

Final MA Assignment BMPF7010

Project title: What does it take to be a choral director in 21st Century UK?

Understanding the education and pathways to choral directorship for the formally and informally educated choral director.

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1. Project Proposal

Project Title: What does it take to be a choral director in the 21st century? Understanding the education and pathways to choral directorship for the formally and informally educated choral director.

*Note the terms choral director and choral conductor are assumed to cover the same function and are interchangeable.

Background

Choral singing is a popular pastime in the UK. A 2017 survey by Voices Now estimated there are over 2 million non-professional choral singers in the UK and over 40,000 non-professional choirs (BBC Radio 3 Choir and Organ Online, n.d.). Each of these choirs will have at least one choral director and many choral directors will lead more than one choir.

The benefits of choral singing from a health and well-being perspective are being increasingly researched, documented and endorsed (Livesey et al., 2012; Osman, Tischler and Schneider, 2016). However, choral conducting is an unregulated activity in the UK, with various routes to entry. Cooper argues that the proliferation of community choirs in Australia means that the education and development of choral directors is now a matter of 'public interest' (2017, p. 358) as a way of protecting participants. Given the participation levels in the UK, it may be reasonable to make the same assertions about here. Some choral directors will have undertaken formal conducting training either at higher education establishments or through organisations such as The Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD). However, there are also those who come to it through other pathways and who may not have had any training in either choral conducting or vocal pedagogy.

An experienced solo and choral singer with a BA (Hons) and MA in Music, the researcher became a choral director twelve years ago as she had become disillusioned with the approach of some choral directors in her singing sphere. The researcher believed some level of training was imperative to provide a reasonable level of proficiency, giving confidence to the singers and therefore, enhance enjoyment and performance. A period of study was completed with ABCD including their Initial and Intermediate courses. The researcher also undertook some orchestral conducting training. Whilst this period of study covered key aspects of choral conducting technique such as beat patterns, expressive gesture, body language, programming, and the communication of musical

intent (Durrant, 2009; Jansson, Balsnes & Durrant, 2021), there was little coverage of vocal health and the tools to help the amateur chorister to protect their voice. The in 2019, she started to build her knowledge through her studies for this degree.

In a study of choral directors based in Norway, Jansson and Balsnes (2021, p. 349) identified six distinct pathways to choral directorship:

1. The educated instrumentalist
2. The educated singer
3. The church musician
4. The music educator
5. The musicologist
6. The apprentice or 'uneducated' choral singer

The researcher considers herself to have come to choral directing via the educated singer route.

The development of formal pathways in choral directorship via higher education been a relatively recent development (Jansson & Balsnes, 2021). Although it has been taught in the USA in an organised and methodical way for some time (Varvarigiu, 2016), in the UK, formal training at conservatoires and universities is a more recent development. In 1997, the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) was the first higher education institution in the UK to offer a specialist choral conducting course (Royal Academy of Music Online, n.d.). Since then, organisations such as the ABCD have worked to raise the profile of formal choral conducting training, and widen its availability (Durrant, 1998) and academic institutions such as Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC) and Birmingham University (BU) now offer postgraduate degrees in choral conducting (Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Online, n.d.; University of Birmingham Online, n.d.).

But not all choral directors have had the opportunity or desire to study at a higher level. Whether due to availability of courses at the time, other commitments such as personal or employment circumstances, many choral directors may have opted for on-the-job training or informal training (that which does not lead to a formal qualification) as offered historically by the likes of Benslow Music Trust or Dartington Trust. These generally take the form of short courses focussing on conducting technique and score preparation. However, since 2022, there appear to have been few choral conducting courses offered for current choral directors (Dartington Trust Online, n.d.; Benslow Music Online, n.d.; The Bow and the Baton Online, n.d.).

Why do we need this information?

Being an unregulated activity, anyone regardless of knowledge or experience may become a choral director. It is the researcher's opinion that if such individuals are not in possession of a reasonable understanding of vocal anatomy, vocal health maintenance and techniques alongside a knowledge of good choral conducting technique, there is a risk of unintentional damage to singers' voices.

This project aims to establish the level of knowledge in the UK choral conducting community by understanding the routes to choral directorship and the background, education, and experience of UK choral directors. Additionally, the project aims to identify which common areas of training, and those which are not. It also aims to determine what continuous professional development (CPD) is undertaken, and whether there an appetite for further training and in what areas.

Areas to be examined are:

- The different routes to choral directorship in the UK
- The education levels within the British choral directing community
- Areas of common knowledge within the British choral directing community.
- Any identifiable gaps in knowledge that may be cause for concern especially regarding the promotion of vocal health in choral singing.
- The level of CPD commitment and the level of awareness of development opportunities in the UK.
- Whether there is a CPD recommendation to ensure choral directors keep abreast of current developments in choral practice and vocal health.

Project aims

The aims of this research project will be:

- To complete a meticulous literature review, using both white and grey literature, focusing on the key elements of good choral conducting and how this is reflected in both formal and informal education;
- To collect and analyse data on the demographics of, and views on training in the choral directing community in the UK.
- To offer the results of the project to institutions such as ABCD to potentially help develop and promote CPD in choral conducting training to the wider UK choral conducting community, whilst aiming to promote a minimum standard of knowledge of elements such as good vocal health maintenance.

- To help informally educated choral directors to appreciate the need for CPD by highlighting current best practice and scientific knowledge in maintaining vocal health.
- To help the leadership teams of choirs e.g. trustees or committees, identify the key elements of good choral conducting practice and ensure choral director candidates are suitably experienced or trained, and aware of the latest developments in choral directing practice and choral singing health.

Research Methodology

Before embarking on this project, the researcher examined her view of the world or her ontological position as this would influence the choice of methods (Mertens, 2015). As an accountant, the researcher has a natural inclination towards quantitative methods and empirical analysis which help her draw conclusions based on the likelihood of the results, placing her within the postpositivist paradigm (Mertens, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, during her studies, she has realised although there maybe one reality or series of events, each individual will have their own interpretation. A director's interpretation of events may be different to a singer's, especially where interactive qualitative factors such as emotions, interpretation, or personal beliefs exist. Such interpretations are likely to be influenced by the participants' background and preferences (Scott, 2014).

The researcher therefore concluded the project would benefit from both quantitative and qualitative methods, reflecting both the objective and subjective nature of the realities experienced, and the empirical responses required (Feilzer, 2010; Mertens, 2015). The researcher reasoned the project would be best approached from a pragmatic perspective (Morgan, 2007) where the methods used are 'matched to the specific questions and purpose of the research' (MacKenzie and Knipe, 2006, p. 6) and are focussed on what is practically suitable and at the time, effective (Petersen & Gencel, 2013) to solve 'the practical problems in the "real world"' (Feilzer, 2010, p.8).

Methods

As a need for both quantitative and qualitative information has been identified in order to understand the choral director's educational background and approach, Mixed Methods was deemed appropriate.

As this project targets a country-wide population, an online questionnaire was determined to be the most efficient way of collecting data. A questionnaire can also be structured to meet the exact needs of the research project (Coe et al., 2017). The questions will cover a mix of quantitative such as demographic information, and more qualitative elements regarding the views of British choral directors on a range of training and CPD elements. The questionnaire will likely contain a range of styles of question including dichotomous, multiple choice, and rank ordering to capture objective and subjective answers. Additionally, there are several considerations to keep in mind when designing questionnaire. Denscombe (2017) states it is important to consider the order of the questions and whether earlier ones will impact later responses. Leading questions and assumptions relating to the respondents' knowledge or opinions should be avoided (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) whereas Mertens (2015) stresses the importance of not leaving the most important questions until last. Denscombe (2017) also warns about the dangers of asking closed questions which may lead to an unconscious bias towards the researcher's point of view. Piloting the questionnaire will help to refine and focus the questions (Xerri, 2017). It was recognised the number of responses received will have an impact on the integrity of the results, too small a response could mean the results is unrepresentative, too many responses will make the analysis of the data too time-consuming. A list of questions will to be constructed that provides the depth and range of data needed to draw valid conclusions from the exercise whilst balancing the need for enough meaningful information with the time constraints for the research.

The project design will therefore consist of:

- A questionnaire designed to capture demographic and attitudinal information of the choral conducting community in the UK.
- Semi-structured interviews with a small number of choral directors targeting qualitative aspects of choral conducting and the attitudes towards training. These are likely to take place by phone or by virtual meeting with recordings made to aid transcription.
- An integrative literature review to include grey literature resources such as websites and curriculum information from higher education establishments, alongside traditional primary and secondary sources such as peer reviewed articles and textbooks.

The proposed timetable is given below:

Activity	Oct/Nov 23	Dec 23/Feb 24	Mar/April 24	May/Jun 24	Jul/Aug 24	Sep-24
Preparation						
Preparation of Draft Proposal						
Agree proposal with tutor						
Define aims and objectives						
Draw up draft project proposal						
Research						
Literature Review						
Construct pilot questionnaire						
Circulate pilot questionnaire						
Review feedback on pilot						
Update main questionnaire for pilot feedback and review						
Publish main questionnaire						
Cleanse questionnaire response data						
Compose interview questions						
Interviews to take place						
Report						
Write up methodology section						
Analyse questionnaire results						
Transcribe interviews and code						
Write up findings						
Write up introduction						
Write up limitations/delimitations and reflections						
Write up conclusion						
Draft Submission						
Final Submission						

Ethical Considerations

In line with the guidelines set out in the ERSC Research Ethics Framework and the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice, it is anticipated that no harm will come to the participants and informed consent will be required before any prospective respondent or interview can participate. To protect the identities of the respondents, all responses to questionnaires and transcriptions of interviews will be anonymised. Interview recordings will be stored securely on a password protected computer and coded to ensure the interviewees' identities are anonymous.

The researcher is an active participant in the field she plans to research and as such, is an insider researcher (Humphrey, 2013). Whilst this gives her some advantages as she brings knowledge, awareness, and a commitment to the subject of the research (Brannick & Coughlan, 2007; Saidin & Yaacob, 2016), she may have her own personal bias towards the outcome of this project (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). To counter this and maintain an ethical balance, the researcher should, along with all other ethical issues, address this as part of the planning and implementation processes from the outset, and not as an afterthought (Mertens, 2015). The researcher hopes to counter these potential pitfalls by circulating the questionnaire amongst the membership of organisations like the ABCD, as well as choir leader related social media, to ensure the

responses come from as broad a base as possible within the UK choral conducting community, limiting the number of respondents with any personal or professional relationship with the researcher. Similarly, there will be a request for volunteers or recommendations for interviewees to help eliminate any unconscious bias in the selection process.

Personal Learning Outcomes

- To understand the breadth of knowledge in the UK choral conducting community regarding the recognised fundamental of good choral conducting practice.
- To identify any gaps in that knowledge that may highlight any potential opportunities for CPD for both the informally and formally educated choral director.
- To establish what the members of the choral conducting community consider to be the most important attributes of an effective choral director.
- To develop a study that can be used by training providers to develop CPD programmes.
- To satisfactorily complete a rigorous research project in the hope it will lead to further opportunities for research.
- To be in a position to offer the results to organisations such as Making Music to assist those responsible for the appointment of choral directors to make informed decisions in the assessment of candidates.

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Project Title: What does it take to be a choral director in 21st Century UK?**Understanding the education and pathways to choral directorship for the formally and informally educated choral director.**

*Note the terms choral director, choral conductor and choir leader are assumed to cover the same function and are interchangeable.

1. Introduction

In 2017, a survey by Voices Now estimated that there are over 2 million are over 2 million non-professional choral singers and over 40,000 non-professional choirs in the UK (BBC Radio 3 Choir and Organ Online, n.d.). Each of these choirs will have at least one choral director and many choral directors will lead more than one choir. There is now a choir for everyone, from the traditional choral society to LGBTQ+ choirs, workplace choirs, community choirs and choirs for health and therapy. Research into the benefits of singing from a health and well-being perspective are wide-ranging, well documented and now part of mainstream understanding (Cooper, 2017; Livesey et al., 2012; Osman, Tischler and Schneider, 2016; Smith et al., 2020). However, choral conducting is an unregulated activity, and anyone can set themselves up as a choral director, regardless of education, knowledge or experience.

In Australia, there has been a significant increase in the number of community choirs and Cooper (2017) has argued that the education and development of choral directors is now a matter of 'public interest' in order to protect the welfare of participating choral singers (p. 358). Given the size of the amateur choir community in the UK, it may be reasonable to make the same assertion here, as choral conductors should look to educate their singers, not just musically but in the efficient and safe use of their voices (Durrant & Varvarigou, 2015).

