in-action tool to implement his feedback and critical evaluation on the learner-conductor's progress. The singers of the practice choir could have actively participated in the training process by offering feedback to the learner conductor. That could have nurtured the creation of a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) where the tutor, learner-conductor and the singers collaborated for the achievements of a common goal; for example, a public concert (extrinsic motivation). The singers would then have become more

responsible and motivated to study the music and observe their conductor during rehearsals with the aim to contribute to the training process and move from the rehearsal to the performance stage. However, the increased concentration on autonomous learning that exists within conservatoire environments (Gaunt, 2006; 2008; MacNamara, Holmes and Collins, 2008) probably prevented the creation of a teaching and learning environment based on mutual contribution and collaboration.

8.4.2.5 Sociology

With regard to the socio-cultural contexts that have been observed, Table 8.1 showed that intrinsic motivation, which suggested commitment on the part of the learners, was common across all five case studies. Gumm (2004) argues that the teacher serves as an 'extrinsic' motivation during active music learning and learners are motivated 'intrinsically' when presented with deep reflective learning. The notion of 'intrinsic' motivation has been addressed by the theoretical construct of Cognitive Apprenticeship and was observed in all five case studies that have been examined. To start with, the learner in CS4 who had already been working as a choral conductor of a children's choir enrolled on a postgraduate programme on choral conducting with the intention of improving her skills, awareness and understanding of the role of a choral conductor. Likewise, the learners of CS1, CS2, CS3a and CS3b undertook training in choral conducting, some because they wanted to develop basic conducting skills so as to cope with leading their amateur choirs in schools or church settings (CS1, CS2 and CS3a) and some because they considered it a necessary part of their training as music specialists for their future professional careers (CS3b and CS4). Motivation, according to Biggs, is an outcome of teaching and not necessarily its precondition and for the intrinsically motivated learner 'the point is to travel and not to arrive' (Biggs, 2003, p. 62). In other words, good teaching makes learners want to engage in the tasks. In all, intrinsic motivation was observed by all the learners who participated in the study.

In relation to the 'situatedness' of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), it was recognised by both the learners and the tutors that cohort training, rather than one-to-one instruction, and the use of a 'real' choral ensemble during the workshop sessions promoted collaborative learning and learning from observation of other choral conducting models. In particular, it was found that in CS3a, where the learners were at

different levels in terms of their musical knowledge and experiences, a strong community of choral practice was developed among the members of the group. The less competent and confident learners had the opportunity to observe and imitate different choral conductors other than the two tutors, whereas the more advanced learners reported that they monitored beginners' progress and also learnt from it.

Observation of music performance has been recognised as a key process for learning. Through observation, trainee conductors can build an internal conceptual model of the ways that they could possibly accomplish a task before attempting to execute it (Durrant, 2003; Gaunt, 2006; Rosenthal, 1984). What is more, through observing the tutors and other fellow conductors, the learners can develop a 'conceptual organizer' (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) for their first attempts that allows them to concentrate on executing the skills. This conceptual organiser provides an internalized guide for the period that the trainee conductors practise with their own choirs. When the conceptual organiser is continually updated through further observation and feedback, it is believed that it encourages them to become more independent. The learners of CS2, CS3a and CS3b were encouraged to observe their tutors and peers, to be creative and imaginative when exploring new techniques and to think aloud. They were also urged to define and compare how they felt about their performance, as well as describe their choral conducting experiences in the practical workshops and in their own professional environments.

8.4.2.6 Collaborative learning

Pitts (2005) suggested that personal development and social interaction are closely connected in musical experience.

> Participants do not make choices between these two aspects, but rather seek a balance which allows them to satisfy their personal motivations and musical needs.
>
> (Pitts, 2005, p. 33)

She explains that individual satisfaction is balanced with group experience communicated through social goals, musical achievements and acceptance of collective responsibility, group coherence, development, friendship and support. The learners of CS2, CS3a and CS3b had ample opportunities for group interaction through whole-class learning situations that were planned by the tutors. T2 and T3 had firstly established a cooperative atmosphere in which the goal was to improve the whole through individual progress at one's own level.

Observations identified activities (i) in pairs: one individual conducted the other and the conducted offered feedback on gesture, facial expression, eye-contact or vocal modelling to their conductor; and (ii) within smaller groups of three to four individuals who discussed issues related to choral practice and created their own warm-ups (CS2, CS3a and CS3b). Group discussions that dealt with particularities of diverse choral conducting environments (i.e. church choirs, children's choirs, adult community choirs) took place either within the whole cohort of conducting learners or in smaller groups (CS2). These discussions addressed issues related to rehearsal technique, vocal considerations and repertoire. Additionally, small groups of three to four individuals gave feedback during the practical workshops and on-line (CS3b) on each other's targets towards improvement. When group collaboration occurred in CS2 – CS3b, it appeared to be for collegiality and validation of one's practice, i.e. similarly motivated people supported one another and not through sheer practical necessity of the choir being only present in order to sing for the learner conductors. On the contrary, because of the teacher-focused approach that was adopted by the tutors, no collaborative learning was observed in CS1 and CS4.

Collaborative learning has been identified in teaching and learning literature as an important component in rich learning contexts (Biggs, 2003; Moore, 2000). Biggs (2003) highlighted that formally structured and/or spontaneous learner-learner interaction can enrich learning outcomes[6]. He explained that when learners work collaboratively and in dialogue with their peers and tutors, they can achieve elaborate and deeper understanding of the activities that they undertake. Moore (2000) talks about collaborative learning in relation to Vygotskyan theory[7] and stressed the importance of working towards a learner-teacher relationship that 'invites and

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[6] Biggs (2003) reasoned that through student-student interaction, students can elaborate on existing knowledge. 'This facilitates: (i) deriving standards for judging better and worse interpretations, (ii) meta-cognitive awareness of how one arrives at a given position…The metacognitive aspects are sharpened because students readily identify with each other's learning in a way they do not do with top-down teaching directed learning'. Biggs also put emphasis on the motivational and social outcomes: '(i) Interacting with peers is usually more interesting than listening to lectures and (ii) increased self-concept, communication skills, self-knowledge, getting to know other students better out of which friendships may arise' (2003, p. 90).

[7] Moore (2000) summarised some of Vygotsky's central arguments on development and instruction as following: (i) 'Children's cognitive development is achieved most effectively by elaborating ideas and understandings in discussion with their teachers and peers; (ii) children perform and develop better with help than without help, and ought to be given tasks that will test what is developing in them rather than what has already developed…; (iii) children must develop 'conscious mastery' over what they have learnt rather than merely being able to recite facts which may have little meaning for them; and (iv) the development of such expertise is not subject-specific, and once acquired becomes a tool through which all learning is facilitated and enhanced'(2000, pp. 18-19).

encourages dialogue rather than monologue' and encourages the facility for learners to alternate between discussion with peers and discussion with the teacher.

However, Gaunt (2006) revealed that, in conservatoire environments, collaborative learning tends to be dominated by teaching and learning models based on transmission and apprenticeship, similar to the ones observed in CS1 and CS4. She continued by saying that it is not clear whether such models could stimulate appropriate and extensive learning in all the learners, or if they can encourage teachers to develop techniques and strategies to match needs of individual learners and prepare them for a professional career as music performers. Ruocco (2008) supports the idea of collaborative learning as a particularly effective tool for learning and the development of confidence among primary school teachers who are not highly-skilled in music and who received professional development in choral conducting leadership.

The data from CS2-3b showed that the intermediate level courses did take into account the learners' existing abilities and learning experiences, as well as the interconnections between the ranges of environments (e.g. school, community, church) in which the individuals operated. What is more, it was highlighted by T2 and T3 (but particularly by T3) that the practical workshops were laboratories of artistic and educational research for learners and tutors alike, where the tutors facilitated learners' development through quality collaborative interaction between peers and tutors and, at the same time, became partners in reflective practice and learning. Finally, T3 underscored that she enjoyed teaching in choral conducting courses because she had the opportunity to take the course over and over again and improve her own practice through observing the learner conductors explore gestures and rehearsal approaches.

8.4.3 Summary

The attributes of effective learning environments (Entwistle, 2007) and the theoretical constructs of Cognitive Apprenticeship (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) and learning factors in the workplace (Eraut, 2007), structured the discussion of the data in relation to the process of preparation in choral conducting. This process was observed and reported by its participants across five

case studies. Reflective practice, feedback and collaborative learning activities were singled out by the participant learners themselves as three elements that particularly fostered their education in choral conducting. The following paragraphs discuss the outcomes of the training, as they were perceived and reported by the learners and the benefits of using a phenomenographic approach in qualitative research in education.

8.5   Perceived learning outcomes

Moore (2000, p. 126) points out that 'the acquisition of competences is not the totality of training'. However, when education is formally structured, there is an expectation for learning outcomes from the learners that can be observed from the tutors or examiners. The learners of CS1 and some from CS2 and CS3a would most likely struggle to pass successfully any choral conducting examination that, as in CS4, demands advanced conducting techniques, aural and sight-singing ability, vocal skills and rehearsal techniques. Their background knowledge, in terms of musical-technical skills, was often inhibiting confident and efficient choral conducting leadership. Yet, these learners had enrolled on the courses because they wanted to improve their gestural vocabulary and become more efficient with their rehearsal strategies in their own choral environments.

For the exploration of five diverse processes of choral conducting education experienced and perceived by the participant learners and tutors, this study adopted a phenomenographic perspective. Hounsell and Hounsell (2007) draw attention to the fact that because teaching and learning environments are subjective realities, they need to be investigated through the eyes of those participating in them, both learners and tutors. They suggest that the lived experiences of a curriculum may be seen as different from the curriculum-as-planned or indeed the curriculum-as-implemented, 'if the latter is mediated only from the vantage point of the teaching and support staff' (op cit. 2007, p. 94). On the issue of outcomes as perceived by the learners themselves Ramsden (2007) says

> At the end of the day, it is the students themselves whose experiences determine the quality of the outcomes they achieve. Academics and academies can help make learning possible, but fallible learners, thank goodness, will continue to remain the architects of their own destinies (Ramsden, 2007, p. 150).

Through apprenticeship (CS1 and CS4) or cohort training (CS2, CS3a and CS3b), learning took place through practice under the direction of the tutors, who acted as role models and provided advice and suggestions. With the exception of the learner in CS4, the majority of CS1-CS3b learners offered positive comments on the extent to which their expectations from the training process had been realised. The learners particularly underlined the positive learning environment created by the tutors and the tools, i.e. video recordings, used. However, a study by Yarbrough and Madsen's (1998) revealed that learners often feel satisfied with their learning, even if the quality is not necessarily at very high standards, when the teacher has a 'satisfactory and pleasing style of teaching' (Yarbrough and Madsen, 1998, p. 478). This raises consideration as to whether self-perceptions could always be considered a valid way of evaluating outcomes of teaching and learning processes. Gumm (1993; 2004; 2007), nonetheless, in his studies on teaching styles in choral conducting and the impact that teachers' instruction had on learners, used self-perceptions as a valid means of research, because he found that self-perceptions suggested stability in teaching style.

The validity and reliability of evaluating the effectiveness of a choral conducting programme according to self-perceptions and personal opinions of the subjects undertaking it, which has been realized in this study, might be questioned by the research community. As an answer to this question, the current study parallels choral conducting education and the discourse on the 'competent' practitioner model. The supporters of the 'competences model' argue that the ingredients of 'good teaching' can be itemised. For example, effective teachers need to (i) have sufficient subject knowledge and (ii) be efficient at planning and classroom management. The challengers to this discourse counter-argue that, subject to all the skills being appropriately acquired, not anyone can make an effective teacher because of three problems (Moore, 2000, pp. 123-128). Firstly, learner teachers might have a satisfactory degree of musical-technical competence and awareness of the philosophical principles underpinning their role as choral conductors, but may still have difficulties in organising enjoyable rehearsals for all concerned. This is often the case with conductors within professional choral conducting contexts who tend to focus on perfecting the repertoire that they rehearse and neglect to consider how their singers experience the rehearsal process (Durrant, 2003).

Secondly, however many hours and effort may go into constructing lists of competences, particular items such as 'communicating enthusiasm' or 'maintaining singers motivation' (Table 3.1) might be problematic to measure reliably.

> 'Communicating enthusiasm' in particular seems to suggest some kind of invisible, infectious, esoteric and almost spiritual quality reminiscent of the charismatic-subject discourse, while the call for 'foster enthusiasm' comes into no indication as to how best to achieve this or how the student-teacher's success in this area might be assessed. (How for instance, does one reliably measure 'enthusiasm' during the course of one lesson, let alone across a longer period of time when enthusiasm may come and go according to a wide range of circumstances and events, many of them totally beyond the teacher's reach or control?' (Moore, 2000, p. 127)

This is a situation commonly reported in choral conducting practice. It is technically difficult, even unreasonable to evaluate choral conductors' effectiveness through a single rehearsal. The current research offered the example of CS4's final assessment as a demonstration that factors not related to conductors' competence can have an effect on their perceived performance. To illustrate, the singers of the practice choir did not turn up in time for the final assessment rehearsal and the tutor had to make phone calls to remind them of the assessment exam. Even though the choral conducting learner did not fail the exam – she is a very competent musician and was fortunate to conduct a choir with first-study singers on the day of the exam– she was loaded with stress that did not stem from any weaknesses in preparation, but from an external factor – the absence of the singers. (This does, however, reflect potential real-life situations.)