In the UK, educators and choral directors Durrant and Varvarigou have analysed the training requirements for the development of effective choral directors, creating models, frameworks and curricula to facilitate their education (Durrant, 1994; Durrant, 1998; Varvarigou, 2009; Varvarigou & Durrant, 2011) but whether these have been implemented by choral conducting training providers is unknown to the researcher. This study aims to understand the educational and training backgrounds of the UK choral conducting community which may highlight any gaps with Durrant and Varvarigou's proposals. It also aims to understand and identify the areas where further development is needed.

Due to the scope and timeframes for this study, it will not be possible to analyse a sample population of many hundreds, but it is hoped that by engaging with up to one hundred UK educated or based choral conductors, commonalities in education and training, may be found that are representative and relevant to the wider choral conducting community.

It is hoped to achieve by taking the following steps:

- To identify any gaps in knowledge that may be cause for concern especially regarding the promotion of vocal health in choral singing.
- To understand the level of CPD commitment within the British choral directing community and the level of awareness of development opportunities in the UK.
- To ascertain whether there is a CPD recommendation to ensure choral directors keep abreast of current developments in choral practice and vocal health.
- To help the leadership teams of choirs e.g. trustees or committees, identify the key elements of good choral conducting practice and ensure candidates for positions are suitably experienced or trained, and aware of the latest developments in choral directing practice and choral singing health.
- To potentially help organisations such as ABCD to develop additional training options aimed at the informally trained choral director, thus improving the quality of choral directing in the UK.

2. Literature Review

Summary of Previous Research

Whilst this study is not a direct culmination of previous research, it is informed by it. This was a journey started by an experienced singer who became a choral director, who then realised how little they knew. Previous research has allowed this lack of knowledge to be addressed.

Previous Research

Over the duration of the course, the themes explored and the key references informing this project:

1. Impact of poor posture on the choral voice.
Cardoso et al, 2017; Iwarsson, 2001, Kim and Kim, 2016; Oudes et al, 2005; Staes et al, 2011.
2. Use and benefits of semi-occluded vocal tract exercises (SOVTEs) in an amateur choral setting.
Manternach, Clark & Daugherty, 2017; Manternach, Schloneger & Maxfield, 2019; Titze, 2001.
3. Effect of SOVTEs on vocal acoustics and uses for the choral director
Bozeman, 2013; Manternach, Clark & Daugherty, 2017; Manternach, Schloneger & Maxfield, 2018; Titze, 2018.
4. The breathing mechanism and its role in singing, the Accent Method and the impact on vocal acoustics and relevance to the choral director.
Morris, 2012; Morris and Hutchison, 2017; Thyme-Frøkjær and Frøkjær-Jensen, 2021; Titze, 2006.

This course has resulted in a significant increase in knowledge in the above areas which led to the question of how much knowledge other UK choral directors had of these subjects and subsequently, the proposal for this project.

Current Available Literature

A literature review can be defined as 'a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding a specific topic' (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013, p.218) and 'a means of

demonstrating an author's knowledge about a particular field of study' (Randolph, 2009, p.2).

There appears to be little relevant primary research on choral conductor education emanating from the UK. Despite an extensive online search of the UWTSD library including JSTOR, EBSCO, ProQuest Central and Sage Journals, and Researchgate and Google Scholar, only a few people appear to be researching choral conducting in the UK. These were primarily: Dr. Colin Durrant, a choral conductor, choral conducting tutor and educator, Dr. Maria Varvarigou, choral singer and conductor, lecturer and researcher and in Norway, with research interests in the UK, Professor Dag Jansson, choral conductor and educator and his associate, Dr Ann Haughland Balsnes, a music educator with a special interest in singing in various contexts such as educational and choral.

This infers the study of choral directing training and practice in the UK is an immature field for academic study, possibly because choral conducting is a relatively new offering from Higher Education (HE) establishments. The first specialist choral conducting course was introduced by the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in 1997 (Royal Academy of Music Online, n.d.). Until around this time, choral conducting in the UK could be considered 'pedagogically unsound' (Durrant in Abrahams & Head (ed), 2017, p.230) which, given the date of the chapter, coincides with the introduction of the RAM course in 1997.

Academic study of choral conducting training stems extensively from the USA, where choral conducting has been offered as an academic subject at colleges and conservatoires for many years and consequently, the field of study is better established (Durrant & Varvarigou, 2008; Jansson & Balsnes, 2021; Jansson, Elstad & Døving, 2019; Varvarigou, 2016; Varvarigou & Durrant, 2011). Given the maturity of the field in the USA and the established nature of choral conducting training in the education system, the USA was considered too different a landscape in reference to this UK based project.

The USA's pre-eminence in the academic study of choral pedagogy is supported by the contents of The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy, published by Oxford University Press. A department of Oxford University which itself has a collegiate choral tradition going back to late 13th century (Merton College Online, n.d.; New College Choir Online, n.d.; Magdalen College Choir Online, n.d), recognises the research expertise in this area resides in the USA (Abrahams & Head (ed), 2017).

In the Handbook, 21 of the 31 contributors (67.7%) are USA based college professors and educators, professional choral conductors, musicologists and researchers. An analysis of the locations of the contributors is as follows:

Analysis of Contributors to the
Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy
By Geographical Location

Location of Contributor	% of Contributors
USA	67.7%
UK	6.5%
Australia	6.5%
UK/US	3.2%
Brazil	3.2%
Hungary	3.2%
Germany	3.2%

Figure 1. Analysis of Contributors of Choral Pedagogy by Geographical Location

To date, the views of those currently involved in the long-established choral traditions at the University of Oxford have not been reflected in this publication but hopefully, there will be opportunities to contribute in the future.

Whilst not many recently published papers were found relating to UK choral conducting, papers by the key contributors examined the following topics:

Rehearsals

The fundamental skills and attributes needed by a choral director to ensure rehearsals and performances are engaging and successful were considered in Durrant's 2005 paper. This focussed on five choirs, two from the USA, two from Finland and one from the UK, ranging from primary school age to young adult;. Successful rehearsals and performances were found to be led by conductors with some level of energy and charisma. All the conductors were experienced and successful, and each demonstrated authority but in different ways; one ruled by fear and cajoled the singers into feeling guilty about disappointing him whilst the other four encouraged their singers, listening to their opinions, ensuring the environment was inclusive and nurturing.

More information on the background of the five conductors their early training would have been useful for this study, illustrating whether the skills possessed were taught, innate or a combination of both. It may also have established the level of interpersonal skills included (Jansson, Elstad & Døving, 2019) their studies and highlight some of the

differences in training in Finland, the UK and the USA. However, the scope of the paper covered how the effectiveness of rehearsal leaders in creating an enticing rehearsal environment, not their training.

In 2015, Durrant and Varvarigou produced a chapter for the Oxford Handbook of Singing, examining the role of the choral director in rehearsals and during performances. It argued the standard, skills and understanding of aspects such as gesture, had been inconsistent due to the lack of formal training for choral conductors available until recently. The authors asserted the conductor needs to possess more than good technique to be effective in both rehearsal and performance, they also need confidence in their interpersonal skills e.g. the giving of positive feedback and general leadership (Jansson, Elstad & Døving, 2019). In relation to this project, it is hoped to discover whether current UK choral directors assign importance to interpersonal skills.

Teaching of Conducting

In his 1994 paper, Durrant aimed to determine from available research literature, the aspects of successful conducting requiring a better understanding. This followed a period of teaching UK based trainee music teachers which highlighted the variability of knowledge, experience and skills amongst the students. From an analysis of predominately USA focussed papers, Durrant concluded some aspects of a conductor's skill can be acquired and improved through practical experience of conducted activities and of conducting. However, he argued there are 'specific teachable musical, technical and personal skills necessary for effective conducting' (p.74). On comparing the more structured US system with the UK system, he found the latter to be disorganised and unstructured with very little training in HE music courses. He proposed the following model for effective choral conducting:

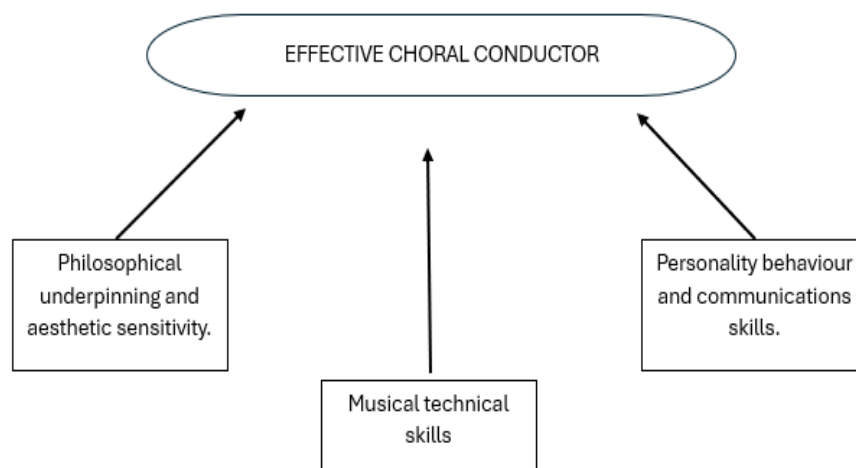


Figure 2. Aspects of conductor effectiveness (Durrant, 1994, p.61)

It should be noted this paper was published three years before the RAM introduced the UK's first HE choral conducting course and other HE institutions also now offer specific training in this area. This project will attempt to understand the focus of current HE courses.

A Durrant and Varvarigou paper published in 2008 opens with the statement 'Professional development in conducting is inconsistent across the UK, leading to a lack of confidence amongst teachers' (p. 72). The paper focuses on development for teachers and student teachers studying for the Music Education MA at the Institute of Education, University College London, including the module Choral Conducting, Leadership and Communications. It found many schoolteachers, especially at primary schools, lacked the confidence to lead choirs. This was attributed to the lack of conducting courses in HE for music undergraduates and postgraduates. A key outcome of the study was the identification of conducting skills requiring development:

- gesture and conducting technique
- better use of rehearsal time
- improve communication with choir members
- the ability to put into practice their knowledge of vocal technique
- learn more about repertoire.

It remains to be seen if there are any similarities between these development wishes and those of the respondents to the project survey.

In her 2009 doctoral thesis, Varvarigou aimed to provide an effective model for choral conducting training. Varvarigou states despite the growing body of research suggesting choral singing brings both musical and non-musical benefits, the training of choir directors and leaders has not been given the same attention. Varvarigou considered there were few courses in the UK adequately preparing choir directors for the role of leading community, church and school choirs. Her thesis examined the content of five training courses, from beginner to advanced, three provided by HE establishments and two by independent organisations. In the context of this project, the key finding was the focus of the courses on the conducting techniques such as clarity of gesture, score preparation etc. with not enough training in non-technical aspects such as:

- an understanding of vocal anatomy and technique 'in order to promote healthy singing' (p.232);
- the development of confidence alongside technical skills.

- interpersonal skills including 'non-verbal communication (eye-contact, posture), encouragement and motivation... and general leadership' (p. 227).

Additionally, Varvarigou asserted:

- Even extensive practical experience of choral conducting does not ensure the tutor has the skills required and the course tutors would benefit from understanding different aspects of teaching.

None of the courses included all the aspects identified by Varvarigou as essential and the courses' weaknesses corresponded closely with the findings in Durrant and Varvarigou's 2008 paper, especially regarding vocal anatomy and health, and confidence.

Regarding this project, it will be seen if the same aspects are identified as weaknesses or CPD topics.

Identity

Durrant's 2005 paper focusses on the relationship between choral singers' sense of identity and the methods and approach of the choral conductors' who lead them. It concentrated on choirs from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland and the School of Music of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Whilst this paper does not address the purpose of this project directly, it does expand on Durrant's model for effective choral conducting above, details of which can be found in Appendix J.

Gesture

Durrant's 2022 paper which he co-authored with Jansson and Balsnes focusses on choral conductors and singers in Norway and Sweden and the relative importance or not, of conducting gestures. Whilst not directly relevant to the UK, as some gestures are ignored by singers, it concludes that self-reflection regarding the use and relevance of gesture should form part of a CPD plan (Jansson, Balsnes & Durrant, 2022).

Establishing the availability and breadth of training in the UK.