Thirdly, following Moore's (2000, p. 127) argument on the limitation presented by the 'competence discourse', it might be quite problematic to isolate and define skills and kinds of knowledge that all choral conductors will need regardless of their difference in character and the environments in which they operate.

> As most teachers will agree, there is no one model of good teaching, any more than there is any one model of the good student or the good school. It is also clear that attempts to identify that universal good teacher, student or school through measurable 'outcomes' are themselves misleading, precisely because of the contingent and idiosyncratic aspects of schooling itself. (Moore, 2000, p. 127)

Unlike CS4, which was a one-year programme that prepared individuals for their role as professional conductors, CS1 – CS3b were much shorter in duration and

predominately designed for people who worked with children or amateur singers, within education, church or community contexts. Therefore, emphasis was also placed on nurturing conductors' interpersonal skills, such as the capacity to create positive non-threatening rehearsals that allow singers to feel confident and comfortable, rather than perseverance on developing technical competence. The diversity of professional lives, interests and stages of development among the learners also meant that no single structure of preparation was likely to suit all. Thus, through self-reflection and self-evaluation of their practice in the class and in their own contexts, the learners were offered the opportunity to tailor the training to their own needs.

Although the examples offered from this study do make relatively good sense, there might still be some educational researchers in music who would argue that taking into account individuals' experiences of their preparation, as well as their self-perceptions of how their practice has changed after taking up a course, might be less reliable, since outcomes cannot be clearly measured. However, this phenomenographic qualitative research study did not focus on the measurement of success by outcome, but rather on exploring the processes of choral conducting preparation in five diverse contexts through an emphasis on the observed and reported meanings that the process had for the individuals who participated in it. The phenomenographic approach that was adopted particularly sought to find the critical aspects of the learning processes observed that enabled the learners to handle this process with a view to extrapolating possible factors of 'effectiveness'. What is more, the theoretical framework that was proposed also sought to interpret possible learning outcomes in relation to the agents of a learning process, the methods employed in the process and the socio-cultural contexts in which training and practice occurred.

8.5.1 Effective choral conductor attributes

In CS1 and CS2, the learners had some general musical competence (aural, reading and singing skills) but appeared unable to master the technical difficulties of gesture or to interact with other people. However, this study has repeatedly underlined that, as it emerged from the data analysis and relevant research literatures, musical expertise in choral conducting can only be achieved when technical proficiency is already mastered. Campbell (1991), for example, underscored that all conductor-teachers, should, by necessity, be musicians. Moreover, Olsson's study (1997) with

instrumentalists indicated that competence in one's instrument was the first parameter that an audition panel paid attention to. If learners were unable to master the technical difficulties of their instrument, their musical quality was on too low a level to be assessed. Likewise, Anderson and Wilson (1996) in discussing effective approaches to discipline-based professional development programmes, started from the premise that teachers (even classroom teachers who are not music specialists), should have an existing practical knowledge of music on which to build on new skills, knowledge and awareness; 'It is unreasonable to expect teacher to teach subjects about which they know little' (op cit. 1996, p. 40).

Taken together, to the outside observer, development of choral conducting expertise, particularly in the learners of CS1, was relatively small. However, such small changes appeared significant to the learners themselves, as they reported themselves to have increased in self-esteem as leaders and self identity as choral conductors. Ruocco (2008) explained that adult learners of CPD choral conducting programmes that she observed tended to rate non-musical factors as more important than musical learning. On the contrary, the learners in CS3a, 3b and 4 reported to have developed, each individual at a different level, skills, knowledge and awareness of their roles as choral conductors and leaders.

8.5.2 Confidence and commitment

Through acquisition of musical-technical skills, philosophical principles underpinning the choral conductor's role ('subject knowledge') and rehearsal (class management) skills, the relatively novice choral conductors in the case studies observed developed various degrees of confidence. This confidence is not necessarily a quality that describes the individuals (Cain, 2007), but often stems from 'active' knowledge that has been acquired through training – knowledge of what to do or not to do, what to say or not to say. Apfelstadt (1997) emphasised that confidence is fostered through musical and pedagogical preparation. That is to say, thorough analysis of the score and careful planning of a logical sequence of teaching strategies can foster a more confident presentation. The learners from CS1-CS4, especially CS2, CS3a and CS3b where self-reflection and articulation was encouraged, emphasised the confidence boost that they experienced during the process of their preparation. Although vocal-related instruction was suggested as an area for further development during choral

conducting preparation, the development of technical skills at one's own level and guidance on rehearsal strategies did provide the learners with more confidence to pursue conducting activities. As learners gained experience through conducting in the class and real-world situations, i.e. their own conducting contexts, they became more confident in their abilities and their practice. Their reflection, too, became more context-specific; they could observe positive change in themselves, which was also recognised by their fellow learners and their tutors.

However, some learners' self-perceived confidence, especially in CS2, was not evidenced, at least to the observer, on the final assessment. This possibly suggests that there is a close relation between skills' and confidence development in amateur choral conductors with limited musical background and conducting experiences. This was also suggested by Dweck et al. (1995) who investigated individuals' entity versus incremental views of ability. A sequence of studies looked to learners' tacit theories of intelligence as a way of understanding the ways that they engaged with the content to reveal that learners with an entity theory of intelligence tend to see themselves as having a limited capacity to accommodate complexity, leading to negative judgements about their intelligence from the experienced failures. These learners also tend to quit an effort early or withdraw to a surface approach when learning gets difficult. In contrast, learners with an incremental theory of intelligence focused more on behavioural factors (i.e. effort and problem-solving strategies) as causes of negative achievement outcomes and so tended to act on these mediators (i.e. try harder and develop better strategies) and to continue to work towards mastery of a task.

Some individuals, particularly in CS2 and CS3a, displayed greater tendency to blame their intellectual ability and skills when they were not as successful as they wanted to be in gesturing dynamics or tempo, connecting phrases and closing fermatas than did those who, sometimes overconfidently, believed that planning the rehearsal better or by knowing the music better would restrict negative outcomes. It was also observed that less experienced conductors, perhaps subscribing more to an entity theory of intelligence, appeared generally less adaptive and demonstrated a helpless pattern of copying. These learners tended to be school teachers within primary education. As a group, the teachers, contrary to the 'musicians' of the training programmes, tended to

express a lack of confidence in leading singing and in being able to plan effectively for rehearsals. They also cited no prior training in conducting. A lack of confidence as a singer was a common feature, particularly when it was also linked to the absence of formal education in singing (Durrant and Varvarigou, 2008; Rogers et al. 2008; Rogers, 2002; Ruocco, 2008; Varvarigou, 2008). A study by Holden and Button (2006) showed a highly significant link between musical qualification and confidence to teach music. The study looked at the teaching of music by non-specialists in primary schools and suggested that although this does not prove causality, it potentially demonstrates that those teachers with practical musical qualifications are more likely to have a personal interest in music and therefore greater understanding of the subject. The findings also indicated that the teachers of the study (71 participants) felt particularly inadequate to teach singing; (i) some found it difficult to sing in tune, (ii) other felt frustrated at not being able to sing well and (iii) a number felt insecure when teaching older children, which undermined teachers' confidence. On the whole, this study suggests that greater subject knowledge and experience of music-making can increase teachers' confidence to pursue choral activities in their own environments after the initial input from their training programmes has finished.

8.5.3 Pedagogical approach

The pedagogical approach is mentioned as part of the outcomes of courses because it has been found that learners are highly likely to adopt, in their subsequent role as tutors, a pedagogical approach similar to the one they have experienced during their own education (Prosser et al. 2007). In order for the evaluation of the developed theoretical framework (Figure 2) to reveal the learners' approach to the teaching of choral conducting, it has to be applied in the contexts where the learners put into actual practice the knowledge, awareness and skills that they have acquired and developed during their education. Since education in choral conducting aims to assist individuals to become more efficient during their practice, the examination of both the preparation process and the practice environments is considered necessary (see Figure 3).
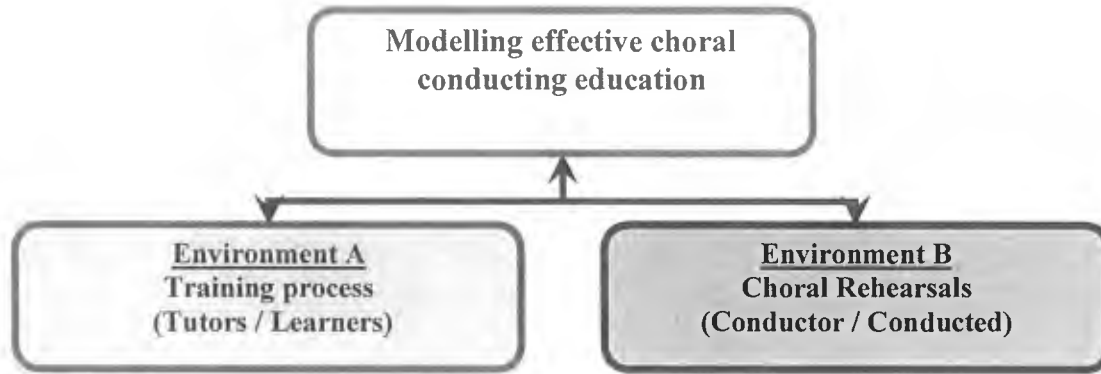
Figure 3: The evaluation of the suggested model in two interconnected learning environments

Francis (2007) suggests that at an individual level,

> …[T]he essential of learning begins with building in memory a repertoire of experienced actions and consequences that increasingly form a basis for making informed choices of action in new situations…Learning is demonstrated in terms of consistency and appropriateness of action in relation to consequence…

(Francis, 2007, p. 139)

However, the focus of the current study has been to examine and describe examples of processes of choral conducting preparation as they happen in different contexts today. In the context of this study, the learners engaged in musical experience that best suited their needs, they set goals and, as they themselves reported, achieved satisfaction from fulfilling them (also Pitts, 2005), each individual at a different level. Bearing in mind that certain 'craft' skills embedded in choral conducting practice require experience in order to improve performance and cannot be learned in a few weeks or even few months, further examination of individuals' practice in their own contexts could potentially offer a clear picture of the learners' pedagogical approach. This study has also highlighted that choral conductors working with children and amateur adult singers within educational, church or community contexts are judged to be effective not solely on their ability to have efficient and clear conducting gestures, but on the ability to make choral singing a learning and rewarding experience for all concerned. From a pedagogical standpoint, this is connected with effectiveness that Armstrong and Armstrong (1996, p. 25) describe as 'a function of the degree to which the conductor and group become one in their mission'. On the whole, this study suggests that the ultimate assessment of professional development rests on the influence that teacher learning has on the learners/singers in the classroom/choral rehearsal. This could potentially constitute a next phase of research.

8.6   Socio-cultural contexts including teaching contexts

The observations in the five diverse choral conducting education contexts that constituted the database of this study took place at a moment in time where renewed interest in singing and choral activities has been promoted by the UK government. As it is mentioned in the introductory chapter, there is now an emerging and increasing awareness, also from government bodies, of the importance of music and singing in children's education (see Chapter One, 1.2 and 1.3). As a result, financial support from Local Authorities and the government has been given to initiatives, such as 'Sing-Up', a project that costs £40m and is extended over four years (2007-2011), which aim to bring music activities, and in particular singing activities, in schools. The renewed interest in singing has brought into the limelight the limited and often inadequate preparation that teachers receive especially within and for primary school contexts, for their role as leaders of singing activities (see Chapter 2.4). The current necessity to respond to new demands within their professional or community contexts can, therefore, be described as the central force that has led many individuals to enrol on CPD and other programmes on choral conducting education.

The contribution of the two independent bodies that cater for the provision of choral conducting education in the UK has been recognised as significant and thus programmes from both organisations have been examined in this thesis. What is particularly of note is that both organisations have developed choral conducting courses for individuals at any or all competence levels in music and spread across Britain (from Leicester to Birmingham, London, Oxford and Bolton). This suggests that there seems to be an underpinning moral position from the organisations and member tutors, which dictates that they can take individuals from wherever they are, in terms of musical skills, and move them forwards. This approach is the opposite of what is followed within higher education and particularly conservatoire contexts, where certain levels of musical expertise are taken as given and a prerequisite for entry. One of the organisations that have been observed also offers a variety of singing-related activities (Singing Weekends for Children and Singing Days for Adults) as well as music resources (songs and arrangement) adjusted to National Curriculum requirements. Whether it is realistic or not to train individuals with

limited musical knowledge, skills and awareness in choral conducting has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

The demand for more skilled music leaders has probably led to a recent establishment of specialised choral conducting programmes within higher education (first course that is still running started in 1997), although still only as a postgraduate and not as undergraduate study. Eight institutions offer choral conducting education; five as a year-long or two-year-long programmes and one of these only started in 2008 and three as a module during postgraduate programmes in music or music education (for more information see Chapter Four, Table 4.1). The creation of new programmes in choral conducting can be also linked with a growing awareness of the benefits from choral participation in people's health (e.g. Clift and Hancox, 2001; Unwin, Kenny and Davis, 2002) and development (Chorus America 2009; 2003), as well as the conducting phenomenon; i.e. how people conduct other people in diverse vocal contexts. The examination of how choral leadership can be expressed in different ways, which gives choral conductors the opportunity to understand what they are doing, made one of the tutors observed in this study, the only individual in the UK to gain a PhD in Choral Conducting education, to go to the USA where choral education has a long history and is structured and offered at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level, in order to systematically study the choral conducting phenomenon and gain expertise. All things considered, the socio-cultural contexts of the courses that have been observed indicate a current tendency in the UK towards a more structured and systematic study of choral conducting preparation in recent years. What is more, the increasing interest in participation expressed by learners emphasises the need for more courses to be offered for amateur musicians within educational and community contexts.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise that without engagement in the social world there is no learning. With regard to the teaching contexts, it has been argued in this study that confidence arose when learners successfully met challenges in their own choral practice environments, whilst the confidence to take on such challenges depended on whether they felt supported by their environments (including teaching environments). All five preparation programmes, but particularly CS1-CS3b, offered skills-training in

choral conducting under simulated conditions, i.e. with a choir, creating the opportunities to the learners to resolve difficulties and reflect and review their practice through feedback. The intention was that the new skills could be then transferred and realised into effective teaching in a more relaxed atmosphere in the learners' own environments. It was found through on-line reflective reports, interviews and informal commentary that this approach to learning appeared to minimise the threat to the learners' self-esteem, promoted a positive self-image, improved subject knowledge and raised confidence levels.