The scarceness of peer reviewed literature available on this choral conducting training in the UK necessitated the consideration of grey literature sources. Grey literature can be described as the varied and diverse repository of public information that has not been exposed to academic review or published in peer-reviewed journals and books (Adams, Smart & Huff, 2017; Schöpfel in Bickell, Kousha & Thelwall, 2022). Paez (2017)

contains where there is limited peer-reviewed literature on a subject, it can be used to minimise publication bias and improve the balance of obtainable information, providing additional perspective on the topic being investigated. Grey literature can be difficult to find and analyse into a form which can be combined with primary and secondary sources (Adams et al., 2016). One drawback of web-based grey literature is the changing nature of domains and webpage addresses, which may hinder the duplication of the searches leading to the source of the information (Paez, 2017). There is also the question of quality; as grey literature sources are not subject to the same scrutiny as peer-reviewed literature, further analyses and checks may be required to ensure it is suitable for use (Adams, Smart & Huff, 2016).

Given the small number of contributors in this field UK, it was concluded publication bias was a distinct possibility. Therefore, the inclusion of grey literature becomes a key tool in understanding the scope of the training available currently.

Consequently, it was decided to examine the content offered by several leading institutions offering choral conducting tuition. Requests were made for copies of syllabuses from several institutions but disappointingly, many were unreceptive. The reasons for this are unknown but it could be they are inundated with requests and unable to help everyone, or there are no detailed written syllabuses, and the programmes are a product of the experience and approach of the tutors,

Consequently, it was necessary to combine information from elsewhere, in this case the websites of the institutes approached with the formal documentation received.

The organisations and the sources examined (in alphabetical order) are:

Organisation Name	Source
Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD)	Website
Birmingham University (BU)	Website
Royal Academy of Music (RAM)	Course Handbook
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC)	Website
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD)	Website
Sing For Pleasure	Website

When analysing the grey literature, only the activities deemed to be core to conducting were examined i.e. those specifically mentioned in the sources (Appendix C). Any elective modules from other areas and faculties' courses would be ignored, as the quantity and variability is too wide for the scope of this project. Additionally, if the subjects are not part of the core curriculum for choral conducting, then subject is not considered to be an integral part of a choral conductors' education by the institute.

The variation and generality of terminology used by the organisations was the main issue with the analysis, making direct comparison difficult. Therefore, the coding and analysis was based on the researcher's interpretation of the terminology used (Appendix D). This also illustrated another drawback, the lack of detail available online; websites and prospectuses are an invitation to enquire or apply rather than a detailed explanation of the course content.

There were significant differences between the offerings by the HE institutions and the independent organisations. All the organisations covered the following:

- Conducting technique
- Efficient and effective rehearsals
- Score knowledge and preparation
- Repertoire knowledge and choice
- Musicianship

The HE institutions also provided coaching in the skills for professional and career development, whereas the independent organisations were mainly focussed on the technical aspects of choral conducting. In both cases, there was little mention of the soft skills that might be required for the effective management of a choir or vocal anatomy and health, factors noted in Durrant, 1994; Durrant & Varvarigou, 2008; Jansson, Balsnes & Durrant, 2022 and Varvarigou, 2009. Where people management elements were identified, these were unspecific and vague e.g. 'create a rapport with the choir' (ABCD Online, n.d.; Sing for Pleasure Online, n.d.), and 'keep singers interested and musically satisfied' (RBC Online, n.d.).

Analysis of Grey Literature Sources

	Institution	RWCMD	RAM	RBC	BU	ABCD	Sing for Pleasure
	Source	website	prospectus	website	website	website	website
	Specialist Choral Conducting Pathway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Independent Organisation	Independent Organisation
	Level	Postgraduate	Postgraduate	Postgraduate	Postgraduate	Intermediate = Diploma ABRSM Advanced = Licentiate ABRSM	Course Type - Intermediate/Advanced
Code	Element included in course						
1	gesture/direction	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
2	beat patterns					Y	
3	score preparation	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
4	error detection/aural skills	Y	Y	Y		Y	
5	rehearsal organisation and effectiveness		Y	Y		Y	Y
6	knowledge and choice of repertoire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7	knowledge and application of vocal technique	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8	acquisition of language skills	Y		Y			
9	interpretation		Y	Y			Y
10	musicianship	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
11	people management skills			Y		Y	Y
12	verbal communication skills		Y	Y		Y	
13	knowledge of vocal/choir acoustics						
14	knowledge of vocal anatomy & health					Y	
15	pastoral care						
16	authority	Y		Y			Y
17	knowing when to intervene/correct						
18	knowing when to empower to self-correct						
19	writing of programme notes						
20	one to one tuition/mentoring	Y	Y	Y	Y		
21	group tuition	Y	Y				
22	non-choral repertoire studies	Y					
23	employability and transferrable skills			Y	Y		
24	developing and managing a music career		Y	Y	Y		
25	practical experience with singers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
26	masterclasses	Y	Y	Y	Y		
27	opportunities to observe other conductors	Y	Y	Y	Y		
	wide range of institute performance						
28	opportunities	Y	Y	Y	Y		
	performance opportunities with guest						
29	performers	Y		Y			
	secondment and other real-life practical						
30	opportunities	Y					
31	professional project development		Y	Y			
32	work with other departments such as Drama			Y			
33	personal development skills such as reflection	Y		Y			Y
34	collaborative skills development	Y	Y	Y			
35	mentorship programme	Y					
36	development of creativity and innovation	Y					

Figure 3. Summary of Analysis of Grey Literature Sources

3. Methodology

Ontology & Epistemology

We are all influenced by the world around us and how we perceive and understand that world will impact our beliefs and actions in everyday life (Meretoja, 2014). Similarly, the philosophical worldview or paradigm (a 'basic set of beliefs that guide action' (Guba in Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.5) of the researcher will shape their methodological choices as much as their way of thinking (Mertens, 2015; Petersen & Gencel, 2013). In order to articulate their paradigm, the researcher must first examine their position on, and assumptions regarding their perceptions of reality - **ontology** (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). This will influence how events within that reality or realities can be examined, measured, and communicated to others – **epistemology** (Kawulich, 2012). As shown below, the establishment of these two positions will help the researcher understand their paradigm and promote the establishment of a methodology that is viable and appropriate for their proposed project.

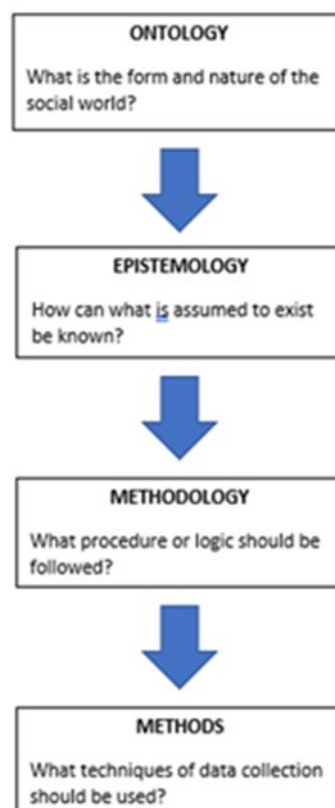


Figure 4. The relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Coe et al, 2017, p.16)

Paradigm

By analysing and understanding their paradigm, the researcher will provide a basis for the justification of the chosen methodology and subsequent methods (Petersen & Gencel, 2013), subsequently establishing the background for the researcher's work (Ponterotto, 2005). This rational analysis of the researcher's paradigm should also help identify any subconscious bias towards a methodology and methods that may be inappropriate or inadequate for the study at hand (Mertens, 2015).

Due to my training as an accountant, I am comfortable with quantitative analysis and my ontological inclination leans towards the belief that there is only one reality with the possibility of measurable variants. As such, this places me within the postpositivist paradigm with its focus on quantitative analysis, empirical measurability of outcomes and objective scientific methods. The postpositivist paradigm enables the researcher to draw conclusions based on the probabilities of outcomes rather than their absoluteness (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018; Merriam and Tidsdell, 2016).

However, whilst I am still of the ontological position there is only one reality, during the course of my studies and earlier research, I came to appreciate that the one reality may be interpreted differently by the individuals with whom I interact (Feilzer, 2010; Scott, 2014). As a choral director, I am in an interactive relationship with my singers, my repetiteur, and the instrumentalists that perform alongside. I now recognise that my choral directing colleagues are also involved in interactive relationships, involving the same, similar, or different subjectivities that impact me, and that a research project examining this field of practice may not be measurable by quantitative methods alone. As a result, I concluded the research would benefit from the use of suitable qualitative methods as well, and the use of combination of methods leads me to believe that a pragmatic paradigm is the most appropriate framework for this study.

Methodology

A pragmatic paradigm does not dictate a philosophy that adheres to one or many versions of reality (MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006), or the methods that should be used to determine outcomes. It is concerned with the 'solving of practical problems in the "real world"' (Feilzer, 2010, p.10). As such, the researcher is free to choose whatever methods are practically suitable and at the time, effective (Petersen & Gencel, 2013). This 'approach' (Morgan, 2007, p.65) will allow me to focus on 'what works' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p. 9) for this particular study rather than being limited by the conventional position of other paradigms which focus on either quantitative or qualitative methods (Morgan, 2007). By putting the research question at the centre of methodological decision-making, the researcher decides on the best methods, which if

appropriate can include both quantitative and qualitative methods (MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mitchell, 2018).

However, Mertens (2015) advises that the methods chosen should be in line with the expectations of the relevant research community to mitigate any questions relating to the integrity of the project and the results.

The methodology most closely aligned to a pragmatic paradigm is that of Mixed Methods (Christensen, 2020; Florczak, 2014). The focus of Mixed Methods is the collection and consolidation of close-ended (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) data in order to analyse and understand the research question under consideration (Creswell in Florczak, 2014). By using Mixed Methods and combining qualitative and quantitative methods and data, greater insight into the research problem will be gained than by using by either in isolation (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). For this approach to be successful, the research question should have qualitative and quantitative elements (Bell and Waters, 2018).

As a relatively new researcher with little experience of qualitative methods, the prospect of being able to combine unfamiliar methods with more familiar quantitative methods appealed to me. This flexibility in design approach allowed me to triangulate my methods without being constrained by a particular paradigmatic approach which may have resulted in the adoption of less useful tools. I agreed with Mitchell (2018, p. 103) who stated that Mixed Methods 'may be especially attractive as a choice to relatively new researchers with an open mind as to how to tackle a particular problem'.

Methods

The understanding of the research question requires an understanding of the background, experience, priorities, and motivations of the choral conducting community in the UK. In order to address this, the methods I have used are:

1. Questionnaires

A questionnaire of twenty-nine predominately closed questions was produced. A few open questions were included to allow for unusual circumstances to be noted e.g. non-UK choral conducting education experiences. Care was taken to ensure the questions were clear and unambiguous, avoiding overlap and intended to cover all possible responses. They were predominately multiple-choice. For the few open-end questions requiring an opinion or comment, coding would be required to facilitate analysis so the responses could be consolidated into the overall results. Where a question asked for elements to be ranked, the results will be analysed using simple frequency ranking

method. This questionnaire will provide quantitative data that will enable me to perform a statistical analysis to understand the pathways taken by the respondents, their educational background, their experience, their priorities, and their personal development preferences.

In order to ensure the questionnaire was fit for purpose, it was piloted within a small group of choral directors known to me. Whilst the responses were anonymised, as I had approached the individuals in question, therefore increasing the potential level of subconscious bias (Mertens, 2015), the results of the pilot were excluded from the final analysis. Instead, the pilot provided useful feedback on the structure, breadth, and wording of the questionnaire. The feedback was used to refine it in preparation for the roll-out to the wider population and to ensure it would provide reliable and valid responses (Xerri, 2017; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018)

The final questionnaire was created using Qualtrics and a link was published online, primarily via several choral conducting social media sites including the ABCD Facebook group in an attempt to reach a wide number of potential respondents; the link was also circulated by email to members of the Voice Study Centre. It was hoped to draw on as diverse a population as possible to maximise the breadth of data collected and to avoid any unconscious bias regarding the respondent pool. The questionnaire was anonymised (Appendix E).

The resulting data was then extracted from Qualtrics into Excel where it was cleansed, the variables and elements were reviewed and then loaded into SPSS. The cleansing and review processes were repeated until the data was in a format to be analysed using the SPSS functionality.

2. Interviews

Qualitative interviews are a widely used tool in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) where they can be used to 'validate survey data, they can also help to explain and enhance quantitative data...' (Adamson et al., 2004, p.144).

The purpose of the interviews was to further explore the participants' motivations, experiences, and opinions regarding the role of the choral director (Gil et al., 2018). To allow for flexibility in the process, I discounted a structured interview approach as I wanted to encourage a personal response. I next considered the use of unstructured interviews as a way of allowing additional aspects and theories to emerge (Mertens, 2015), however I was concerned about the potential length of time they would take and

also the possible difficulties in analysing and coding the likely varied responses (Gil et al., 2008).