8.7 Summary

This chapter discussed in detail the findings that emerged from the data analyses of Chapters Five, Six and Seven, in relation to the research questions enquiring into the process of choral conducting preparation in different programmes in the UK and the perceived, by the participants, outcomes of this process. The findings have been linked with the five interconnected parameters of the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three and refined in the current chapter, and the literatures on choral activities and choral education that were reviewed in Chapter Two. The theoretical constructs presented in Chapter Three and particularly that of Cognitive Apprenticeship facilitated a detailed description and discussion of the processes on choral conducting education that have been observed and offered a structure for the exploration of the first research question.

With regard to the second research question, a phenomenographic approach was used with an intention of raising awareness of the tutors' and, subsequently, the learners' (as future tutors) understanding of their own teaching and their singers' learning in choral conducting. The widely accepted notion of instructive teaching linked to learning as receiving and applying instructions was challenged. Increasing awareness of the influence of background knowledge, experiences, perceptions, aspirations and conceptions of learning from both the tutors and the learners allow choral conductor educators to explore different ways of approaching choral conducting teaching and to comprehend the ways in which learners likewise approach and understand their learning tasks. Prosser et al. (2007) emphasise that

…[T]hose teachers and students who engage with a particular task or phenomenon and who unite their being with their knowing (or, in phenomenographic terms, connect the 'what' with the 'how') will become more aware of the richness and the complexity of the task they face and more open to seeing variations in the understanding of the phenomenon' (Prosser et al., 2007, p. 57)

Overall, this study has emphasised that learners in choral conducting develop skills, knowledge and awareness as they engage in regular practice under the guidance of effective tutors. Likewise, it was suggested that effective tutors are those who become strong facilitators of learning and engage with helping learners to learn. The following and concluding chapter summarises the findings and puts forward some implications for music education and further research in the field of choral conducting education.

Figure 2: Effective Choral Conducting Education – A Conceptual Framework

Socio-cultural Contexts, including Teaching Contexts

Learners

- Background (knowledge/abilities, biography)
- Expectations /aspirations
- Perceptions of subject matter
- Conceptions of learning

Tutors

- Background & attributes (knowledge/abilities, biography)
  - A. Philosophical and Pedagogical Principles
  - B. Musical – Technical Skills
  - C. Interpersonal skills – General Leadership
  - D. Conceptions of learning contexts
- Pedagogical approach
  - o Managements of materials
  - o Expectations/aspirations
  - o Perceptions of subject matter
  - o Planning and preparation
  - o Monitoring
  - o Evaluation / Feedback

Process: Learning to be a choral conductor

Attributes of effective learning environments (Entwistle, 2007)

- Empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Explanation
- Clarity
- Structure
- Level
- Pace

Likely pedagogical context to provide effective learning, e.g. Cognitive Apprenticeship model (Collins et al. 1989; Eraut, 2007)

- A. Content (*Domain knowledge, Heuristic strategies, Control strategies, Learning strategies*)
- B. Methods (*Modelling, Coaching, Scaffolding/Fading, Articulation, Reflection, Exploration*)
- C. Sequencing (*Increasing complexity, Increasing diversity, Global before Local*)
- D. Sociology (*Situated Learning, Culture of Expert Practice, Intrinsic motivation, Cooperation & Competition*)

Learning Outcomes

- Effective choral conductor attributes include:
  - A. Philosophical and Pedagogical principles
  - B. Musical – Technical skills
  - C. Interpersonal skills – General Leadership
- Pedagogical Approach
- Confidence and commitment

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Introduction

This research study investigated the nature and process of choral conducting education in five diverse teaching contexts in England and explored the learners' perceptions of their development and their programme's effectiveness. A theoretical framework was developed for this purpose and was applied for the examination and analyses of the data from the five different contexts. This chapter begins by summarising the research findings, followed by the implications of the study and suggestions for further research.

9.2 Summary of the findings

The main findings of the research are summarised here in five areas that emerged from the proposed theoretical framework. The areas are: (i) the tutors, (ii) the learners, (iii) the process of preparation, (iv) the learning outcomes and (v) the socio-cultural contexts including teaching contexts, where choral practice was embedded.

9.2.1 The tutors

Firstly, there seems to be a link between tutors' enculturation and background in music that informs the way that they teach and perceive their expertise in choral conducting. The tutors of the study tended to adopt a similar teaching approach to the one that they experienced as learners or apprentices. Apprenticeship environments were observed in the programmes at an initial and at an advanced level where tutors had acquired their perceived expertise through experience and not through formal choral conducting education. A learner-focused teaching approach was observed in programmes at an intermediate level, where the tutors were familiar with choral conducting preparation within educational contexts. Whilst the learners at an initial level did not offer any comment on their tutor's teaching approach, the learner at an advanced level did acknowledge some weak points of her teaching process, such as

the absence of gestural instruction, which she attributed to the tutor's insecurity to teach something that he had learnt empirically himself. On the contrary, the learners at an intermediate level, who were led from experienced choral conducting educators, highlighted that their tutors' teaching approach fostered their development and progress at their own level. This finding underlines the significance of preparing choral conducting tutors for their role as educators.

Secondly, within the context of the study, the term 'interpersonal skills' referred to qualities, such as non-verbal communication (eye-contact, posture), encouragement and motivation, quality feedback, effective rehearsal pacing and planning, clear communication goals and general leadership. Such skills can and should be nurtured within choral conducting education environments. Although it has been recognised that some individuals might be more able than others in communicating enthusiasm to or leading the choir, it is within the tutors' duties to reinforce the perception that all individuals can become effective conductors and no amount of charisma can compensate for poor rehearsal planning and preparation or lack of awareness of vocal education. Experienced choral conductor educators (and not just choral conductors), can motivate, observe, guide and evaluate learning at different levels and contexts.

9.2.2 The learners

The study highlighted a link between the learners' perceptions of the subject matter and their conceptions of the learning contexts, which subsequently affect their expectations from the training process in choral conducting. Several individuals in this study who enrolled on choral conducting programmes were initially unaware of what choral conducting practice involves and what they needed to develop at a personal level. In addition, more than any other area of performance practice; choral conducting needs the application of already mastered musical skills and knowledge from the conductor or leader. When musical skills and understanding are absent or insufficiently developed, communication with the singers is difficult (which was the case with the learners in CS1 and some in CS2), and the choir have fewer opportunities to fulfil their potential in singing and musicianship development.

9.2.3 The preparation process

To begin with, all five tutors who were observed were enthusiastic and supportive and developed a positive and non-threatening learning environment. Such an environment particularly enabled the less experienced and knowledgeable learners (in music performance) to conduct in front of their fellow learners without feeling (or at least, showing) any embarrassment or hesitation to participate in the suggested activities. Furthermore, the structures, level and pacing of the preparation processes were very much influenced by the perceived and actual musical competence of the learners. The more educated and confident in music were the learners, the more the tutors were able to facilitate and guide the learning process, instead of restricting themselves to instruction on beat patterns or interpretation of the music. In addition, the content of preparation included the same elements across all five programmes, which suggests that there are particular musical (vocal skills and gestural technique) and non-musical (interpersonal skills and leadership) qualities related to choral conducting preparation that, regardless of the level of the learners, constitute the core of choral conducting education.

With regard to the methods employed, reflective practice appeared to contribute to the learners' understanding of self, practice and broader education issues in relation to choral conducting. Moreover, as reported, it also helped them to monitor their progress, analyse their strengths and weaknesses and to consider implications for future choral practice. It is suggested, therefore, that ample opportunities for self-reflection should be incorporated in programmes on choral conducting education and promoted by the tutors during the preparation.

The use of video proved to be an effective tool during the process of preparation because it allowed observations of oneself and other conducting models and helped in tracking down each individual's development over time. Although most learners were initially uncomfortable with the use of video, by the end of their programme almost all participants praised its positive contribution to their development. Therefore, more choral conducting preparation programmes are encouraged to use video recordings as an effective tool for learning.

Furthermore, regardless of their competence in music and conducting, all learners wanted to receive regular and detailed feedback from their tutors and fellow learners. The necessity for regular feedback was particularly stressed by the experienced and competent learner-conductor of CS4 who, despite her existing competence, sought for feedback after every rehearsal that she led and was disappointed that provision of feedback was not a central part of her preparation process.

Cohort training rather than one to one instruction and the presence of a choir during the workshop sessions promoted collaborative learning, which was singled out as a particularly effective method of preparation in choral conducting. When collaborative learning occurred (through group discussion or pair/group practical activities) a cooperative atmosphere was established and learners reportedly improved at an individual level, as well as at a collective level. What is more, the tutors in the contexts where collaborative learning was promoted emphasised that the practical workshops were environments of artistic and educational research for learners and tutors alike. Cohort training also promoted observation of other choral conductors. Observation of other conducting models was recognised by all tutors and learners as a key element of an effective process in choral conducting education. Therefore, it is suggested that during their preparation, learners in choral conducting should be encouraged to look for opportunities to critically observe other conductors, both in rehearsals and performances, and review their own practice in the light of these observations.

9.2.4 Learning outcomes

Because of the diversity of professional lives, interests and stages of development among the learners, no single structure of preparation was likely to suit all. Therefore, the application of a phenomenographic methodology that focused on learners' reflection and monitoring of themselves and in relation to the responses from their singers was considered a reliable and valid approach for the examination of the perceived learning outcomes. Additionally, this study pointed out that musical expertise in choral conducting can only be achieved when technical proficiency (advanced aural and reading skills, musicianship and a clear gestural vocabulary) is already mastered (as in CS4). However, education on choral conducting leadership for

non-music specialists could potentially benefit from musical activities that help these individuals increase their self-esteem and self-identity as choral leaders rather than primarily focus on the development of technical competence.

What is more, there seems to be a close relation between skills and confidence development in amateur choral conductors with limited musical background and conducting experiences. It is suggested that learners' confidence in choral conducting can be fostered through musical and pedagogical preparation, greater subject knowledge and experiences of leading choral singing activities, as well as guidance from an expert choral conductor educator. Future examination of individuals' choral conducting practice in their own socio-cultural environments could potentially offer a clear picture of the learners' pedagogical approach as choral leaders. This could be a topic for further study.

Lastly, it was suggested that the craft knowledge in choral conducting can only be developed through constant engagement in conducting practice (deliberate practice) and through performance opportunities. When performance opportunities were not offered, as was the case in CS4, or when learners did not practise with a choir what they learnt during the workshops, progress in choral conducting was perceived by the learners themselves to be limited. As a result, some learners appeared less confident to conduct in front of their peers or to actively engage in group feedback or other practical activities. This could be a major blow for cohort choral conducting training, which was recognised in this study as a particularly effective environment for choral conducting preparation.

9.2.5 Socio-cultural contexts, including teaching contexts

The renewed interest in singing and in choral activities in the UK has uncovered the limited and often inadequate preparation of individuals for their role as choral leaders and conductors. Professional development and preparation is also necessary for tutors who become choral conductor educators. This research highlighted not only the need for more programmes on choral conducting education within educational and community contexts, but also a current necessity for a structured and systematic

choral conducting education for the tutors who will lead these programmes. Last but not least, the theoretical framework towards modelling an effective choral conducting education is believed to have captured and successfully described the parameters that influence effective teaching and learning in this very field of musical practice. In addition, exploratory studies on interactive music making activities within education could possibly benefit from the application of the proposed theoretical framework.

9.3   Implications

Some ethical implications relating to anonymity arise from this study that used a small sample and within a relatively small context. The programmes that have been observed were the ones that allowed full access to the researcher. All tutors and learners were given the option to participate anonymously or not and since some wished to keep their anonymity; it was decided by the researcher to present all cases anonymously. Moreover, the close affiliation of the researcher with one institution and one of the choral tutors is not believed to have influenced the outcomes of this study. On the contrary, it offered the researcher full access to the programme's material (written and audio-visual), as well as the opportunities to interview the learners at any time, as long as they were willing to do so, without any special permission.

Implications and recommendations arising from the study are directed to policy makers, tutors on choral conducting courses, choral conductors, singers and researchers. With regard to policy makers who are responsible for designing curricula, this research proposes a theoretical framework, evaluated in diverse choral conducting environments, which can provide the guideline for effective choral conducting education contexts. This research also suggests that more educational programmes on choral education and choral conducting have to be developed and promoted across the UK. These programmes should not focus solely on technical preparation, but should also offer the participants support in confidence development and more opportunities for practical experiences of choral leadership.