To provide the interviews with structure and to limit the impact of digressions, it was decided to utilise a semi-structured approach combining set questions with one or two open-ended. I hoped this would provide a degree of flexibility to explore different aspects of the topic in a more organic manner (Kallio et al., 2016)

Throughout the process I was conscious of the need to build a rapport with the interviewees to ensure the dialogue was open and honest, reassuring the interviewees that I would represent their answers accurately and in the spirit in which they were intended (Mears, 2017). I also needed to be cognisant of any potential pitfalls such as allowing my own views and identity to influence the participant's answers (Mertens, 2015).

The interviews were conducted and recorded via Teams and an AI tool was used to transcribe the recording in to order to save time. Whilst this was more efficient than a manual transcription, a review of the transcriptions was completed, and amendments were made for significant mis-transcribed words and phrases (Appendix F). The transcriptions were then analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, helping to identify the themes running through the data gathered during the interviews (Byrne, 2022). A summary of the keywords, codes and themes was created, modelled after a format produced by Naeem et al. (2023) (Appendix G).

3. Literature Review.

The final method to be utilised was a systematic literature review including documentary analysis of grey literature, being documents that are publicly available but have not been subject to 'traditional academic peer-review processes' (Adams, Smart & Huff, 2017, p. 432). I anticipated that the inclusion of grey literature would add balance and further context to my research by examining the current development opportunities available to the research population, in this case UK based choral directors (Paez, 2017).

By expanding the literature review to grey literature sources, I was able to analyse a number of documents relating to choral conducting courses available in the UK. This enabled me to demonstrate the priorities of course designers, and to compare and contrast this with the educational or continuous professional development requirements of the UK choral directing community as established from the responses to the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. By limiting the grey literature sources to reputable educational establishments and organisations such as the Royal Academy

of Music, I hoped to maintain the integrity of the review, and therefore the project, by eliminating the risk of bias that may be present within the documents presented by individuals (Adams et al., 2016)

Insider Research and Ethics

It is widely acknowledged that insider research has a number of advantages over that conducted by outsiders that do not have the same 'shared experience of the world' (Smetherham, 1978, p.98). This includes a commonality of understanding of the subject and language used which can aid communication and assist in the development of relationships between the researcher and participants (Taylor, 2011; Breen, 2007; Darra, 2008; Brannick and Coughlan, 2007). But many of the advantages have their downside as well; there is the perception of bias and the need to manage being both the researcher and a member of the community being studied (Yvonne-Bulk & Collins, 2023; Humphrey, 2013; Brannick & Coughlan, 2007). As such, it is vital that the researcher be aware of the potential conflicts of interest and risks and put in place suitable controls to mitigate them, without impairing the value of the research by controlling out the advantages of that insider perspective that outsider researcher misses (Humphrey, 2013). As a choral director, I believe a key factor in managing the risks associated with insider research is the choice of methods (Brannick and Coughlan, 2007; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2013). By combining a structured, anonymous questionnaire that provided a significant portion of the data for analysis with a smaller number of semi-structured interviews, I have hopefully negated some, if not all of the risk associated with my insider researcher position.

To ensure ethical guidelines were followed throughout the project, a statement explaining the purpose of the research was made available to all participants prior to the commencement of the questionnaire and interviews. Written consent was obtained from the participants as part of the process, either as part of the questionnaire or as part of the interview arrangements. As participation was voluntary, the participants were free to withdraw from the project at any time and were offered the option to omit questions they preferred not to answer. The results of the study were offered to all participants on completion of the project.

5. Findings

Introduction

A choral conductor's practice is an accumulation of a number of factors such as education, musical background and experience, personality and opportunity (Jansson and Balsnes, 2021; Jansson and Balsnes, 2022; Durrant, 1994).

The purpose of this project is to understand the routes to being a choral director in the UK in the 21st century, to determine common areas of knowledge and also any gaps. Additionally, it aims to understand whether there is CPD requirement and a subsequent CPD recommendation.

The structure of the questionnaire was influenced by the competency elements identified by Jansson, Elstad & Døving (2021) and Varvarigou and Durrant (2011) (Appendix I) and the researcher's own experience. There were a range of questions relating to subjects such as general demographics, education, and training. The respondents were also asked to rank in order of importance various elements of choral conducting under the headings Conducting Competencies and Leadership and Other Competencies; respondents were also asked to consider their top three strengths and weaknesses across both categories to understand if there was any commonality between the topics covered in depth in training and those that were not. The identification of common weaknesses may support the identification of any shortfall in current training provision.

Additionally, all respondents to the survey were offered the opportunity to be interviewed as part of the project. Twenty-one participants volunteered and assigned a unique number, then six were picked using a random number generator. Of the initial six, only four responded to the email invitation to participate. An additional four participants were again selected by random number generator and contacted. Three participants responded and were invited to take part, bringing the total number of interviewees to seven.

The survey registered ninety-five responses of which ninety-two complete most or all of the survey. Three entries had no responses to any questions which may have been the result of a change of mind, an internet outage or another reason. As the three blank responses provided no information for analysis, they were deleted from the database.

The themes arising from the analysis of the interview transcripts provided the structure for this chapter.

		Themes				
		Commercial Skill ▾	Health & Wellbei ▾	People ▾	Performance ▾	Training ▾
Codes	Recruitment	Pastoral Care	Pastoral Care	Performance	Training	
	Innovation	Community	People Management		Conducting competency	
	Costs	Wellbeing	Routes		Routes	
	Organisational/ad min skills	Communication	Personality traits		Repertoire	
	Competition	Training	Reflection		CPD	
	Marketing	Personality traits	Boundaries		Wellbeing	
		Vocal technique/health	Motivations		Communication	
		Inclusivity	Community		Development	
			Communication		Network	
			Society/Environme nt		Personality traits	
			Authority		Vocal technique/health	
			Priorities		Organisational/ad min skills	
			Feedback		Real World	
					Reflection	
					Career background	
					Variety	
					Keyboard	

Figure 5. Themes and codes from interviews

People

Demographics of the Survey Respondents

The first part of the survey looked at the demographics of the survey participants in terms of age, gender identity, and education in order to have a basic understanding of the participants. The matter of ethnicity was excluded, more by oversight than omission and its inclusion may have provided further insight into the choral conducting community. However, it may not have added anything information regarding the routes to becoming a choral director for the respondent population.

Of the respondents who completed the Location question, eighty-six were UK based, four were non-UK based and two did not respond to the question.

		Location			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	UK	86	93.5	95.6	95.6
	not UK	4	4.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.2		
Total		92	100.0		

Figure 6. Location of respondents

In terms of age and gender, the profile of the population was as follows:

		Gender Identity By Age Crosstabulation						
		Age						Total
		18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	
Gender Identity	Male	3	2	6	4	9	0	24
	Female	3	4	18	19	16	4	65
	Non-binary/3rd gender	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Prefer not to say	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Total		8	6	25	23	25	4	92

Figure 7. Gender Identity by Age

The reasons for the concentration of respondents between the ages of 41 and 70 was not explored as part of this project but there may be link between the reasons for a similar profile in choral singers as expressed by Interviewee 3 (**I3**):

'I think they tend to drop out of things as work and family take over... your competition isn't the other choirs and orchestras... they've got children, they can't get out of an evening... when the kids grow up, they come back to it...'

Alternatively, it could be a natural progression for the experienced choral singer to be curious about a change in role who decides to exploit the opportunity if it arises as it did for Interviewee 6 (**I6**):

'I've been a choir singer for donkey's years... and one choir in particular, the director was very keen to encourage people to, to have a go. So, I had a little go once, and began to sort of sense that I had the bug for it a little... he gave me regular goes, and then he gave me a little bit of coaching.'

The motivations behind the decision to become a choral director at any time of life, would make an interesting additional facet to this project. However, given the scope of the

remit, it is uncertain if there would have been the capacity to complete further analysis of this subject within the timeframe. It may be a suitable subject to include in a more focussed study for the future.

General and Music Education

Several questions were asked about the general and musical education of the respondents. The aim was to establish any similarities in the backgrounds of the respondents as part of their route to choral directorship.

Educationally, there was a wide range of achievement across the group and equally, the types of schools attended:

Highest Education Level By Type of School Crosstabulation

Education ^a			School ^a						Total
			State	Faith	Grammar	Independent/Private	Cathedral School	Prefer not to say	
	O level/GCSE	Count	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
	A-levels/Highers or Equivalent	Count	3	0	0	1	0	0	4
	Undergraduate degree	Count	12	3	7	9	2	1	27
	Postgraduate certificate/diploma	Count	15	2	6	4	1	0	25
	Masters	Count	12	2	7	7	0	0	28
	Doctorate	Count	2	1	0	0	1	0	3
	Various 1 year diplomas	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	New Zealand School Certificate (16 years of age)	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Music Diplomas	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		Count	49	8	20	21	4	1	92

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

Figure 8. Highest Education Level by Type of School

Of the ninety-two respondents, 53.3% (49) attended state schools whilst 44.5% (41) attended grammar and independent/private schools and overall, 90.2% (83) had attended further or higher education establishments. The incidence of postgraduate training amongst the overall population with 60.1% (56) studying at postgraduate certificate/diploma or higher. Given an undergraduate degree or equivalent is generally a requirement to undertake postgraduate study (Postgraduate Search Online, (n.d.)), at 67.5% of the sample, a high proportion of the choral directing community in the UK have continued their studies at postgraduate level or higher.

When examined by school type, 41% of state school educated choral directors went on to higher education, with 84% of those then continuing to postgraduate level. This compares only slightly less favourably to independent/private school educated participants of whom 52% went no further than undergraduate level with their studies but of those entering higher education, 95% went on to postgraduate study and higher.

Of those faith and grammar school pupils that studied at higher education level (63% and 65% respectively), 100% continued to post graduate level. Cathedral school educated participants were very few in number but 100% obtained a higher education degree, of which 50% continued to postgraduate level and above.

In terms of post-school education, i.e. both Further and Higher Education, of the ninety-one answers 36 (75%) of state school pupils went to a university and 6 (13%) to a music conservatoire. This is compared with 17 (81%) of independent/private school pupils attending university and 7 (33%) attending a music conservatoire. Within the responses for both state and independent/private schools, there will be some individuals who attended both.

Further & Higher Education by School Crosstabulation

			School ^a						Total
			State	Faith	Grammar	Independent/Private	Cathedral School	Prefer not to say	
Higher and Further Education ^a	General FE College	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Sixth Form College	Count	11	1	0	1	0	0	12
	Performing Arts College	Count	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
	University	Count	36	8	15	17	3	0	69
	Music Conservatoire	Count	6	2	4	7	1	1	19
	Prefer not to say	Count	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
	Institute of Leadership	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Open University	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Private Tuition	Count	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Polytechnic	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Technical College	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Postgraduate Conservatoire	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	Count	48	8	20	21	4	1	91

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Group

Figure 9. Further & Higher Education by School

If the sample is representative of the choral directing community in the UK as a whole, UK choral directors are appreciative of the benefits of higher education and are a well-educated community. Given the sample size is small when considering the most recent statistics on choir numbers (approximately 40,000 choirs in the UK in 2017 (BBC Radio 3 – Choir and Organ Online)), it may be difficult to confidently extrapolate this to the wider population. However, this remains an interesting aspect that may benefit from closer study at a later stage as it could prove to be indicative of a predisposition to continuing personal development (CPD) if opportunities of interest are available.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, in higher and further education, 60.9% (56) of the respondents studied Music and a further 5% (4) studied Arts subjects such as Drama and Performing Arts. STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and Medicine were represented in the sample by 12% (11) respondents, with English,

Languages and Humanities being studied by 15% (14). The Science subjects studied included Material Sciences, Physics and Applied Mathematics and Physics.

First Subjects Studied at Further & Higher Education Institutions

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
First Subject at FE ^a	Music	56	60.9%	60.9%
	English	2	2.2%	2.2%
	Sciences	3	3.3%	3.3%
	Languages	6	6.5%	6.5%
	Humanities	6	6.5%	6.5%
	Engineering	3	3.3%	3.3%
	Medicine	4	4.3%	4.3%
	Education with Creative Arts	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Information Technology	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Primary Teaching	2	2.2%	2.2%
	Acting	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Performing Arts	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Teaching	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Occupational Therapy	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Music and Drama (Joint)	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Children	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Music and Philosophy (Joint)	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Education	1	1.1%	1.1%
Total		92	100.0%	100.0%

a. Group

Figure 10. First Subjects Studied at Further & Higher Education Institutions

Excluding the dominance of music and given the variety of subjects studied, it was perhaps to be expected that in answer to the question 'Is choral conducting your main source of income?' only 25% (23) responded yes. For the majority, their main income is derived from other sources, including several music related activities such as instrumental teaching, instrumental and singing performing (figure xx Main Sources of Income). These individuals could be described as 'portfolio musicians' as described by Interviewee 7 (I7) who considers himself to be a portfolio conductor:

'they talk about being a portfolio musician these days, about having some teaching and some playing work and quartet work... I feel like I'm a portfolio choral conductor, because I have to be able to do lots of different styles and lots of different lots of different types....you have to be, yeah, multi skilled in different, different areas to make a success. You can't just do one thing.'

This idea of the portfolio musician is also a view expressed by Jansson and Balsnes (2022) in relation to the choral scene in Norway. They describe the choral director as 'a

sub-category of musicians where a common feature is the portfolio career – multiple jobs constitute a professional practice’ (2022, p.196).

For those who do not derive their income from musical activities, it may be that choral conducting for them is a hobby that may or may not provide additional income to their main job. This is not a question that was asked and may be considered an oversight in the structure of the survey.

Main Sources of Income

Main Source of Income ^a		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Unspecified non-musical	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Instrumentalist	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Professional singer	2	3.0%	3.4%
	Singing/Vocal teacher	9	13.4%	15.5%
	Composer	2	3.0%	3.4%
	Music teacher	6	9.0%	10.3%
	Student	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Retired	9	13.4%	15.5%
	Piano teacher/accompanist	9	13.4%	15.5%
	Teacher (unspecified)	6	9.0%	10.3%
	Software Company	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Military Musician	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Legal Practice	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Aviation Safety Consultant	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Marketing	2	3.0%	3.4%
	Vocal Coach	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Youth Choir Tutor	2	3.0%	3.4%
	NHS Worker	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Organist	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Office Administration	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Engineering Tutor	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Civil Servant	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Arts Administration	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Data Protection & Cybersecurity	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Part-time conductor	2	3.0%	3.4%
	Performer	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Primary School Teacher	1	1.5%	1.7%
	Instrumental Tuition	1	1.5%	1.7%
Total		67	100.0%	115.5%

a. Group

Figure 11. Main Sources of Income

In terms of musical background, it was questioned whether there was any correlation between becoming a choral director and the individuals' primary instrument (including voice). The response was dominated by Classical Voice/Choral Singing at 42.7% (38) and Keyboard at 22.5% (20).

Primary Instrument Category

Primary Instrument ^a		Responses		
		N	Percent	Percent of Cases
	Classical voice/choral singing	38	42.7%	42.7%
	Opera	4	4.5%	4.5%
	Musical Theatre	5	5.6%	5.6%
	Strings	3	3.4%	3.4%
	Woodwind	10	11.2%	11.2%
	Brass	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Keyboard	20	22.5%	22.5%
	Composition	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Jazz and Rock	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Gospel Singing	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Classical singing exc choral singing	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Cello, Voice and Piano equally	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Jazz	1	1.1%	1.1%
	Conducting	2	2.2%	2.2%
Total		89	100.0%	100.0%

a. Group

Figure 12. Primary Instrument Group

The high incidence of singers leading choirs is perhaps to be expected and having keyboard skills was recognised as a desirable attribute for a choral conductor in both the survey, where it was identified as an additional key competence and also by Interviewee 2 (I2), who expressed some thoughts on the benefits of proficient keyboard skills:

'I have got grade four piano and working on a grade five piece at the moment, but I don't have the confidence or the skills to be able to just sit in front of children and just play with them... but to have the option to be able to select things if I wanted to, and not rely on a on a digital track, which is very inflexible.'

The relatively high proportion of Woodwind players compared to other categories was a surprise but unfortunately, the survey was not structured to explore this further. It is a possibility that because there may be fewer opportunities for Woodwind players, than say for String players to participate in other musical activities, that they are looking to expand their portfolio of skills. However, it may be that the survey sample isn't representative of the wider population.

In terms of proficiency, 52.2% (48) respondents had studied their first instrument at Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) Diploma level and equivalent and above. Equivalent achievements included awards from the Royal College of Organists,

the Royal School of Church Music, Trinity College of Music and London College of Music.

Highest Level for Primary Instrument

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Upto /Including ABRSM 7 or equivalent	8	8.7	9.1	9.1
	Upto /Including ABRSM 8 or equivalent	23	25.0	26.1	35.2
	ABRSM Diploma or Equivalent	12	13.0	13.6	48.9
	ABRSM Licentiate or Equivalent	5	5.4	5.7	54.5
	ABRSM Fellowship or Equivalent	3	3.3	3.4	58.0
	Undergraduate Performance	13	14.1	14.8	72.7
	Post graduate Performance	15	16.3	17.0	89.8
	None of the above	9	9.8	10.2	100.0
	Total	88	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	4	4.3		
Total		92	100.0		

Figure 13. Highest Level for Primary Instrument

Of those that did not complete a traditional exam-based instrument education, several had private tuition, were self-taught or were experienced singers without formal music qualifications. One respondent was a Natural Voice Practitioner.

Based on the response of the sample where 93.5% (86) of the respondents had sung in choirs (Figure 13), it seems likely that most choral directors had been choral singers at one time or another whether as a singer alone or as an instrumentalist singing in a choir. Of the seven interviewees, five had been involved in choral singing as singers and two were primarily instrumentalists that had sung as part of their musical education. Interviewee 4 (**I4**) summed up the situation:

'and um, so I'm, ultimately, I'm a pianist. That's my kind of background. Um, obviously you don't go through a musical education without being pulled into singing in choirs.'

In their 2021 paper looking at choral conducting education, Jansson and Balsnes also found this to be true of choral conductors in Norway, and that being a choral singer first was the most frequent route to becoming a choral director.

First Choir Experience

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
1st choir sung with ^a	School choir	48	55.8%	55.8%
	Church choir	21	24.4%	24.4%
	Cathedral choir	8	9.3%	9.3%
	County Youth Choir	1	1.2%	1.2%
	Local amateur choir	1	1.2%	1.2%
	Local childrens/young persons choir	3	3.5%	3.5%
	College Chapel Choir	1	1.2%	1.2%
	Collegiate Choir	1	1.2%	1.2%
	University Chorus/Choir	2	2.3%	2.3%
	Total	86	100.0%	100.0%

a. Group

Figure 14. First Choir Experience

As such, the respondents were asked to what their first experience of choral singing was. The results showed that regardless of instrument, career or educational choices, all respondents had choral singing experience; 55.8% (48) of the 86 respondents who answered the question started their choral singing career in a school choir and with 33.7% (29) singing in a church or cathedral choir. This appears to support I4's assertion that in the UK, a musical education universally includes choral singing.

It was noted that 4 respondents did not have their first choral experience until they were in higher education as members of their college or university choirs.

The respondents were then asked if, as well as being choral directors, they were active choral singers as well. It was found that 62% (57) were active choral singers across a range of choirs.

Current Choirs Membership

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Current Choirs sung with ^a	Professional	14	12.3%	24.6%
	Orchestral/Symphonic Chorus	6	5.3%	10.5%
	Concert choir	5	4.4%	8.8%
	Community Choir	16	14.0%	28.1%
	Rock/Pop Choir	6	5.3%	10.5%
	LGBTQ+ Choir	1	0.9%	1.8%
	Choral Society (SATB)	10	8.8%	17.5%
	Chamber Choir (SATB)	17	14.9%	29.8%
	Upper Voices Choir	5	4.4%	8.8%
	FVC	5	4.4%	8.8%
	School or College Choir	1	0.9%	1.8%
	Church Choir	16	14.0%	28.1%
	Cathedral Choir	6	5.3%	10.5%
	Gospel Choir	2	1.8%	3.5%
	Other	4	3.5%	7.0%
Total		114	100.0%	200.0%

a. Group

Figure 15. Current Choir Membership

54.3% (31) belonged to more than one choir with the highest being 6 and the average being 2 and 45.6% (26) belonged to just one choir.

One of the benefits of a choral director also being an active choral singer is that it potentially exposes the individual to a variety of conducting styles, repertoires and performance practices. **I6** stated that it is important to:

'not just to sing as much as you can, but of singing in different kinds of choirs...wonderfully invigorating and cross fertilizing and refreshing... You have to, you have to fertilize your own experience.'

One of the participants in Jansson and Balsnes 2021 study on choral conducting education concurs, explaining that:

'You learn a huge amount, about vocal technique and choral leadership, how the choir works like a group, and the interaction between conductor and choir.' (p.351)

Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the remaining respondents are not active choral singers or did not answer the question. The option to state they were not active choral singers should have been part of the survey but was missed, this was an oversight that would have provided clarification. However, if the population of the survey is representative of the wider community, then it can be assumed that the majority of choral directors are active choral singers.

However, motivations for being an active choral singer other than learning and development have not been considered and an opportunity was missed to delve into this further. One reason could be that with professional singers in the sample (see figure 10), choral singing is part of their career portfolio; another reason could be for own satisfaction and well-being, as I2 stated:

'I'm in the National Teachers choir, which teachers go for a weekend... on Sunday afternoon, they do a concert. It is just uplifting, and for teachers, it's just such a relief from being in the classroom.'

Respondents were also asked about the types and numbers of choirs they conduct. The results showed that the respondents are engaged by a wide range of different types of choir, from traditional SATB choirs to Sea Shanty groups. However, on reflection, whilst interesting, it does not address the project aim which is to understand the pathways to choral conducting and the community's view on training needs. However, the table can be found in Appendix H.

Training

Choral Conducting Training

Once the respondents' general musical background data had been reviewed, attention was turned to choral conducting education and training. The aim was to draw conclusions relating to attitudes to CPD. Respondents were asked to disclose their highest level of choral conducting education, whether it be a formal qualification such as an examination or diploma, or an informal education unreliant on examination results. It should be noted that the use of the term informal does not imply the training is unstructured or of less intensity than a formal route, simply that it does not result in a formal qualification such as a diploma. Training offered by organisations such as Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD) and Sing for Pleasure (SfP) that is recognised as equivalent to awards in the ABRSM system is considered to be a formal.

The majority of participants had followed the informal route, such as attending short courses, Summer schools or on the job training.

Highest Level for Choral Conducting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Postgrad Certificate/Diploma	5	5.4	5.7	5.7
	Masters	3	3.3	3.4	9.2
	ABRSM Licentiate or Equivalent	1	1.1	1.1	10.3
	ABRSM Fellowship or Equivalent	1	1.1	1.1	11.5
	Informal Training e.g. Summer School/Self Taught	24	26.1	27.6	39.1
	Informal Training - on the job	34	37.0	39.1	78.2
	Other	18	19.6	20.7	98.9
	Prefer not to say	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	94.6	100.0	
Missing	System	5	5.4		
Total		92	100.0		

Figure 16. Highest Level of Training for Choral Conducting

For those respondents who selected the Other category, several participants study choral conducting as part of a degree, either as second study or an elective module. Both ABCD and SfP were well supported for short course and Summer schools and 12% (3) supported their training through private lessons. One specialism arose with a conductor of Ladies Barber Shop who trained with the British and Ladies Barber Shop Associations. Overall, the uptake of training of one form or another was high with only 2 of the 87 respondents stating they were purely self-taught.

It should be noted that by this stage in the survey, several respondents were no longer completing the questions which could possibly be down to survey fatigue, which is something to be borne in mind for future projects.

Conducting Training Other

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Conducting Other ^a	Conducting lessons at conservatoire	1	4.0%	5.6%
	Sing for Pleasure Intermediate	2	8.0%	11.1%
	Sing for Pleasure unspecified	3	12.0%	16.7%
	ABCD Summer School	1	4.0%	5.6%
	Private Lessons	3	12.0%	16.7%
	Self taught	2	8.0%	11.1%
	Scholarship in conjunction with Masters	1	4.0%	5.6%
	British and Ladies Barber Shop Associations	1	4.0%	5.6%
	ABCD unspecified	2	8.0%	11.1%
	Elective in degree	1	4.0%	5.6%
	Music college short course	1	4.0%	5.6%
	Postgraduate second study	1	4.0%	5.6%
	Undergraduate Module	3	12.0%	16.7%
	Other unspecified high quality training	1	4.0%	5.6%
	On the job with College, School and Junior Youth Choirs	1	4.0%	5.6%
	Don't conduct - lead from the choir	1	4.0%	5.6%
Total		25	100.0%	138.9%

a. Group

Figure 17. Other Conducting Training Undertaken

Choral Leadership Competencies

One of the aims of this project was to understand the areas of common knowledge within the British choral directing community and to determine if there are any gaps or areas of concern. To achieve this, it was decided to ask respondents to rank a number of both technical conducting competencies and leadership/soft skills in terms of importance. They were also asked to nominate and rank their top three strengths and weaknesses. This information was then ranked and simply weighted to determine the community's overall view of areas of competence and common areas for possible improvement.