With respect to tutors on choral conducting courses, this research has underlined that craft knowledge on choral conducting practice that has been accumulated simply through practice is not sufficient when it comes to teaching skills, knowledge and awareness on choral conducting and choral leadership. Appropriate preparation in all parameters related to the subject matter (i.e. gestures, vocal education and general musicianship), as well as the pedagogical approaches that are likely to enhance learning (some of them included in the proposed theoretical framework), can foster preparation in choral conducting that addresses all the necessary aspects of choral conducting practice in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Implications for choral conductors in the UK are many. It is acknowledged and validated by this research that the development of skills, awareness and understanding, as well as confidence and commitment in choral conducting should be promoted through a comprehensive education. Particular emphasis was put on choral conductors' awareness and understanding of vocal education in order for them to promote healthy singing. It has also been suggested that methods such as reflective practice, collaborative learning, observation and regular and constructive feedback nurture effective learning within teaching and learning contexts and sustain singers' interest, enthusiasm and motivation in choral participation.

Implications for singers are also evident. This study advocates that the singers can become active agents of the process of choral conducting preparation of their conductors by providing them with regular feedback on how they are conducting. Lastly, there are some implications for researchers in the field of music education and particularly choral education. This research has tried to shed light on several aspects of the choral conducting phenomenon, with particular emphasis on the preparation of choral leaders and conductors. The theoretical framework that has been proposed here could be used as a point of reference for further research implications.

9.4   Suggestions for further study

Some suggestions for further research are offered in this section. It has been recognised by various literatures on choral activities and education that research on

the choral phenomenon is in its infancy. Firstly, longitudinal studies that focus on individuals' perceived learning outcomes from their preparation and their subsequent practice in their own professional choral conducting contexts could be undertaken. Such studies could provide an in-depth insight into the reliability of self-perception as a means of evaluating outcomes in educational processes. Secondly, future studies might consider the establishment and support of reflective practice and collaborative learning in choral conducting education for its potential to change learner conductors' thinking and practice. Thirdly, the broader context of choral education is an area that could benefit from further research. The influence of the wider socio-cultural contexts in people's perceptions of choral practice and conceptions of effective education has not yet been investigated fully. Since choral singing is increasingly gaining recognition within school and community environments in the UK research in all aspects of choral and collective singing (for terminology see Chapter One) would be particularly beneficial. Future research could also address gender issues in choral conducting education particularly within the UK context that has been heavily influenced by the male-dominated cathedral choral tradition. Such studies could investigate the role and contribution of female choral conductors, whose position as choral educators or choral leaders tends to be connected more with school environments that the church choral tradition. What is more, future research could investigate whether UK's cathedral choral tradition influences the context and preparation of the choral conductors in diverse environments such as conservatoires or universities.

Fourthly, more qualitative research that takes into account the participants' narratives of experiences, expectations, perceptions and aspirations of their education processes could be further applied and investigated in different contexts of music. For example, research on how singers in different contexts and at different levels (as professionals or as amateur singers) experience choral participation could inform our way of understanding, planning and implementing effective and enjoyable choral singing activities. Lastly, research into how specialised educational programmes on choral conducting could be developed and incorporated into undergraduate (there is no such programme in the UK at the moment) and postgraduate higher education courses, as well as other independent organisations, would be beneficial. These programmes should look into choral education as an interactive and evolving process, influenced

by the context in which it is embedded and by its members whose background biographies need to be taken into account.

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APPENDIX ONE:

ATLAS.ti TRANSCRIPTION OF FIELD NOTES (SAMPLE)

01

02

03   **1 Assessment procedure:**   ✿ assessment day: the video cameras

04   Every participant conducts for 20
minutes in the main hall. Their
performance in recorded by two video
cameras; one camera is at the front of the
room; it films the participants conducting
and is connected to a video player and
produces a video tape of their
performance. The other camera is at the
side, next to the piano; it gets the side view
of the conductor conducting the choir.
After the participant conducts for 20
minutes, they then go to the room next
door with one of the 3 tutors and while
they watch the video of their performance
they receive feedback for the tutors on
what they see as well as their overall
progress during the course.

05   2 There was no warm-up session   ✿ assessment day: no warm-up
                 from Ttr The participants had,
                 in the 20 minutes to do a brief
                 warm-up (1-2 exercises).

06   3 Ttr told them at the beginning   ✿ **tutor:** enjoy assessment day- you are in control
                 of the session: 'Please enjoy it.
                 You are in control, you are in
                 demand today'.

07

08 | Participant | Tutor | Comments from |
tutors   **Comments from the**
participants

09 | Std | Ttr | I didn't attend the |
1st session.   I didn't attend the session

10 | Std | Ttr | Ttr started by | ✿ P2 feedback:improved posture
giving feedback on the session. He said
that conductors should be 'improval
without being nasty, and correct the
mistakes of the choir'. He commented on
his body posture that got improved. He
also compared his performance with
yesterday's performance which, according
to Ttr   was better. 'By skilling yourself   ✿ **tutor:** by skilling yourself, choir trusts you more

then the choir becomes a little bit better because they <u>trust</u> you and sing for you. It can only be for the good'. *Ttr:* He mentioned that at the course the tutors supported the triangulation of learning where participants receive feedback not only from the tutors but also from their fellow-conductors. He said that he hoped the environment was supportive.   He said that his singers told him that he feels more in charge of what he is doing. 'The course helped me achieve my goal; <u>confidence</u> in front of the choir'. Contribution of the course: He set up and directed a new church choir with choir members from many other church choirs of his area for a concert on some kind of church anniversary.

☆ tutor: triangulation of learning

☆ P2's reflection: more confident, directs new

11 | Std | Ttr | Good body
posture that you destroy when you bend and shrink your body but ultimately they did what you wanted them to do and that is the goal. *Ttr* gave feedback on her gestures while they were watching the video. 'Keep everybody active all the time, even when you work with isolated voices. Try and engage everybody especially when you work with children. You had a percussive start. Pay attention to the pianist - try to engage everybody. Don't sing with them, because you did most of the time. <u>'If I were you, I would practice gestures at home'.</u> 'You should make sure that your hands already know what to do before you give the music to your singers'.

☆ P3 feedback:gesture and rehearsal planning

12 | Std | Ttr | 'Good body
posture. You are not always comfortable with the ways you talk to the choir' 'You need a greater sense of <u>authority and confidence</u>'. 'I'd like to see more expansion; more freedom'. 'Use your face more and look down less'.   '<u>I felt relaxed and comfortable</u>'. 'I managed to get them to speed'. 'I've learned loads

☆ P4 feedback: good posture, more authority & confidence

☆ P4 reflection: i learned loads from course, 1st week
I don't feel stiff

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form the course and it's the first weekend that I don't feel scared stiff'.Ttr: Now build on that.

13 | Std | Ttr | Q: How can you describe your journey from April until now? The feedback he gave him: 'The good bits will go inside and will come up. Try to do less for people; economy'. Ttr: Reflect on the good points of the rehearsal. Ttr: I think that there are things you could explore. You are competent and clear. Look at how you are gesturing. There is tension in the music that resolves but it doesn't seem to resolve in your gesturing. You might just want to look again at the ways you are gesturing. Very clear, efficient, powerful rehearsal. For me it is more about fine tuning. Ttr: I think you bring an anxiety to the sound with your gesture. You want a tension but create warmth of sound.Std: How do you fix these things?Ttr: Possibly your gesture gives a subliminal message 'I am in charge'. Try to <u>trust</u> the choir a bit more. Ttr: You know what you are doing but you are trying with language to do things you can do without; [you can do] just with gesture'. [On the sound of the choir when he conducted]: It's like organ blocks of sound! Ttr: Try to release sound rather than control it. What I think you need to do is allow the sound to come.   I heard very interesting ideas. I have taken up a few choirs.Ttr: There was good singing. I would like to have worked more on the sound. Ttr: What do you think when you say 'work on the sound'?Std: I was anxious and the choir picked up that.Std: I enjoy rehearsing because in rehearsals there are moments that of themselves are worth. **[In the course, through conducting] You are talking about serious things; life, really. It's not only about conducting, here.**

P5 reflection: we are talking about life in this *course*

14 | Std | Ttr | Ttr: you

P6 feedback: very positive

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demonstrated very well with the voice but give them time to reproduce it. Posture: check your legs because you have them open. Tr: All your work is beautifully thought. You've got beautiful control and elegant gestures. It's revealing yourself to the choir for so doing. And you are always well prepared.   'It was the first time I had regular tuition on conducting'.

⚙ P6 refelction: 1st time regular conducting tuition

15 Std   Tr   Tr asked her how she felt about her performance. Tr: You have to be careful of your body posture. Tr: Through your gestures try resistance in sound. We all work at it all the time. Tr: You have a tendency when you breathe with the group, you breathe high. Tr: You have a tendency to looking at people without really looking at them. Tr: Make sure that your hands and your eyes/body work together. I have the impression that they are quite independent. Tr: You have a nice way of engaging everyone. Tr: [As conductors] we do something to the best of our ability to help the choir. *I have noticed that when Tr feeds back on people's performance and what they have to improve she always associates that to herself and how she still learns and practices by doing things. She always says: I am trying to do that all the time' and '...I have to practice for the rest of my life'.* Tr: Try to sing through all the parts before you teach the piece. Do a good deal of preparation.   Std ι.: 'I was more relaxed'. Tr: Did you enjoy the course? Std.: I enjoyed the course and I would like a follow-up. Std: The standards of this course are very high. Tr: The standards are quite reasonable this year.

⚙ P7 feedback: gesture, breathing, eye contact

⚙ tutor: i still learn and practise by doing things

⚙ P7 reflection: enjoyed course, want a follow up

16 *We had a chat with* Std *ι during lunch-break and he told me that he took the choral conducting exam at the* [name of [organisation]   *There was no agenda of the standards that the*

⚙ P10   exam

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examination had apart from requirements of what the student should conduct. He said every student has 35 minutes for warm up exercises and 3 pieces - one of which is a 20th century piece and has to be taught there. He received comments like: 'The singers are professionals and it was brave of you asking them to shape their mouth for the vowels.' Std   *replied to them that: The singers are the colours. The music is the canvas and I am the painter. I am going to use the colours the way I want so as to create what I have in my mind'.*

P10: singers are colour, music is canvas, i am
the painter

17 [Std   ][Thr   ]Thr: Tell me about the rehearsal. Thr: Very well done rehearsal. I'd like to see more expressive stuff. Thr: What did you gain from the course? Thr: what was the piece about? Because your facial expressions were deadly serious. Thr: Transfer <u>freedom</u> to the singers. Thr: You rarely looked at the singers. Thr: You meticulously built it up but you teach things where you didn't have to teach. In rehearsing you start from where the choir is. Thr: My biggest points are to <u>trust</u> the singers and look at them a bit more. Std: I think that the rhythm-teaching was very successful. Thr: Good mechanism of teaching rehearsals. Std: I wasn't really controlling the dynamics properly. They enjoyed it and that was quite essential. It's a great piece (what he selected) because it works with such small amount of musical materials. Std: It's great that the first sessions are short. Plenty on the gesturing and how people copy what you do with your body. It's so much more obvious with kids. I've learned some essential things, i.e. when the choir drags....and the different reasons why something can be wrong. What I have to learn somewhere else is rehearsing because [you learn it] when you work with the choir.

P8 feedback: good rehearsal, transfer freedom
to singers

P8 reflection: i developed craft skills

18 Std   Thr   Thr: How do you

P9 feedback: explore gesture, use your face

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feel it went? Std: It was different from what I am used to hearing (kids). Th: Good choice of music. Explore the shapes of all these things you are asking. You had the opportunity to work with something different from what you are used to (adult choir) and you missed it because you thought you cannot do it because they are not kids. Make use of the group you have. Std: Continue to work on the resistance in gesture. Th: Everything seemed to be one dimension. Take the opportunity to explore.

Thr: Keep your body steady because it seems that your legs have a power of their own. Th: use your face more. You get more from people. You had the opportunity of working with a different group and you missed it. You missed to shape what the music is about.　　Std: she said that she works with a cd at school as she doesn't have an accompanist and it is difficult for her to work on different dynamics with the kids.

☼ P9 works with cd at school, she can't work on *dynamics*

19 | Std | Thr | Thr: It is a difficult piece. Yesterday's rehearsal was much better. What I think this piece needs, because I am doing it with my choir and it is more difficult that it looks, is more help with gesturing. Th: What I saw was confusion in 2 and 4 and there was an inconsistency in tempo. Th: Release the sound and trust the singers. Th: You have a sense of authority Th: In this course we are trying to tell you to get ownership of what you do. You have been very receptive. Th: Your actual gesture is very economical.

☼ P10 feedback: release sound & trust the singers

Std: I was very tired. The choir didn't do exactly what I wanted. Th: What do you take from the course? Std: **I came in the course having done conducting studies in SA. My conducting style has changed, as my singers tell me. Shaping the sound and**

☼ P10 reflection: i have become an immersive conductor, *i shape music – i don't conduct it*

shaping the singers to get the music I want. I try to get into the shoes of the composer, and I mean that the course helped me to become an immersive conductor for myself, my singers and my listeners. Ttr: Yes, it seems that it is going off momentum. Std: **what I understood is that you don't have to conduct but you have to shape.**

20 | Std | Ttr | Ttr: He told her that she was using 4 gestures that were more instrumentally friendly than vocally-friendly. Ttr: There is no problem about clarity or musicianship. 'Very good warm-ups'.Ttr: The gesture when closing the singers was more for instrumental conducting and doesn't represent the closure of the vocal mechanism. Ttr: when I work with singers and instrumentalists, I usually use singers' gestures. When you use a stick, do some gestures as when singing. You have to find your own way of doing things so I am not telling you what to do.

✿ P11 feedback: you conduct singers like instrumentalists

21 | Std | Ttr   Gestures - I like that you actually begin to explore because it gives you more colours to work with.   Std: Most of it, for me, is confidence. I have explored a lot in this course.

✿ P12 feedback:i like that you begin to explore

✿ P12 feedback: i have explored in the course, most of it is confidence

22 | Std | Ttr | Std:I have changed my conducting style very much. I tried to apply more of what we have said. The singers haven't mentioned anything yet. We had a big break during the summer. (to Ttr) One of the major triumphs was that you made me still. Std: Looking yourself at the camera is so useful! Horrifying but so useful.

✿ P13 reflection: you made me still, i changed conducting style

23 | Std | Ttr | Ttr: You had some very good gestures that you kept repeating. We don't want good gestures to become habitual because they get to be less effective.Ttr: Huge improvement because you are focused now. Ttr: Think as a singer.

✿ P14 feedback: good gesture, be adaptable, think as a singer

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What will help me as a singer? Thr: there is no one way of doing things. Th. Make yourself more centered. Thr: In a choir take things from where they are. Be adaptable. Std: There is one phrase that I take from that course and I heard it from Thr and is was 'to love your choir'. Std: I feel hugely more <u>confident</u> than I felt at the beginning of the course. **Std: [the course] It broadened my horizons. It's good that you put into practice what you have learnt, when you have the breaks in-between. He didn't like: Britten - and the whole fuss about beat patterns when it needs to be conducted simply by 2 beats. Feedback from one particular participant was off-putting. And some of Thr's warm-up sessions and the experimental music she suggested.** In general he felt 'freed-up'

🌟 P14 reflection: i feel more confident, 'love the *singers'*

🌟 P14 reflection: good to put in practice what *you learn when breaks in-between sessions*

🌟 P14 reflection: did not like fuss about patterns, *feedback from singers often off-putting - some warm-ups*

24 | Std | Thr | Instead if humming she could use 'ng' (mirroning) or sirening 'ng+text'. Thr: The stand is too much in your way. In rehearsing the group, I would prefer you did one verse and 'kill them' than doing all 4 verses.

🌟 P15 feedback: on warm-ups and rehearsing

25 | Std | Thr | It is a craft skill to work from where the choir stands. Thr: We need conductors to be teachers a bit more, sometimes.   She reflected on the things she wants to improve and said that she has been writing then in her journal. **Contribution of the course: the previous courses where for 10 days morning to evening but this course allows time in between to think about what was happening. The course was also hugely helpful: we have been told - 'there are plenty of ways to do that'.**

🌟 P16 feedback: we need conductors to be more *teachers*

🌟 P16 reflection: in-between gaps help practice, *'there are plenty of ways to do something'*

26 | Std | Thr | Feedback on the video and general comments

🌟 P17 feedback general comments through looking *the video*

27 | Std | Thr | Suggestions for some gestures to be changed. Most of the

🌟 P18 feedback: gestures have changed, look at *video*

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time through checking the video there was discussion on the gestures and how much he had improved.

28 | Std | Ttr | The feedback was given in the room after the sessions finishes because he was the last and the time of the course had finished. Ttr made some general comments on the assessment procedures and the reports that the participants will receive and then while people were tiding up the room, Ttr was giving Std feedback comments without use of the video.

P19 feedback: the last person, feedback in class

29 ➤

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I. Case Study 2 – Session 1:

S5 (Video: 7 min. and 18 sec.)

Song: I am sailing

Before L5 starts T2 says:

T2: She has never done this before.

L5 conducts.

The choir applauds after S5 finishes conducting for the first time.

L5: I wanted it faster.

T2: Yes but they followed you. Now you don't have to be nervous any more. Do you? *(To the singers)* She was so nervous that she came to me and said 'I know I have to do it. Make me do it'. That's fine. There are a lot of lovely things going on there that showed us the connection. I thought the third verse was very good. Gosh…I nearly…I am shaking here. And at the third verse when your face was loosing its terrified look and actually began to connect with the music.

L5: At the first verse they were not doing what I wanted.

T2: Because your face was not telling us. It was face that was not showing it. Tell yourself 'I can do this'.

T2: *(To the singers)* Tell her she can do it.

Singers: You can do it.

T2: You know, starting a piece of music is the most difficult thing to do.

L5: I find the breath hard [to do]. At the upbeat.

T2 demonstrates hand gestures and all participants copy. T2 stands exactly opposite L5 and says 'Copy me'. T2 demonstrates and L5 copies him. All participants copy T2.

L5: I want it slower than the pianist plays it. I don't know how to make that slow.

T2: Do it 'in four' [beats in a bar].

L5: I don't know the 'in four'. *[Referring to the expression]*

T2: No, but in order to establish the tempo with the pianist it might be worth doing it 'in four', and then moving into 'two'. Just start the first bar 'in four'.

L5 looks confused.

T2: Sing to me the speed that you want.

L5 sings the song at the speed that she wants it.

T2: Really slow.

T2 establishes the tempo with the pianist and then lets S5 conduct the song.

L5 conducts.

T2: Ok. Well done. Say nice things to her.

II. Case Study 2 – Session 2:

L5 (Video: 12 min. and 43 sec.)

Song: For the Beauty of the Earth

L5 conducts

T2: Ok. Let's go back to the same thing. Just try and have a smooth 'two' in a bar.

L5: I can't. Whenever I do something else, that's it. I've lost it and then I've found I'm doing two on one.

T2: Well, if you are waiting for a bus or a train just practice this.

Singers laugh.

T2: Let's all do the 'two' [beats in a bar]. Pair up with somebody and look at that 'two' again.

Group work in pairs. Participants do a 'J' shape when conducting two beats in a bar. Each individual mirrors their pair.

T2: Nicely-cut hand. So here is nice and gentle. Look at each other. On 'two' I want you to point up to the Northwest. 'One- two'. Just point somewhere. So you do two things at once.

T2 counts 'one-two' and demonstrates what he asks them to do.

T2: Now phrase like this *(T2 demonstrates)*. Ok? Some of you need to practice more than others. Right? It's something you might be able to practice just waiting for a bus.

Singers laugh.

T2: So just do various things with your other hand. The support thing now *(demonstrates)*. So, this is automatic pilot almost.

T2: So just practice. It's something you can practice. Two [in a bar] is actually almost more difficult than 'four' or 'three'.

T2 demonstrates three- and four-beat patterns and the participants copy.

T2: So get those habitual patterns. And then you can go in and out of them. So it's down-across-out-up for a four-beat pattern. Even if you are left handed the up always comes in from the outside. It helps with the breathing and these are internationally recognized.

T2: And two is an inverted 'J', a backward 'J'. Say it!

Participants do the shape of 'J' and they say 'Jay'.

T2: Now that's nice. All of you look at each other. Is it nice? Ok. Let's go back to L5.

L13: Sorry, could I just ask you about the 'four' [beats]? You've got the 'J'... *(L13 practises the pattern)*

T2: The up-beat is always from the outside.

T2 demonstrates the pattern again. L5 is next to L13. L13 gets confused and L5 helps him to correct his four-beat pattern. After L13 figures out how to do it, he practises a couple of times).

Participants chat with each other for some seconds, while L13 keeps practising the pattern.

T2: So the up-beat always comes in from the outside. Now get those [the patterns] inside you, so that they are rock-solid and practise in front of a bus or something or in front of your children or in front of your old-age pensioners or whatever club you go to. Practise in the bath, in the shower. Now, L5 (name of participant). Let's have another go. Back to where we were. And your *(T2 sings a phrase from the song)* was nice. It was just right. Because it was softer than they have done it before, so it was just right. Do it again. Tinkle away from the beginning. *(T2 turns to the pianist)* Please....

L5 conducts the introduction. T2 beats the tempo for her to keep up with the speed she started. L5 stops.

L5: I'm confused.

T2: Why are you confused?

L5: I was waiting for a particular pattern of notes because I don't know it [the song].

T2: So how do you know which they were if you don't know it?

L5: Because I wasn't counting...

T2 interrupts her and counts an upbeat for the pianist:

T2: 'And [upbeat] one'. Then he turns to L5 'Just go 'and-one'...with me...with me...from where they come in. You are going the bar they come in...

L5 looks very confused.

T2: Because the 'one' is the breath. The 'and' is the one before… 'and -one' … 'and' means 'two'… 'Two-one'.

L5 looks really confused.

L5: I don't know what you mean.

T2: I just demonstrated it.

L5: So,… the bar before where we are.

T2: Yes, it's 'and-one'

T2 demonstrates with the choir singing the beginning of the song.

T2: Now you do it.

Maria: Can I suggest something? Maybe you don't have to look at the music at all, because the pianist will play it and the singers know what to sing, so just move your hands, for practice. Don't look at the music.

L5: What's going to happen?

T2: But we will. We will sing it. All I am asking you to do at the moment is go 'and-one'…

L5: With both hands or just one?

T2: Use both hands and both feet if you like. Both hands it's just great.

Pianist to L5: I can't see you.

T2: So as she can't see you just go a little bit out [T2 refers to the hands – bigger gesture].

T2 demonstrates the pattern again.

L5 starts but immediately stops although the choir keeps singing.

T2: Right. That's where we are going from so bring us in this time.

L5: But that's what I don't get.

T2: What don't you get?

L5: That if I've gone 'four-one'…

T2: We are coming on on 'two'.

L5: …you are going 'one' but I should be going ….(*she takes a breath).*

T2: We are getting a little bit on automatic pilot now. So what I think you need to do is just…

L5: What do I do with my hand?

T2: Exactly what you did just then.

L5: So where do you do your breath?

T2: It's your face the problem already.

L5: So what do you do with your hand while you are doing the breath?

T2: You beat time…And the breath is on the 'one'. 'And'…

L5 looks at T2 very puzzled.

T2: Everybody do it to show her. Ready?

T2 conducts and the group follows him. L5 looks at T2. She shows with her face that she hasn't understood.

T2: Do it again…I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll say 'and-breathe'. 'And-breathe'.

T2 conducts. Participants sing and conduct. L5 looks again a bit confused but follows the music. The choir keeps singing although L5 stopped conducting for a moment. Then L5 picks it up.

T2: Now, what I want you to do now…You've got a naturalness of the movement. It's there. Trust it.

L5: It's just me. I did something and suddenly I forgot.

T2: But, it's very clear so just keep it going. Now your face is telling us 'Hey, I'm confused' and I don't want to…Try and get the face.

L5 smiles to the choir, in an effort to change her facial expression.

T2: Right. Now, we've got it. I know we are doing a lot of technical things and some of you are less experienced than others with the music. What I am actually hoping…The message across is that everything we do is natural. It's a natural kinaesthetic response to the music. So the music is telling you what to do and the gestures flow with the music. And I hope there is nothing we do that it's extraneous to the music. So the breathing…it's all part of it. And so any movement you do is part of that aesthetic gesture of the music.

L5: In my head I know exactly what I want to do.

T2: You need to come and do the MA and do the philosophy class. *(To the singers)* Doesn't she?

Participants laugh.

T2: Do the same again. So it's 'breath-one'.

L5 conducts straight away. While she conducts, T2 says:

T2: Look at us.

L5 looks ups and smiles. At some point she lost count of the beat-pattern and T2 went to the centre, stood in front of her – facing her and did the pattern with her. Then he withdrew to the back of the classroom.

After L5 finished she said:

L5: The reason I stopped was because I couldn't work out if I was on 'one' or 'two', so I could start again. Because I lost it.

T2: But in a sense you didn't loose it. *(To the singers)* Did she?

L7: No. I think you are worrying too much about it. If you just don't look at the music…Because you don't even have to know the tune…you just have to think 'I am conducting in two'.

T2: And I think you are feeling it because you are bringing us little tender moments that you did that beautifully.

L5: I can feel it except when I do something and then I find that I am still beating it, except that I'm only going 'one-two-one' and I think 'oh, I am at the wrong one'. So then I have to stop to make it the opposite way.

Singers applaud. L5 sits down.

III. Case Study 2 – Session 4:

L5 (Video: 20 min. and 39 sec.)

Song: You raise me up

L5 conducts the whole piece with the repetitions.

L5: *(With a big smile in her face)* It's nice. Thanks for singing that.

L7: So much more. That's amazing.

T2: I think she has moved 100 miles since we saw her the first time. That is just like a different conductor.

Singers applaud.

L7: You were looking at us, smiling at us, engaging with us.

T2: And also beating four beats.

T2: I liked the calmness of this; it was unruffled. You don't have to do any more than that. I want you to watch that [the video]. I want you to watch that and compare it with the first one. It's a great difference.

L7: And the smile showed that you were really enjoying it and when you were bringing us in. You were looking at us the whole time.

L5: I think it has actually helped that I have listened to a recording of the piece, so I've got an idea…With the other pieces I didn't know them at all.

T2: In a sense, before we get up and conduct any music, we should know it. We need to know what we are doing. But there is also a craft knowledge that you develop by

doing things with the choir. So as you do it with the choir you know it better and better and you know what your weaknesses are.