Eight elements were chosen to summarise the technical aspects of the act of conducting and eight elements were chosen to illustrate the leadership and other skills associated with the management of choirs. Respondents were also asked to provide their thoughts on any important competencies that had been excluded from either category.

Of the conducting competencies, the respondents identified clarity of gesture and direction as the most important competency to have mastered. In this context, clarity of gesture and direction or 'gestural vocabulary' (Jansson, Estad and Døving, 2021, p.7) relates to the conductor's ability to provide the choir with clear non-verbal direction on elements such as

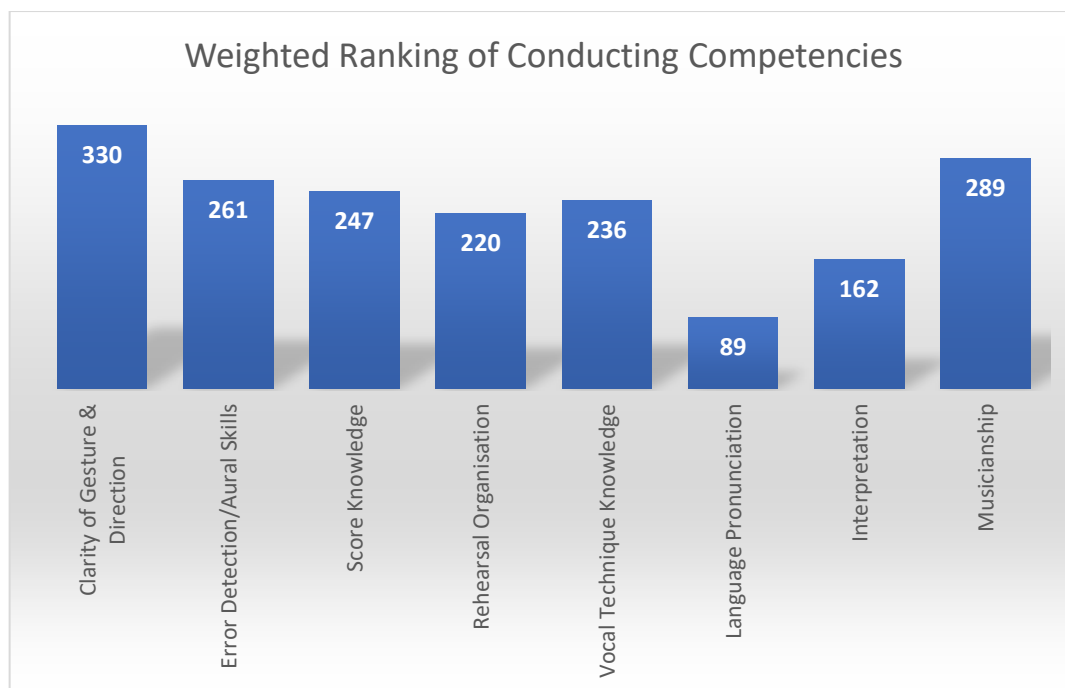


Figure 18. Weighted Ranking of Conducting Competencies

tempo, dynamics, expressiveness, entries and ends of phrases and number of beats in the bar (Cofer, 1998; Gumm, 2012; Durrant, 1994; Jansson, Balsnes and Durrant, 2022; Durrant and Varvarigou, 2015). This contradicts the findings of Jansson, Elstad and Døving (2019) who found that gestural proficiency ranked near the bottom in a survey of 685 choral conductors across Sweden, Norway and Berlin, Germany. Without knowing more about the choral conducting practices and training in Sweden, Norway and Berlin as well as the difference in sample size and statistical measures applied between this and the aforementioned study, it is difficult to make a meaningful comparison between the results. One factor could be that like in North America, choral conducting training has a longer tradition in other areas of northern Europe and as such, emphasis may be placed on different aspects of the choral conductor's art (Durrant and Varvarigou, 2015). Another factor may be that the emphasis placed on conducting gesture by both the higher education institutions and independent organisations as evidenced in the literature review, has given rise to a perception of higher importance. However, a better understanding of any differences in approach to choral conducting training and practice between the UK and Sweden, Norway and Germany may provide some insight into the contrast in importance of gesture.

Whilst clarity of gesture is considered of importance to UK choral conductors, this is not always the case for the singers. Of the seven interviewees, Interviewee 1 (I1) commented as a singer, saying:

'if I was stood in front of them as a singer, I'd rather somebody had understanding and intention and a deep knowledge of what we were trying to achieve... if their beat shapes are a bit unorthodox... I can square that square, those circles, '

In addition, reflecting on the role of conductor, they commented that:

'the gesture is only a minuscule part of the job. It is, what's the turn of phrase, a requirement, but not sufficient.'

Similarly, **I4** states that:

'Yep, I didn't feel like I need conducting lessons. I did all that coming up through my piano and clarinet grades...we did in those days, have to learn conducting patterns... I don't do it very often. I do sometimes, but... it is a communication that you develop with your choir, and nobody can tell you how to do that.'

Jansson, Balsnes and Durrant (2022) also suggest that gestural skills may not be that important from the singers' perspective, expressing the view that that conducting gestures are as often ignored by choral singers as they are acknowledged. Additionally, poor gestural skills may provoke a conscious decision by singers to ignore unclear, indecisive or inadequate gestures and rely on their own musicality (Varvarigou, 2016).

The second most important competence was that of musicianship, which can be described as the artistry or creative skill of the musician or in this case, the conductor (Collins Dictionary Online, n.d.). As 77% (71) of the respondents have attained at least ABRSM Grade 8 or equivalent in their first study instrument (Figure xx), it is unsurprising they have confidence in their musicianship skills and their ability to transfer this skill to choral conducting. Apfelstadt (in Varvarigou and Durrant, 2011) maintains that musicianship including musical intuition and artistry is one of the key components in good choral leadership.

Surprisingly, even though Musicianship was considered to be marginally less important than Clarity of Gesture and Direction, when asked to pick their top three strengths and weaknesses, overall, the respondents considered their number one strength to be their Musicianship.



Figure 19. Weighted Ranking of Strengths

This would imply that there is a gap between the respondents' perceived skill set and they what they believe the role requires.

Of the other competencies ranked, the element considered the least important was that of Language Pronunciation which may be understandable if the choirs involved are mainly or only singing in their native tongue. But for those that incorporate western classical repertoire in their programming, there may be occasions when works are performed in languages such as French, German, Italian or Latin at which point, some language knowledge may be useful. Jansson, Elstad and Døving (2021) found there was a similar outcome in a survey of 294 Norwegian choral conductors, where language skills were also deemed the least important competency element. However, the contributors considered Language Pronunciation to be the sample's overall greatest weakness by some margin, which may have impacted its ranking as a core choral conducting competency.

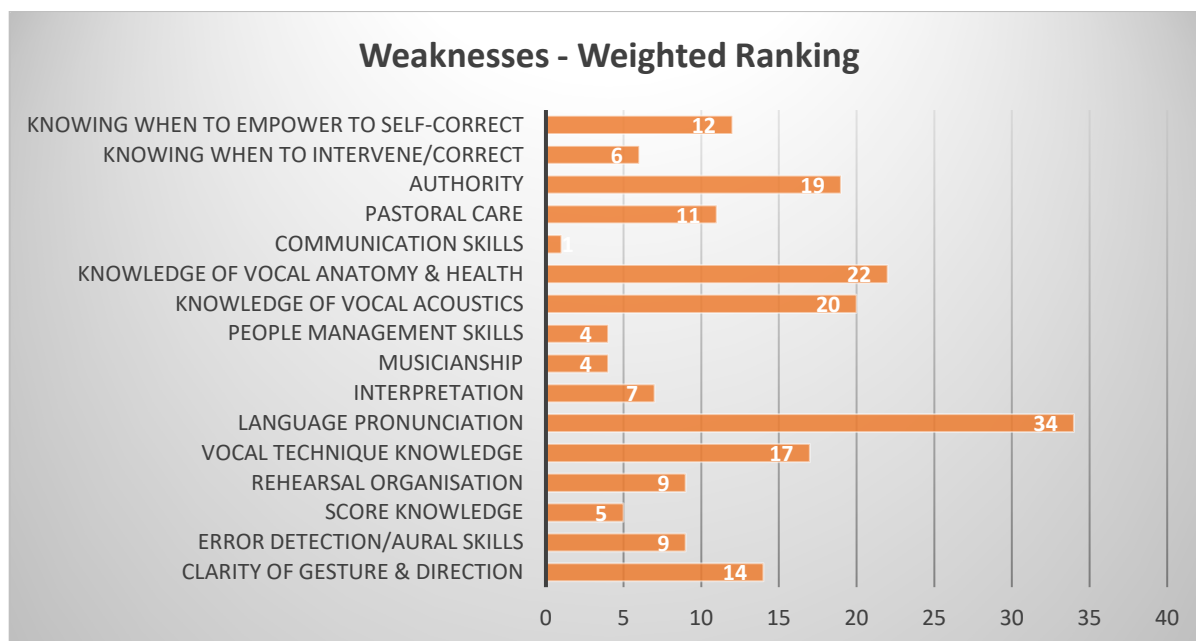


Figure 20. Weighted Ranking of Weaknesses

Of the Leadership and Other Competencies identified, people management skills were considered the most important as well as being the overall third top strength. Communications skills were identified as the next most important and interestingly, the respondents' viewed authority as the least important of the competencies but also as the fourth highest weakness.



Figure 21. Weighted Ranking of Leadership and Other Competencies

A closer look at the actual rankings given for authority as opposed to the weighted ranking shows that 29% (12) of the respondents gave it the lowest ranking, including 30% (8) of females, 23% (3) of males and 50% (1) of those who preferred not to say.

But of the small number of respondents that ranked it the most important, there were twice as many females to males.

Importance Ranking of Authority by Gender					
Ranking	Male	Female	Non-binary	Prefer not to say	Total
1	1	2	0	0	3
2	2	1	0	0	3
3	1	1	0	0	2
4	0	4	0	0	4
5	2	3	0	0	5
6	2	5	0	0	7
7	2	3	0	1	6
8	3	8	0	1	12
Total Responses	13	27	0	2	42
% of total ranking 8 or least important	23%	30%	0%	50%	29%

Figure 22. Importance Ranking of Authority by Gender

However, when examining the top three weaknesses by gender identity, 39% (11) of females ranked Authority within their top three weaknesses compared to 6.6% (1) of males.

Top Three Weaknesses by Gender Identity

			Gender Identity			Total
			Male	Female	Prefer not to say	
weaknesses ^a	Clarity of gesture and direction	Count	1	6	0	7
	Error detection/aural skills	Count	4	2	0	6
	Score Knowledge	Count	0	2	0	2
	Rehearsal Organisation	Count	2	3	0	5
	Knowledge and application of vocal technique	Count	5	6	1	12
	Language Pronunciation	Count	9	6	1	16
	Interpretation	Count	1	3	0	4
	Musicianship	Count	2	2	0	4
	People Management	Count	1	2	1	4
	Knowledge of vocal/choir acoustics	Count	2	9	0	11
	Knowledge of vocal anatomy/health	Count	3	8	1	12
	Verbal communication skills	Count	0	2	0	2
	Pastoral care	Count	2	2	1	5
	Authority	Count	1	11	0	12
	Knowing when to intervene/correct	Count	1	0	1	2
	Knowing when to empower to self correct	Count	2	5	0	7
	Prefer not to say	Count	3	0	0	3
Total		Count	15	28	2	45

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Group

Figure 23. Top Three Weaknesses by Gender Identity

Understanding the reasons for the ranking of importance or strengths and weaknesses was not an aim of this project. But the disparity between male and female identifying respondents on the issue of authority is striking and warrants further investigation into

the reasons and whether it is something that could be addressed through training. Additionally, **I2**, **I5** and **I7** admitted to experiencing feelings harbouring on imposter syndrome – the fear of losing credibility and being found out to be fraud despite their demonstratable expertise, training or achievements (Bothello & Roulet, 2019). In this case it was because (respectively) they were not a trained singer, had a non-musical HE education or when working with orchestras because they did not have orchestral conducting training. Again, whilst investigating the reasons for this is not an aim of this project, there may be a worthwhile investigation to be made.