Pianist: L5's beat was very clear.

T2: What's different about you mentally that was different in general?

L5 looks at me and smiles. She had told me during the lunch break that she got an A pass in her black belt grading in Taekwondo.

L5: I did a self INSET and I used a lot of these stuff *(showing gestures)* and it went really well. It actually helped. It helped doing this to do the staff INSET but not having done that…(I can't hear the end of the sentence…).

T2: Good. What we could just do is 'tidy-up' the last page; the cut-offs when you do the diminuendo.

T2 demonstrates to L5 how to do it (not captured by the camera).

T2: There is a lot of just instinct that is going on this time, which is natural. So, what might be just helpful is…..

T2 demonstrates.

T2:…that flick of the hand at the third beat.

L5 practises for a while.

T2 shows her how to do a breath as a release.

L5 conducts the last page but stops.

T2: Do it again and make sure that you give a breath to the singers.

L5 conducts.

T2: Do it again. Pay attention to the left hand. It has to show that something is going on.

L5 conducts.

L5: I confused myself with the beat.

L7: You don't need to beat the whole bar at the beginning of the piece.

L5: I do it for the pianist.

T2: In long notes you need the sense of momentum to go through it. Music is moving.

T2 demonstrates how to conduct a long note in a 'dramatic' context. (We can't see).

L5 conducts the last phrase.

T2: Please tidy-up the ending phrase. In the cut-offs just bring your hand out a bit; don't be apologetic about it.

T2 demonstrates (we can't see).

T2: *(To the singers)* Copy me.

T2 demonstrates for a second time and participants copy him conducting in four beats in a bar.

All participants conduct the last phrase after T2 demonstrates it a couple of times.

L5 conducts.

T2: Well-done. Do the last page again.

L5 conducts the last page of the piece.

T2: In terms of posture she doesn't have to do any more than that. The only thing you have to refine is the breath because you breathe with us and this is great! Can we let her do all the way through? *(To L5)* Do you mind doing that?

L5: No.

L5 conducts the whole piece from the beginning and everybody applauds at the end.

APPENDIX THREE: QUESTIONNAIRES[1]

SESSION 1:

1. What made you develop an interest in choral conducting?

2. Which do you consider the three most important attributes of a choral conductor?

3. What do you think that you can develop during the four-session programme (name of the programme)?

4. Have you ever attended any conducting course(s)?

Undergraduate course	
Postgraduate course	
INSET course	
Summer school course	

Other course ....

5. Age: 20s ☐   30s ☐   40s ☐   50s ☐

6. Have you got a degree or other qualification in music? YES ☐ NO ☐

7. Where do you conduct singers (e.g. primary school, secondary school, community centre, church etc.)?

SESSION 2:

1. Is there anything that you have tried to do differently during choir rehearsal since the previous session of the programme (name of the programme)?

2. Have you noticed any difference in the choir? If so, what difference?

3. Have the choir, or anybody else listening to them, noticed any difference? If so, what?

4. Please add any general comments on the previous session of the programme (name of the programme).

SESSION 3:

1. Is there anything that you have tried to do differently during choir rehearsal since the previous session of the programme (name of the programme)?

2. Have you noticed any difference in the choir? If so, what difference?

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[1] The questionnaires were distributed to all participants of programmes CS2, CS3a and CS3b.

3. Have the choir, or anybody else listening to them, noticed any difference?

4. How effective is your general understanding of:

	Little	Satisfactory	A lot
The relationship between gesture and sound			
The voice			
The role of the conductor			

5. How confident do you feel now on:

	Little	Satisfactory	A lot
Choral rehearsing style			
Communication/interpersonal skills			
Dealing with vocal /choral problems			
Gesturing effectively and efficiently			
Conducting technique (including patterns, entries, cut-offs)			

6. Please add any general comments on the previous session of the programme (name of the programme).

SESSION 4:

1. Please describe any unexpected gains from the course.

2. Which parts of the course did you think were MOST useful? Why?

3. Which parts of the course did you think were LEAST useful? Why?

4. What would you like to develop further in choral conducting and why?

5. SKILLS:

How confident do you feel about:

	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
Choral rehearsing style				
Dealing in practice with singing development				
Dealing with vocal and choral problems				
Gesturing effectively in terms of blend, balance, intonation etc				
Using various choral conducting techniques (including entries, cut-offs, patterns)				

6. UNDERSTANDING:

How effective is your general understanding of:

	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
The relationship between gesture and sound				
The science and workings of the voice				
The communication and interpersonal skills of the conductor				

7. TOOLS:

	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
How appropriate was the music repertoire used at the sessions?				
How useful were the reading literature and handouts?				
How useful was the use of video during the sessions?				

APPENDIX FOUR:

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS (SAMPLES)

I. INTERVIEW WITH A TUTOR (T5):

Maria: Firstly I would like to tell you a few things about my research; I want to see how people in the UK get trained as choral conductors, because there is a huge tradition in this country with the church choirs and the community choirs and the choral societies but I did a survey and I found that there are something like 108 universities and only 5 or 6 offer choral conducting courses. So I was wondering how do people who conduct choirs here, get trained? You graduated from (name of institution)...

Tutor: Yes.

M: But they don't run a course on choral conducting any more.

T5: They just stopped it. As of this year.

M: Alright! Can you tell me how the course was when you took it?

T5: It was a fantastic course and (course tutor's name) was a brilliant teacher. And I learned so much. It was my 2nd degree at...(name of institution). It was a Masters degree. And there was a general Masters degree for performance and you chose your performing option. And there were, of course, all the instrumental options and singing but also at the conducting option there was orchestral and choral. So I chose the choral conducting option because I had just done this course which you are observing now, the first year it was running and I wanted to learn some more and so that's why I applied and (course tutor's name) was fantastic, fantastic teacher. And he taught me through one individual lesson a week plus with the chamber choir I took half an hour of the 2-hour rehearsal every week. So he got to see me working through that. He didn't say anything then but he was sort of taking notes of what I was doing in that half hour. And then we'd follow it up the next day in my lesson.

M: Ok. Did you have to conduct in a concert?

T5: Yes, I got to conduct part of a concert and once a whole concert as well.

M: For your assessment?

T5: Yes, some of it was assessed and I also had to give a lecture on a topic of interest to do with choral music and plus there was the academic part of it which was the dissertation and essays. But that was part of the general Masters course. Em…and yes, I had an assessed rehearsal at the end of my course and an assessed concert, as well.

M: Right. Did you receive any vocal tuition….?

T5: Yes. Part of my course on my 2nd study was…yes I had an hour's lesson a fortnight.

M: Right. Was it compulsory for the course?

T5: Yes. Yes.

M: Why do you think so few universities have choral conducting courses? Do you find any difference between a conducting course, a general conducting course for the orchestra, and a choral conducting course?

T5: I think so few universities…they don't think it does as academic pursuit. They think it's more of a practical pursuit, so therefore a job for the conservatoires and not a job for the universities.

M: Right.

T5: I mean in the psyche, in the psyche rather than it's something that they'll say straight at you. I think it's because it has never been seen as an academic pursuit therefore it's very difficult to encourage them. I did teach the two years at the University of (name of institution), where they did an undergraduate conducting course and it was very popular and though we covered all the aspects, we covered…that the truth to be around it was more orchestral specialization and I was a choral specialization and they…we did…we talked about choral conducting at one term and about orchestral conducting. Now, as to the two different disciplines, of course, there are so many things that are the same.

M: Like?

T5: The technique. And rehearsal and the rehearsing and things like that. So many things that are the same. But I think, I think, there are lot of….with choral conducting the techniques sometimes bypass as a fundamental.

M: Why do you think that happens?

T5: I don't know. That's a very good question. Why? I think because people…again there is something in the psyche of this country that… Oh, well. It's from the tradition of being an organist to conductor. And it's been the same role that the organist would

spend hours and hours and hours on rehearsing how to play the organ and then it's just assumed that they can conduct as well.

M: Do you think that it might also come from the side of the singers? That the singers feel that they don't need to be led in the same way as instrumentalists, as an instrumentalist needs in an orchestra?

T5: I have never thought about it like that, to be honest.

M: Have you…

T5: I have never thought about it. I've never really asked….I think the singers appreciate a proper conducting technique as much as the next person because it is still to do with the clarity of meaning and how to face the music and being in control of the tempo and I think singers will still welcome the clarity. (Laughing)

M: Can you tell me some things about the course that you run at the University of (name of institution). Why do you think it was popular?

T5: Oh, I didn't run it. I…the choral part I had an input into. And I did it for two years and I think it was…unfortunately, part of the reason it was popular was because a lot of the students thought of it as a non-academic subject. So, therefore, they thought: 'Oh, well…it's more practical and therefore I am not writing lots of essays'. Reason number one. For some.

M: Ah, ok.

T5: For a certain number. And number two, people were generally genuinely interested for their future careers because they were thinking about whether they wanted to go and teach and therefore they'd be responsible for instrumental ensembles and vocal ensembles in their future lives so they were thinking ahead, which is good. Thirdly, a lot of them were very…already very accomplished practical musicians on their own instrument and were looking for something, for some more, something more to challenge them and develop their own musical awareness and understanding of why something might work, one might work as a conductor and why not. So I think a lot of them were thinking ahead, others were already good practically and were thinking about extending that and there was an option to do that.

M: Can you highlight for me two or three things that were very important in your course. Which things you said: 'I have to include this, this and this definitely in this course'.

T5: A basis of technique, a good basis of rehearsal and, these are not necessary in order, and how to get your understanding of the music across to whoever you are conducting.

M: When you were a student and you were receiving training, can you take me through this process of your training? You started…I guess you had some piano lessons before, you know how to play the organ or the piano. Do you find it necessary for a choral conductor?

T5: I am a really bad pianist. I've never played the organ.

M: Ok. (Both laughing)

T5: In some ways I come to this from a different route because I am a violinist and that's my number one training but when I went to the university I started doing lots of singing in the chapel at the university for my undergraduate course, it was at the University of (name of institution). And I started to do more and more singing and I enjoyed the singing side and I was asked to take some…for one term I was asked to cover for the sabbatical term of the director of music and though I found myself I have been interested in conducting before, I mean, you know, it was all over the place and I thought 'well..', I enjoyed it but I wasn't really comfortable so I wanted to find out a way of being more comfortable. So I didn't come from it from the pianistic side; I came from the instrumentalist side where I sat in orchestras and watched conductors and thought 'why can't I?', why don't I feel like I can play easily or why don't I feel comfortable?'. So I knew that there was a certain amount of technique involved to, for it all to work properly. So I wanted to study it properly… how to get it right. Like any other instrument and that's also what I really believe very strongly, is that you have to study the conducting as much as you were to study an instrument. You would, I would presume to go pick up the trombone and play the trombone just because I know how to play the violin. I might know what it should sounds like because I can see the notes and I would be able to hear it in my head but I would have no method on how to play it. It would end up sounding completely wrong. And I think people don't think. I don't think it is arrogance. It is not arrogance to presume 'oh, just because I can do this, then I am alright to conduct'. But it's a lack of thought.

M: So after your degree you went to attend the (name of programme).

T5: After my undergraduate degree I went to the (name of programme).

M: How was the journey from the beginning…

T5: The journey from the beginning, well as a said today in the class, you know, I was all over the place and gradually with each of the sessions, you know, ideas get into your head. Where the real learning goes on is in-between. Because you get the change to watch and understand and for the ideas to accumulate. And as long as you are open-minded when you are up there, always trying new things then, it may or may not happen straight away when you are in-between the sessions and doing your work, then watching the video and going 'oh my God. It looks awful' (Laughing). Then that's where you really learn. It really is. That's why actually this course worked for me, because I had time to think about it and try it out.

M: Ok. So do you think that this kind of training is more effective; when you receive some training and then you have the chance to apply it with your group; and then come back, receive some more training and then try things out?

T5: I think it is really important…I don't know about whether it is more effective but I think it is really important that there is a course like this because it gives people who have a job Monday to Friday and are busy all the time with their work, so it gives them a chance to take on a conducting course rather than being…you have to stop everything to go and study at a university or a conservatoire. So I think it is really important that something like this does exist. And what it prompted me to do is to say 'ok, I've had a start and I want to find out some more so then I went and found out about a course to study'. But for continuing professional development I think is really important. That the course does exist and you do have time to think about it because a lot of the people here are teachers or maybe church choir trainers and they get, sort of nudged by thoughts in the sessions and go home and they think about it and then when they come to the next rehearsal they'll begin in a way that is different. They'll have thought about something and say 'today I'm going to really see if I can get this working for my choir'.

M: Did you think that being videoed helped you?

T5: It's so important.

M: Ok.

T5: It's not…it's horrible. It's really horrible watching yourself. Watching yourself on the video. It's not very nice. But it does really sort things out.

M: For me, it's very nice to hear that the new generation of conductors want to receive training and doesn't…

T5: Well, if these things didn't exist I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't have got going and I wouldn't have necessary thought because…I don't know…I knew I didn't want to play my violin as a full-time thing. I knew that I didn't want to do that but I was looking for something that I wanted to focus on and I got so much encouragement from (name of tutors), when I first started and (more tutors), who used to do this course that they said 'come on, keep going. Do it, do it, do it'. And there were other courses that I went on as well and always got encouragement and so if I…and always got encouragement not saying 'Great! Well-done', but always encouragement to learn more and say 'yes, yes it's worth it, go on and do it'. I think that was important.

M: Yea. Yea. For you, which are the most important attributes of a choral conductor?

(Silence)

M: As a violist, for example which were the things you wanted to see in the person who was standing in the middle?

T5: The most important attributes for a choral conductor, I would say, aren't removed from any conductor; band conductor, orchestra conductor, is that you want to see from them, in how they conduct, what they want from the music. Because that is the job of the conductor. Because if you didn't have a conductor, a certain amount of your work, especially, you know, for the…..maybe sixteen singers you might not need a conductor if they are good singers, you would be able to start together and if you are working with singers who listen to each other it would all work. Because they have an understanding of the music, they can sing in time, sing in tune, whatever. So where the conductor is so important is that they come in and say 'well, yes that sounds fine but actually this needs to happen, that needs to happen. To do with all the blend of the voices, to do with the nuances in the phrasing, all…that is where the conductor really puts it all together. And that is the same for conducting an orchestra for a big symphony.

M: So he is like a facilitator.

T5: A facilitator, yea. So it's not really to….I mean of course it would be anybody's dream to turn up with 16 singers who can sing it straight away to a certain degree, of course, that's anybody's dream because then you really get it. But you can only really be an effective conductor if you can do something with those 16 singers who can already sing it to a certain extent and that's where the extra, where you earn your money, or whatever. (*Laughing*). I don't know. But that's to say for any conductor.

That's not special to the choral conductor. It's the blend of everything and the facilitator, as you say, to bring this music and make it sound as you hear it here.

M: Is it easy to find a job as a choral conductor?

T5: It's impossible to make…well, it's impossible to have a salary position. Not impossible, very difficult if you are one of the chorus masters for the big London choruses like the…, you know, London symphony chorus or something like that. Then yes, you have a salary that is very good. And if you didn't do any other conducting you'd be able to live. But it's possible to make a leaving by doing other things as well. But, I mean, you could make a leaving if you were rehearsing with five different choirs a week, then you can make a leaving. That's fine. But it's…

(Laughing) But it means that I would be out five times a week and I wouldn't see my family and…and….I do some other bits of teaching in the daytime. So…I work with three choirs in evenings plus I do some teaching and that's how it sort of gets more sensible. (Laughing)…Because, there are jobs, there are plenty of jobs now, but not sort of full-time, you know…it'd be one evening per week maybe two evenings a week.

M: Ok. Were you a chorister as a child?

T5: I sang when I was young I sang in a church choir, my school choir but then I stopped singing when my voice changed. I stopped singing because I was playing my violin and I played my violin in a youth orchestra and that was my main focus and I found a band. My father is a keen singer. He does it not for his job but he sings with P. (name of choir) symphony chorus. Amateurs' choir and…but to a good standard and when he was a boy he did lots of singing. So I always knew that this was his background. He never, sort of really, when my voice changed and I didn't fancy singing, he never bothered about it. He just, you know, he was happy that I was doing my violin and then when I went to university I started singing again. I felt 'oh, yes'. And that was it.

M: Thank you, thank you very much for your time.

T5: Have you had a chance to speak to (tutor's name)?

M: No, no.

T5: So I can put you in contact with…

M: That would be great.

T5: …with (name of tutor) because he was my tutor at (name of institution). That course is now finished but he teaches at (name of institution).

M: Is that a choral conducting course?

T5: Yea.

M: Is it an undergraduate or postgraduate?

T: It's a postgraduate.

M: Oh, thank you very much. If you can do that for me I will be very grateful.
(Exchanging emails)
(Informal chat about people to contact)
M: Do you know anything about the course at (name of institution)?

T5: Yes. I will put you in contact with…(name of the person I could contact). It seems to be a very good course...

M: How do you select the repertoire that you conduct? How do you select the pieces that you want to do with your choirs?

T5: It's a combination of what I want to do at that time, what is appropriate for the choir; they may have a certain structure that year or they do particular kind of concerts for the particular time of year. So that's a combination. What I would like to do as well, it may be I want to do a piece I have already worked on before so I am not learning a new piece with them and there may be another new piece that it's new for me as well. So I get to research everything into it and work on it. And then also where I want to go with it, so if I, say, well maybe this kind of programme will be good to do this year because next year I want to try something different or something new or something that will develop the same skills.

M: So there is long-term planning.

T5: You try, try. It's very easy to say 'oh, in three years' time I want to be doing that'. You always have to accept that things are often coming in quite short notice. But with major works, like Messiah, Durufle Requiem or bigger sort of Verdi requiem, then you think 'well, I want to do that this year' and also money (laughing). Whether there's any money.

II. INTERVIEW WITH A TUTOR (T1):

Maria: Thank you first of all for having me here.

Tutor 1: No problem.

M: Can you tell me a few things about your background as a musician and choral instructor?

T1: I did quite a lot of singing from university. I mean I was singing in school but I did quite a lot of singing after school, as a choral scholar at college where I went on to and later on I was given a couple of cathedral choirs. I started training here with (programme) when I was still at university, my last year. So I did my training there. French horn player as well but very badly now. Really don't play at all except rude noises. But actually I have very little formal musical education. So I finished at O level, really; O level music is as far as I went. I did a music diploma, sort of afterwards when I started work in church music, so actual, in terms of formal musical education not a lot, but actually everything I learnt at O level applies to what I do here. Frankly all the harmonic bits and pieces I use, so I remember most of it. Few and little places that I use them all the time. So not a music degree or anything like that. So the training was really very much always on the job…

M:…craft knowledge…

T1:…and continued developing by going on the odd course here or there, building slowly fresh experience, different peoples' insights. Some courses I have been on have been completely useless, you know, they were actually very soul-destroying; very soul-destroying. One or two have been really very useful. They have really made me think and develop my own skills and the bits that…so that's my sort of background. I have become head of conducting training a couple of years ago, taking all responsibility for our syllabus. It has been quite a lot about training skills for our tutor team.

M: UK has a big tradition in choirs and choral singing but there are very few courses that actually provide training in choral conducting. Why do you think that happens?

T1: I think people take for granted that tradition. It is a very valuable tradition; it's a great tradition but we do take it for granted. That actually it just happens, 'hey! Isn't that wonderful?' So that is why we provide many courses; we do. There are five of these, plus two residential; seven, plus summer school which is eight; plus bits that do CPD work in schools etc. So it's quite a lot of things that we run for people out there in the work force who are actually doing it in a way that delivery suits them. So it could be a 5-day course like this or it could be 2 residential weekends that we offer or if you could make it away for the week that is the most attentive, the longest, you get most experience from podium time and you can do it that way. In terms of formal training there is very little available in the universities. Some of the conservatoires

offer a postgraduate choral conducting diploma etc. etc. but actually that doesn't get to many people. Not many people will do that. And the conservatoires notoriously, much to my anger, very few of them if any actually offer this sort of training to people out in the field, which is fine for us because, you know, allows us sort of refill free. Who else offers it? (Name of programme) offer a course, which is a good course in many ways but they are not as systematic as we are… Our syllabus here has been developed over forty years…And all our tutors are trained as lead in our syllabus…Because if these building blocks are all in place all the key skills are in people, they can actually develop in all sorts of ways in the future depending on their particular needs and depending on where they were. But without those key building blocks, you can really falter. Ok, and the challenge that we often face is that people's perceptions of their own abilities is way ahead of actually the reality. Their ability to reflect on their own ability, on actually where they are, is not very objective at all. And that's one of the challenges that we really, really face. They don't realize how bad they are. Very often. They can be bad and they think they are absolutely fantastic and they are not. They are just not. So, there is a big gap about perception and reality about choral conductors in this country. Somehow they get away with it because their singers are good. I will give you an example of a very, very good professional choir up in (location in the UK) whose conductor is completely useless but I don't knock him for it because actually he gets some fantastic results from his singers. By accident? I don't know how he does it, but he does.

M: But why conducting is considered a very formal discipline and not choral conducting?

T1: I think it has always been second. I think there has always been obsession in this country of being second grade. You know, if you are a choral conductor and then you step up to being an orchestral conductor they will always, they will never let you forget that you were a choral conductor. I do both but I've always, you know, regular time has been said 'My God he is a choral conductor trying to be an orchestral conductor'. Actually I do both fairly well.

M: Do you find any difference, from your experience, do you find any difference between the attributes that a choral conductor has from the attributes that an orchestral conductor has. Is there any difference between the two roles?

T1: There are some substantial differences. First, the interaction that the choral conductor has with the choir and an orchestral conductor has with the orchestra are

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two very different dynamics. An orchestra reacts very differently to a conductor than a choir does, so when you are conducting both at the same time you have to be able to be a schizophrenic and split between the two from time to time. I think that many of the key skills are exactly the same. You know, being able to keep a steady beat, being understood, being clear, starting clearly, stopping clearly, being expressive, having independence in hand gestures. All these things are very, very common. All the key building blocks, here actually if someone did really well on this course and we stood him up in front of an orchestra, they would be understood. They would be absolutely understood. But then it's how you go on to develop baton technique, as well as you get to use the stick, which I usually do unless it's a very small orchestra, 12 players or under, I always use a stick and actually handling that as a different kettle of fish, which some choral conductors take to very easily and some don't.

M: Which are the skills that you think you can only develop while doing it; while conducting people? Because I guess that in short courses like this you can only teach some skills, people can develop some skills but they are some that they might not be able to develop. The question is, can you teach all the skills that a choral conductor needs?

T1: We can teach virtually all the skills a choral conductor needs. We can also teach some cheats to get round blocks where we can't teach. I can't teach a person to be charismatic. I can show them how to go round it if they are not. I can't teach somebody to have a natural general genuine rapport with singers or the people in general. I can give them some cheats when they have difficulty in that particular area. I can show them how to hide it, how to overcome it. But I can't teach them to be charismatic sort of personality and I am not in the business of tampering with people and their personality.

M: I like your honesty because some people claim that they can teach everything in a choral conducting course. When it comes to teaching, why did you, for this course, why did you put so much emphasis on patterns?

T1: Because I think the role of teaching in a choral conductors' role description sometimes can be underrated. I think it's very important. It's very underrated. And it's very important that you don't actually just conduct but actually teach. And then once you've been able to teach then you can move on to the actual gestural bits and pieces that you actually work on. But the ability to teach the singers to sing accurately and well from the vocal technique point of view and from phrasing and all the nuances

that you want to put into it, it's just absolutely critical. It's so important thus underrated that you have to be able to teach. And those people, those are the conductors that purely want to do this bit but none of the teaching. Actually they are running 100meter sprint with one leg tied behind their back.

M: That's true. And what are the assessment criteria for this course. So that people…(He gives me a piece of paper with all the criteria). Oh, that is… I didn't know.

T1: You wouldn't. That gives me details of what their experiences are, what are ……
I would like to know their age, so that I know…, their voice is helpful and what other courses they have done in the past. Everyone but one today is new to the course. And here are the criteria, there is preparation from grade excellent through to unsure; teaching skills, very good pacing, good, fairly successful, problems, weak, disorganised; gesture, from good to difficult maintaining pulse, occasionally they are not able to maintain the click or a steady click; musicianship; the use of voice whether it's confident or qualitative or tuning problems; authority and rapport. So good and in giving command or timid/ weak/ overbearing. So, the two extremes; either they can be very timid and weak or they can be very…(making noises). For rapport, enthusiastic and encouraging to anxious, very nervous or even aggressive. So, date by date (the tutor fills in the spaces in the evaluation form) and they hear some recommendations for how you forward.

M: Thank you very much. I am really impressed because this is the first course that I see being so well organised.

T1: Again, this is something that we have developed…These things apply the same in Mozart's time and now.

M: Can I have access to the curriculum, at some point.

T1: No. It's a confidential document. I am not going to let you have it.

M: Seriously?

T1: Yea.

M: Ok.

T1: A bit straight with you know, I wouldn't be able to share them with you.

M: Really? Ok. Because I know there are very few courses that have a structured plan of aims and then outcomes.

T1: These, course aims I can give you. Outcomes I can't give you.

M: I found what is available on the internet. Yes, I have that.

T1: I can give you possibly a little bit more than that. The key building blocks that we teach at this level…What we have been delighted about is that our courses are very well regarded by those people that have got to them.

M: Ok. Thank you very much for the time and for giving me all that information.

III. INTERVIEW WITH A LEARNER (L1):

Maria: Thank you very much for time. My first question is if you have attended any programme in choral conducting before.

L1: I did in April 2007, I started gospel choir workshops, so it wasn't a one-to-one lesson; it was group singing but gospel singing all very energetic, lively and dancing. We trained on how to move…

M: You trained?

L1: Yea, it was like a training; it was like a course, gospel choir course. And then we had a concert. It was brilliant!

M: How did you develop an interest in choral conducting?

L1: Because I studied choral singing for twelve years. I studied choral singing so I loved it.

M: As a singer?

L1: Yea, as a singer. I started playing the classical piano and choral singing for 12 years, that's why I love classical music and that's why I love choral music as well.

M: And why did you come to this particular course?

L1: Because I always wanted to be a choir leader. And I was looking for some course; some suitable course where I can learn some techniques. Because I have been observing choral leaders everywhere I go so, for instance, when you conduct a gospel choir it's completely different. They use different patterns, completely different; they dance, they can't stand still! They have to dance and we have to dance as well. It's all very passionate; I love it.

M: What kind of music do you do with your group?