The reaction of the interviewees, however, seemed indicate that the need for People Management skills in the choral setting was a distraction and something that needs to be worked on. Comments made include:

I1: *'So probably the thing that has come to me, and it's still a journey, is the managing, the managing the people, and always been able to go right, let's go this way and be exciting and have people follow you because you were exciting...'*

I2: *'The people management type of thing kind of gets in the way of just the music sometimes. But I know it's important...always a small group who are just wasting time chatting and wanting to go to the toilet constantly and in and out.'*

I4: *'one of my choirs is committee led, and I think not feeling as in control is tricky, to manage the politics. I think that's a whole different ball game, because I can influence,... but sometimes the people politics... can be tricky because I just don't have the same handle on it as I do my other choirs'.*

When discussing the least favourite aspects of choral conducting, **I7** stated:

'committees! But I guess it's that kind of trying to get that shared sense of direction... and when I first started,... I was quite blinkered about the music..., so have I had to kind of open myself a little bit up to, like, finances and venues and, you know, and thinking more strategically over, over a course of three or four years, rather than thinking, I want to do those pieces, I want to do the 100 piece orchestra...'

I3: *'yes, I mean, sometimes management, I'm not sort of really strict, as strict as I should be, and people talking rehearsals and answering back and stuff. I mean, I think over the years, I've, you know, got a fairly interactive style of running rehearsals, but then it can*

get that can get a bit sort of that everyone's talking at once, and I've got to stop it, please. That's one of the things I found more difficult.'

It may be that some people will have a natural inclination for people management (Durrant, 1994) and some, such as **I2** will be able to draw on experience from their working life:

'It's the people management. It's the thinking ahead. It's the problem solving, troubleshooting, thinking on your feet, a lot of acting, pretending that you're happy when you're not, or, you know, all those things that you have to do as a teacher.'

Other aspects can be developed through training in the use of positive language, reflection on how actions can impact others and understanding the influence that a conductor can have over their singers (Durrant, 1998; Durrant and Varvarigou, 2015).

Overall, there seems to be a significant gap between the training needs identified by the respondents and that offered by the providers. The focus on traditional choral conducting technique such as gesture seems to be at the expense of other elements the choral conducting community would find useful. Knowledge of vocal anatomy and health was ranked as the second greatest weakness with vocal technique not far behind; and leadership skills such as authority were also considered lacking. These are elements that would benefit both the director and the singer so consideration to putting more emphasis on them would be a recommendation.

Finally, the survey participants were asked to provide examples of other important competencies that were not included in the original list. Fifty-four separate competencies or personality traits from empathy and kindness to having a sense of humour and not losing one's temper were listed (Fig. 24). Of the competencies that recurred, the most frequently mentioned was Repertoire Knowledge/Choice followed by the need for Keyboard Skills, and the need for certain personality traits such as a sense of humour and empathy.

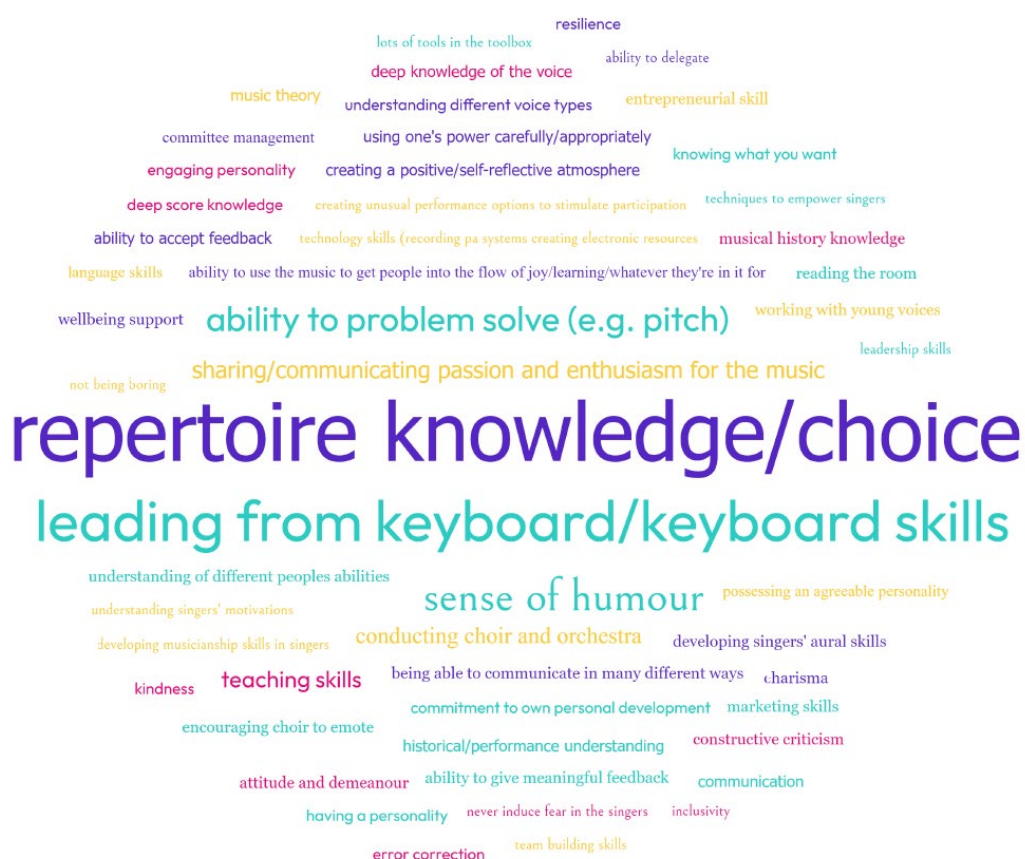


Figure 24. Additional Competencies Suggested By Respondents

Commercial Skills

A recurring theme for the interviewees and one that cropped up in the Additional Competencies response, is the need for the modern choral director to have an almost entrepreneurial mindset and a set of commercial skills that can be used to support their choirs, especially if setting up their own. As such, an overview of marketing and advertising, costing and budgeting, promotion and recruitment of new members, and administration skills to ensure the effective operation of the choir as an entity have been suggested as a beneficial addition to training programmes. It was also highlighted that an understanding of the available technology and what it can be used for to benefit the singers, conductor and audience could be useful, this may include being able to create online resources for singers such as backing tracks and digitised sheet music, or the use of audio-visual equipment to enhance performances and the audience experience

As discussed in the Literature Review, training is offered as part of the postgraduate choral conducting degrees in the development and management of a professional conducting career by institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Birmingham University. However, this appears to be

mainly aimed at the conducting of professional vocal ensembles where there is the possibility of a professional infrastructure rather than the amateur choir where much of the administration and organisation falls to the choral director. The independent organisations, ABCD and SfP, did not appear to include any coverage of such skills in their training offerings.

It is not to say that opportunities to acquire these skills are not available, for example Making Music, a charitable organisation that supports all types of amateur music making, offer tools ranging from an online administration system to a resource bank of repertoire ideas and music, and programme notes. They also provide details of a series of case studies focusing on different aspects of running an amateur music organisation such as the very effective Peterborough Sings toolkit for introducing and recruiting new people into choral singing (Making Music Online, n.d.). However, the respondents to this survey and the interviewees have highlighted this sort of skills as missing from the training they have undertaken or the training available is not suitable for their needs.

As **I7** who completed a Masters in Choral Conducting stated:

'in terms of administration, I've learned over the years about how to do it. That's something that I think could have been in my course. I think that sort of thing and that the people skills required... I know I've never had to write down a 12 part Victoria motet since I was at college doing it. So that was part of my test..., having to plan financially, having to think about a concert series and looking at music repertoire that was, that was perfect for that choir, that was, that was really, really interesting.'

I4 explained that the training they completed did not cover areas such as marketing which would have been useful:

'I think one of the things that's missing is kind of how to set up and market a choir, I think that is something that would be incredibly useful, because I think a lot of us it's a, it's become very competitive... And I think helping, helping people, helping choir leaders, I suppose, to identify what their strengths are and how to market their choirs on that, I think, is something that that might be useful...'

I3 expressed frustration at not having the tools to effectively promote their choir:

'Yeah, struggle for audience as I think we're not doing kind of modern pop choirs. And getting young people in is a big issue for everybody, isn't it? The feeling that, when we go, the whole music sector will die with us, and it's really a challenge to get younger

people there's, I mean, it's not just for but orchestra as well. And, you know, it's always a sort of, how can we get new audience'

They also mentioned about the need to be aware of costs, especially the cost of sheet music:

'If it's a modern stuff, we've got to buy 30 copies of it, whereas if it's an older piece, we can get it off CPD... But, you know, it's also a cost, a cost factor.'*

(*Choral Public Domain Library)

This is a topic that requires further investigation to assess what is required or what the choral conducting community's expectation is.

The benefits of a grasp of commercial matters were demonstrated by **I5** who had worked in commercial businesses before becoming a choral director. Having made the decision to set up their own singing studio, they realised they needed to boost their profile in their local area:

'So, what I did was advertise a kind of singing workshop so that people could get to know me, and I could get to know some people, and that would be the start of my studio. But what happened was the singing workshop turned into a regular event and became a choir.'

Similarly, **I6** who successfully operates a specialist liturgical choral events programme commented on their wish to use technology to reduce cost and increase efficiency in managing their library of music:

'The one technology I wish people did have more was iPad. I went iPad about four years ago... finding things would be so much easier and be so much better, and we'd be much, much, much less expensive as well, obviously we wouldn't supply the iPad'

I6 also had this advice to offer when it came to attracting the audience:

'I guess I'll just want to encourage people to, to think outside the box a bit... Don't just think always in terms of concerts on a Saturday night in the church at 7.30 you know... just think of some other fun stuff... Give the audience a good time. Rethink things, reinvent things, whatever the style of music want to do, have fun with it, and just do a bit differently to the way everyone else does it and the way you've always done it.'

Whilst not initially considered a key element in a choral director skillset at the outset of this project, it appears commercial awareness is a desirable asset in a choral conductor's armoury. Like all organisations, choirs need funds to operate and the main ways to raise money are through membership subscriptions and ticket sales (grants and sponsorship are important but not available to every choir). If audience numbers are not maintained or increased, there could be a danger that subscriptions increase to compensate which could be off-putting to both existing and prospective members. As indicated by the interviewees, the conductor often plays a key role in the commercial decisions, whether it be through choice of repertoire both in terms of attracting audiences and cost of music or the hiring of instrumentalists, as such there is probably an case for the inclusion of at least some basic commercial awareness content in training offerings.

Health and Well-being

There is now a wealth of research that shows that singing is good for health and well-being and which has now been taken on board by society in general (Osman, Tischler and Schneider, 2014; Livesey et al., 2012; Launey, J., n.d.; Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Online, n.d.; Keating, 2020).

For example, choral singing is used as music therapy to treat dementia and it has been shown to help improve relationships between dementia sufferers and their carers; it can help improve memory and mood and can help both sufferers and their carers to accept and cope with the condition (Osman, Tischler and Schneider, 2014).

Even where the singers are healthy, there are benefits to be had. Choral singers benefit from, amongst other things, the social engagement with fellow singers, potentially improved respiratory capabilities, improved mood and relief from stress; it is also said to improve confidence and boost concentration (Livesey et al., 2012).

In terms of this project, although the examination of the health benefits of choral singing is not the main purpose of this study, knowledge of vocal health and anatomy ranks third in importance for Leadership and Other Competencies (figure 20). It is also considered to be the second ranked weakness across the survey (figure 19).

However, for every benefit, there is the potential for hurt to someone's mental and physical health and several of the interviewees raised the question of vocal health:

I4 commented: *'I personally feel that I have a responsibility to my singers to make sure that they are not doing any damage to themselves. It's like safety first, isn't it?'*

And also: *'I started singing lessons... because I kind of recognized that I was kind of being pushed vocally... and it was a good call, because what I hadn't appreciated, but maybe I did, on some level, was I was starting to ruin my voice, actually, because I was being asked to sing in a range that wasn't comfortable for me.'*

I2 stated *'... and things like rehearsal planning... choosing repertoire, working with the needs of the children... what vocal skills they might need to develop... warm ups and physical things, ...the right posture, using their voice effectively...I see too often, doesn't happen in school, and children are then hurting their voices because either too low, because often they choose repertoire that's sung by men, or it's, it's whatever the teacher wants to do, and they may not have the knowledge of the voice and how the voice works.'*

I5 explained: *'Vocal health, vocal anatomy, we have had to look after people's voices, yeah, and get the best out of them.'*

I3 commented on their lack of knowledge: *'I go to these warmups with the vague idea about getting the muscles going, but really, you know, other than just easing in gently is all I really know about...'*

And regarding training previously undertaken

'I thought, well, I don't, you know, I'm a musician. I don't know so much about singing. And I was hoping for more actual singing technique and how I can help my choir...'