L1: We do…We didn't want to focus on one style because I just really want to do many things. I like us to be able to do various things, various occasions, so we did classical things, like madrigals, pop, jazz and gospel because that's just a 'must'.

M: And from this course which are the things that you used from last time?

L1: I definitely used pulsing and some entry and ending, definitely. Because we always struggle how to start, how to end. So definitely I used this. There was really great.

M: *And did you see any effect, did it have any effect on the choir?*

L1: Yes, I did, because I was more organised and because before then, I didn't have a clue how to start; how to get them started, how to finish them, so it was all very messy. Now it's getting there. It's getting into the shape, so it's much better.

M: *So, from the choir, as a feedback from the choir, did they tell you something? 'Oh this is more helpful...or...'?*

L1: Yea. Mainly, the way they start singing or the way they sing all...because I know they always watch me and before that I wasn't sure. 'Ok, they are watching me, what am I supposed to do though?' And now I show them what to do and they are really comfortable with it so I can see they do what I want them to do so they...and they want me to show them what to do, so I think it's like a mutual...It's really good.

M: *What else do you want to develop in this course? Which are the skills you think you need?*

L1: Of course when you have more parts of the song I'd like to be able to have understanding how it works, need to have control over the different voice because we have five parts all the time so I just like to be able to handle that. And I think it's just hard but it's beautiful. I really want to be sure that I know what to do, how to control everyone and rhythmically, as well. I am really interested in knowing how to have control over the different parts, singing as a group.

M: *So, for you, which are the qualities that good conductors should have?*

L1: He needs to know the piece very well, he or she, she or he, she needs to know every part really well, she needs to be able to show the changes in melody, changes in the rhythm, she needs to show, she needs to be able to show all these changes. She needs to get the choir, the people watch her all the time because that's very important. It is loads of things.

M: *When you go to concerts... what do you enjoy from live concerts?*

S1: We haven't had a concert yet so I'll be quite interested to know that. Because we sort of recently started rehearsing and, well I am quite scared, a little bit.

M: *Yes, ok. I mean, it's normal; I guess. Do you stand in the middle or you conduct from the side?*

L1: No, I conduct from the side. A bit different, because this is not a proper choir. It's not a choir; I don't want this to be a choir. I don't want this to sound as a choir. I want this to be a singing group. It's a bit different feeling and I believe it will be interesting and I believe people will be interested in it. I just feel it. I know it, so I just really want to work so hard to get the bets results.

M: Judging from the music, it must be very exciting attending a concert that has jazz, gospel, madrigals, rock, no, no, pop...

L1: Pop, this is just approachable. I want to be approachable to people. I want people to be interested, so to speak their language. People like jazz or pop songs in a jazzy arrangement so I like to play round with the music a little bit.

M: Ok. But do you know if there are some skills that conductors need to have in order to be more effective with their groups; because there are very few courses that offer training in choral conducting. So it seems that some people think that choral conductors don't need to be trained; they can just do it.

L1: No. I have seen so many bad conductors. It's just outrageous. A conductor has to know how to use patterning; they need to know the music, they need to be able to read music, they need to use clear gestures because that's just a 'must'. Because as we have seen here today, singers will do just want you show them to do and if you do the wrong thing, they will do the wrong thing as well. So it's just a 'must' that they must get everything proper and correct.

M: Thank you very much for your time!!

IV. INTERVIEW WITH A LEARNER (L28):

Maria: Can you please tell me a few things about your background knowledge and experience in choral conducting.

L28: So, choral conducting which is my general musical background.

M: Yea.

L28: I started off as pianist and I finished my studies in piano and I took voice lessons and later I got acquainted with the Kodaly educational concept and after I attended a 3-weeks seminar in Hungary I decided to go and do the full course. So I went there for 2 years and I did the choral conducting course and the Kodaly Pedagogy.

M: So tell me about it, in a nutshell.

L28: Well, it had lot of, like personal, like musicianship development, lots of theory and all done within the Kodaly concept. And we did lots of teaching methodology, elements of, you know, theoretical about history and musical literature and then the actual conducting. I had two hours a week of like a conducting lesson which was, you know, technique and gestures that's going to music repertoire and also another two hours a week of so-called conducting lab in which the conducting majors, like, the students that actually did the course took terns conducting the choir with the rest of the students of the institute and that's how we got our rehearsal practice.

M: And that course was for 2 years?

L28: Well, I took it for two years. They have like certain levels; they have like four levels and when you go there you give some entrance exams and they place you in the appropriate level. And then you can say that you completed the so and so level there. For example if you started of like in level, the basic, which was the first one it didn't necessarily mean that you would stay for four years, you know. People there, went there for a year and just did the basic or just did the…They have Basic, General 1, General 2, Advanced. So I went there and I got placed at General 2 so I did General 2 and Advanced. So I did 2 years there and in both years my focus was choral conducting because I wanted the extra practice. I didn't have enough of that. And after that I came to England last year and I worked part time as a choral conductor of a youth choir in… (location in the UK), youth music choir, so they sing SAB. And also, I wanted to do some proper, to get like a proper postgraduate qualification as my tuition in Hungary is not officially recognized. So I was looking for, I guess you can say, the paper but also to get some more experience and to get acquainted with the system here and how the choral world operates.

M: So, why did you choose this particular course?

L28: My choices were limited when it came to choosing because even though you could take conducting in many schools, it was like very, very few schools that actually focused and specialised. You could do choral conducting as a first study so didn't really have that much choice.

M: So from the things that this university has which were the elements of the course that you found most interesting?

L28: I like that it's a small school and I like that there is a lot of flexibility. You can personalize your course. So, I've taken up some electives; I've taken up for example orchestral conducting as an elective because that is something that I wanted; I

definitely wanted some experience I didn't have before. And because I am part of the vocal department I can attend some foreign language diction classes so I am taking German diction. And what else? Of course there are other general MMus academic subjects like musical philosophy and aesthetics and performance practice, performance scholarship.

M: So what to you expect to get from this course? By the end of this course what do you expect to have gained?

L28: Well obviously I am going to have much more extensive experience and firmer knowledge of the choral repertoire. I haven't had the chance to work so much on technical stuff, but I am doing, you know, as you saw, lots of in my one-on-one tuition I do lots of, you know, exploring new repertoire and talking about with my tutor; about how we will approach it from the rehearsal point of view, problems that would arise and how to solve them. Obviously maximizing my rehearsal technique and, you know, time saving; tricks which are so necessary. Because, you know, we are always haunted by some clock.

M: Right. Did you have a look at other choral conducting courses before choosing this one?

L28: I didn't have the chance to observe. I mean, I went briefly and observed like, the… (Name of the course) before that and it was very much…it was practical oriented there and I didn't like the fact that they didn't actually have a choir for you to practice on. So it was you know the students between them that sang for each other which as fine but I don't think that anything can really replace a real proper… and like real-life problems, that you know, you are likely to come across and you need to figure out ways to solve them. And then again it was, I suppose, the (name of another programme) which was all good but again it was not that flexible. I wouldn't have had the chance to get some orchestral conducting, for example. And the conducting classes that we would have had with a choir to work on would not be on a regular basis. So maybe I would get like twice a term, I would get some podium time but not really.

M: Which are for you the most important attributes of a choral conductor?

L28: Well, obviously, you know sound musical skills and aural skills. So apart from technical-theoretical knowledge that one needs to have; keyboard skills always help but there is not like a necessary prerequisite but it's good because, you know, you have to learn the score somehow and you can't sing all the parts at the same time. So

the way I learn a piece, what I do: I just sing one part and play the others at the same time. There I sing the soprano and play the others and then I will sing the alto and play the other three or four, or whatever. So that's how I learn my music. And vocal skills without a doubt, because it's not always the case that you'll have professional singers to tutor so you need to be able to give advice on vocal technique. And I guess the personality is quite important, as well because, you know, you need to convince people to follow you, you need to convince people to stay with you. So interpersonal and social skills are quite important, in my opinion.

M: From your experience in working as a choral conductor in England, do choral conductors here get some kind of basic training before becoming choral conductors?

L28: No. I would say no. The usual arrangement that I have met, I guess, is, mostly like in church music, you have like people that have grown up being in the choirs and then you get all those directors of music and all those organists. So those organists as director of music one of their duties is to manage the choir so many people actually, you know, are having a position where they have to learn on the job. Most of them start of like that because choral conducting is not offered anywhere as an undergraduate principle subject. Like, you can do it on the side along with something else like piano, or some other instrument or singing but, to my knowledge, it's not offered anywhere.

M: So the kind of training that you are receiving at the moment, where you have the choir to conduct and the one-to-one instruction, do you think is a good enough model of a choral conducting course?

L28: I think so. Yes, because obviously you need some consultation time with a teacher so that you can work and, you know, advance in your own pace. Like you saw for example, with the choir I need to be doing something else; it has been like a month now we have only done three pieces. I can't go like that! I want to increase my repertoire, you know, learn more and approach more, so my chance to do that is during the one-to-one.

M: How about podium time? Do you have enough here?

L28: I think podium time is very vital. I do think that this is very, very vital to have some experience in that. I mean, it's not that you can't learn as you grow but it helps you avoid some unnecessary shortcomings.

M: Thank you very much for your time! See you again next term, but we'll keep in touch via emails, if that is ok with you.

L28: Sure!

V. INTERVIEW WITH A LEARNER (L5)

M: Can you please tell me a couple of things that you feel that have gained so far from the course.

L5: Well, I've never done any conducting before so just the sort of basic idea of conducting technique and…Then mirror the posture and things that you want to support when the children are singing…

M: Is it anything that you are missing so far from the course? Would you like to have more time…(unfinished sentence)?

L5: Oh, yes. Heaps more time. But…you know, never having done it I'm sort of started right from basic. I don't even know how to hold one hand, so…at the moment I still manage one hand but the other one is a bit…good at doing…something else. Maybe a bit more…I mean I don't understand that much about how the voice works to improve singing and I think maybe I need to know more about that to support, you know…the conducting skills.

M: Which is the most useful thing that you have taken aboard so far from the course?

L5: I don't know… I suppose that learning to breathe and bringing them [the children] in because it has improved the start. We don't get that dribbling on when we get the third word. We do mostly get a good start.

M: Ok.

L5: And I've really enjoyed when we set out the warm-ups and that sort of vocal technique but I feel I can't remember it all because it was like so much in one session and then I get home and I try bit …and I thought 'what was the rest of it?'. So, you know, I suppose for me, I just need to go over things.

M: But then if there is something that can be improved in the course, what would be your suggestion? Can think of something that you would have liked to have more of?

L5: I think….I really…I was fascinated by the way the voice worked that I was interested today when you had moving all the people around…..Because you change

your voice depending on where you are standing next to. Whereas obviously our children would stand next to their friend…and I'm thinking…I'll move them around and they won't like it but I'll try it out. Things like that.

M: Did you have any unexpected gains so far from the course?

L5: Hmmm….

M: Did you realize that there was something you were not expecting to…?

L5: I really enjoyed singing.

M: A!!!(Surprised)

L5: Because I used to sing and I never sing now. And just singing in parts it was like… 'Well I've forgotten about that'! Which made me try more part singing with the choirs, I suppose, at school, although sometimes they look at anything as too hard. So, it doesn't have to be…I just really enjoyed the fact that I was singing in a group even when I wouldn't have to practice.

M: Ok. How did you start conducting at the school?

L5: My head teacher said…I put in my performance management that I wanted to, you know; know more about singing because I am the music coordinator…to know more about singing and conducting. So we started the choirs and didn't really know what to do with them and the Head teacher saw that course and asked if I'd like to do that..so…

M: Oh, that's good.

L5: But she knew it was an MA module and I didn't. So…I thought it was for beginners, you know…and then I was quite shocked when I got here and everybody else had done it before.

M: So far which of the things that you have done here you could use with your choirs?

L5: Hmm…(thinking for a while). I've done, like, the warm-ups, relaxing the body, I've done the breathing techniques and so learning where we breathe from…We are not going to put our shoulders up…..hmm…Bringing them in, just actually conducting because we always have a CD, because nobody plays the piano but even with the CD just conducting there shouldn't get them used to looking, you know, what the conductor is doing. And I've tried, I've tried modelling things, you know where I change and they have to copy what I am doing. And then I just change and they have to change as quickly as they can, you know, how they stand or sing. Modelling that

sort of posture that if I want them to stand up, I will stand up rather than…If I think they are slouching or something I just model good posture and they do it, too.

M: Would you like to attend some other course on conducting in the future?

L5: I probably would. I find it very uncomfortable because I feel I don't know much about it but then again I feel that it is good for me because I am learning a lot. So,yes…

M: What do you think of the atmosphere at this course…?

L5: Oh, I think it's lovely. It's just me really that has a lack of confidence I think. I think people are lovely and the course… You know, the tutors are great as well. They are very supportive but it's just that I'm lacking confidence about standing up in front of people so..

M: Did you have the chance to have a look at the videos?

L5: I did the first time…

M: Ok..And?.

L5: …which was quite embarrassing because I didn't realize…It wasn't so bad. It was afterwards that I cringed. I felt like an embarrassed little girl at the end. It wasn't so much what I was doing while I was conducting. I had no chance to look at the other ones because I don't have email at home.

M: A, ok. But did you find it useful?

L5: Yes. I enjoyed it. I liked watching other people. People that I thought I really wanted to watch what they were doing….

M: Thank you for your time. I'll let you have your break now…