But while the survey asked about vocal anatomy and health, there are other health and well-being matters for choral conductors to be aware of such as mental health or social well-being issues that were not included, but were brought to the discussion through the interviews:

I4 reflected: *'you create that environment for them... if you are creating a choir for well-being, I think that's quite important that people feel safe.'*

For **I5**: *'it's a very much a community in a choir, that it's a very inclusive, welcoming choir. And I think everybody in the choir feels it's their choir, so it's our choir rather than my choir.'*

Similarly, for **I7**: *'it's about the community, about, about the about the collaboration, about the joy, and that's, that's what I love about amateur music making'*

I7 also described the attitude of a music director they worked with on a recruitment project to introduce people to choral singing and the potential impact that could have on someone who was just finding their way to singing:

'How do you handle those people who you, who can't match any pitches back to you in that two or three minutes? And one of the music directors says to me...why lie to them or just put them out the misery and tell them singing, it's not their thing... and they should find something else to do... Where is everything that you should believe in, your compassion and your empathy,... it makes me want to weep, because that person will, will now never sing when their child gets married, that person will be silent in the church'.

And not just for the singers but also for the conductors as well. A couple of the interviewees raised the issue of the impact of choral conductorship on themselves, especially in relation to performance or the weight of expectation either from the choir members or self-imposed:

For **I3**: *'Rehearsing I think it is the creative process... I don't enjoy concerts when I'm conducting it. I've got to stay focused and make sure everything happens right. I enjoy the buzz afterwards when everyone says, Oh, that was great. Or conversely, I'll go right down if things weren't didn't go as well as I wanted to, but I just found this sort of stress, a lot of pressure around stupid things... I sort of get to the end of the concert, I feel bit sort of, you know, I've missed it'.*

I4 commented on feeling the need to emulate a previous conductor of the choir:

'so I'm not like her, and it nearly destroyed me that first year, actually, or a couple of people in the choir, nearly destroyed me, because I relied quite heavily on the keyboard, and I didn't realize until I was talking to my singing teacher during lockdown that I'd kind of developed performance anxiety. I couldn't, I couldn't remember, the notes just went from my head during rehearsal, just couldn't do it, so I was relying more and more on

my keyboard. And I think essentially I'd been trying to be this other person for them, which was not me'.

I4 discussed the importance of maintaining boundaries, especially within the choirs for wellbeing field:

'And I think this is the thing with choirs for wellbeing to separate... it's keeping everything warm and friendly, but still having boundaries in place, ... to make sure that I'm doing my own things outside of choir, within my own friendship groups, and I'm looking after my own wellbeing. So that the choir doesn't become something that I need'.

As can be seen from the few examples above, the question of health and wellbeing in a choral setting goes beyond a knowledge of vocal anatomy and health. It is also influenced by repertoire knowledge and choice, by personal behaviours such as the display of empathy, and the need to safe-guard the mental wellbeing of both singers and conductors. As I1 commented:

'So, so pathways to choral conducting ought to also include... bit somewhere around music therapy, isn't it?... whilst there certainly is the, the training out there to prepare in a structured way, decent professional choral conductors, there's certainly not the pathways out there to prepare the equally valid person who needs to be skilled in a whole load of other things to run the community choir really '

The introduction of the mental health aspects to choral conducting from both the singers' and the conductor's side was unanticipated and raises the question as to whether any of the training providers have considered this as part of their curriculum. This could be especially relevant in relationship to health and wellbeing choirs where the singers could potentially have vulnerabilities, and the choir leader needs to be able to respond appropriately.

Continuous Professional Development

To understand the level of commitment to and expectations for CPD, final part of the survey concentrated on the respondents' views on, and plans for future training.

In order to determine if the respondents' CPD activities exhibit any correlation with the strengths and weaknesses identified earlier, the following summary was produced as a reference point.

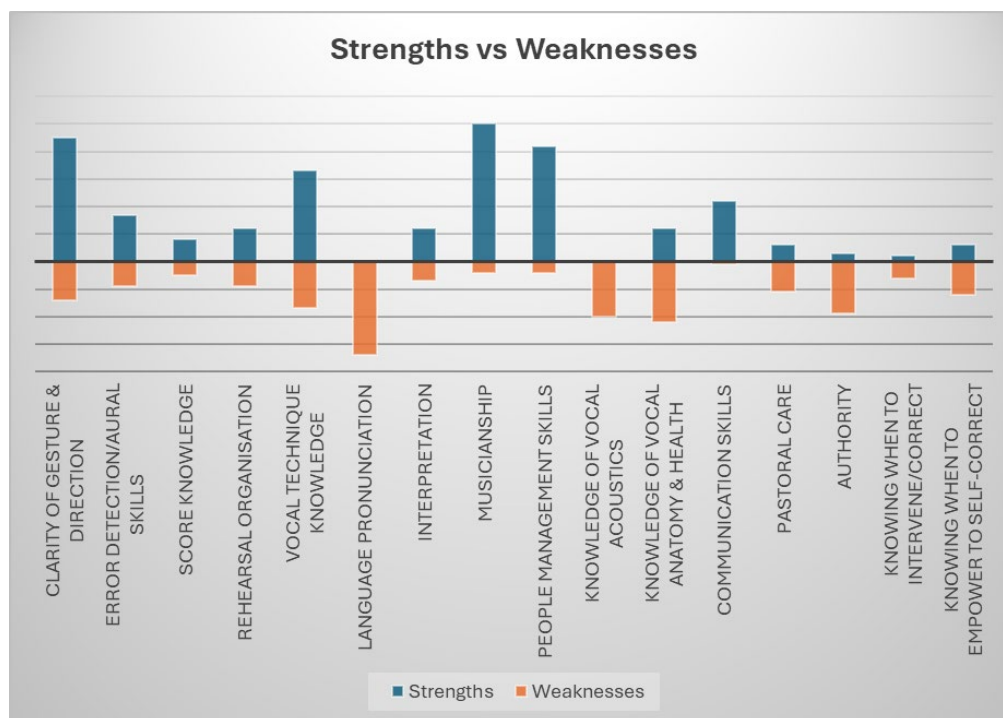


Figure 25. Strengths vs Weaknesses Summary

It should be noted that by this stage of the survey, around 44% (41) of the initial respondents failed to complete any further questions. Whilst disappointing, this does provide an opportunity for reflection on the reasons for this such as survey fatigue and is a useful learning experience that can be used to inform future projects.

However, of the remaining active participants, 56.9% (29) were actively undertaking CPD and 43.1% (22) were not. The most striking aspect was that 63.6% (21) of female respondents were involved in further training opposed to 50% (8) of the male respondents and 0% of those who preferred not to say.

Actively undertaking CPD by Gender Identity

		Gender Identity			Total
		Male	Female	Prefer not to say	
actively undertaking CPD	Yes	8	21	0	29
	No	8	12	2	22
Total		16	33	2	51

Figure 26. Actively Undertaking CPD by Gender Identity

At this point and with the drop off in the number of survey respondents, it is believed the sample is not large enough to draw any valid conclusions regarding the wider choral conducting population and whether there is a higher female level of engagement with Continuous Professional Development compared to other gender identities. However, as 41.2% of remaining respondents are female-identifying and actively training, there may be some merit in investigating this in a future study.

Of the topics studied, the most common were Vocal Technique including warm-ups and Conducting Technique. It was perhaps surprising that the first two topics were the most common as they or a linked subject had been scored highly as Strengths by the respondents. The next two most popular topics were Vocal Anatomy and Health, and Score Preparation which had scored less well in the Strengths rankings so would seem more likely to be addressed by CPD. However, it is a possibility that the remaining participants at this point did not rank these topics in line with the majority of the respondents to the earlier questions, and are therefore not representative of the large population.

CPD Topics Undertaken

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Areas covered in CPD ^a	Conducting technique	21	24.4%	72.4%
	Score preparation	14	16.3%	48.3%
	Vocal technique including warmups	21	24.4%	72.4%
	Vocal anatomy and health	18	20.9%	62.1%
	Specific techniques such as Estill, Accent Method, Alexander technique	3	3.5%	10.3%
	Vocal acoustics	4	4.7%	13.8%
	Singing for health and wellbeing	4	4.7%	13.8%
	Prefer not to say	1	1.2%	3.4%
Total		86	100.0%	296.6%

a. Group

Figure 27. CPD Topics Undertaken

Respondents were requested to indicate what delivery methods had been used for their recent CPD activities, the most popular of which were short courses and seminars, followed postgraduate study to Masters level.

Recent CPD Activities by Gender

			Gender Identity		Total
			Male	Female	
Recent CPD Formats ^a	Short course/seminars such as BVA/AOTOS	Count	3	9	12
	Short course/seminars such as Voice Study Centre	Count	3	7	10
	Longer courses e.g. ABCD Initial, Intermediate & Advanced	Count	0	4	4
	Undergraduate training	Count	0	1	1
	Postgraduate study leading to Masters	Count	2	5	7
	Private Lessons	Count	2	0	2
	ABCD Conference	Count	0	1	1
	Vocal Ed Health Courses	Count	0	2	2
	Summer Schools	Count	1	2	3
	Private vocal coaching	Count	1	0	1
	Unspecified online course	Count	1	0	1
	Evolving Voice Online	Count	0	1	1
	Estill	Count	0	1	1
	ABCD short courses	Count	0	1	1
	Sing for Pleasure short courses	Count	0	1	1
Total		Count	7	21	28

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Group

Figure 28. Recent CPD Activities by Gender

Unfortunately, given the attrition rate in overall participation, the sample may now be too skewed to allow for valid conclusions to be drawn; but once again, further investigation with a narrower focus on some of the issues identified may provide a more balanced and justifiable conclusion.

In terms of future CPD plans, a similar pattern emerged with Conducting Technique, Vocal Technique and Vocal Anatomy being the most favoured for further development.

Future CPD Plans

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Future CPD Plans ^a	Conducting technique	17	20.7%	51.5%
	Score preparation	10	12.2%	30.3%
	Vocal technique including warmups	15	18.3%	45.5%
	Vocal anatomy and health	16	19.5%	48.5%
	Specific techniques such as Estill, Accent Method, Alexander technique	6	7.3%	18.2%
	Vocal acoustics	4	4.9%	12.1%
	Singing for health and wellbeing	7	8.5%	21.2%
	Other	1	1.2%	3.0%
	Not currently planning any CPD	6	7.3%	18.2%
Total		82	100.0%	248.5%

a. Group

Figure 29. Future CPD Plans

A small number of respondents indicated the intention to study other topics not included in the above list. These included subjects such as Vocal First Aid, the Aging Voice and a PHD in Singing for Health and Wellbeing. A couple also indicated they were undecided at this point in time but would be looking for topics that benefitted their choirs in one way or another.

In general, it was considered surprising that the CPD intentions did not align more closely with the weaknesses identified earlier on. However, as previously noted, given the dropout rate for the latter stages of the survey, it is possible that the sample has become skewed and is no longer representative of the original respondent population. This is an aspect that was not considered in the earlier stages of the planning process, and for future studies, the design of controls to limit any adverse impact of attrition should be considered, and if possible implemented.

It should be noted at this time that most of the remaining respondents indicated the intention to undertake multiple development activities.

In terms of preferred delivery methods for future CPD activities, by far the most popular was a short course over a weekend. In general, courses that had an element of in-person training were favoured which may be of interest to CPD providers. But online delivery was not discounted, and the respondents were open to a range of delivery methods.

Favoured Delivery Methods for CPD

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Favoured Delivery Methods for CPD ^a	Online delivery	12	12.6%	36.4%
	In person only	10	10.5%	30.3%
	Short course e.g. a weekend	25	26.3%	75.8%
	Short courses e.g. a couple of hours a week for a month	14	14.7%	42.4%
	One-off seminars	19	20.0%	57.6%
	Longer courses e.g. Diploma or Certificate level	10	10.5%	30.3%
	Longer course e.g. Postgraduate	4	4.2%	12.1%
	Mostly online delivery with occasional in person day-weekend	1	1.1%	3.0%
Total		95	100.0%	287.9%

a. Group

Figure 30 Favoured Delivery Methods for CPD

Finally, as mentioned earlier, 43.1% of the remaining respondents were not considering CPD activities. It was considered important to investigate the reasons for this as it may give some indication of conditions that may be preventing choral directors from continuing with their development which in turn may be of interest to training providers.

Reasons for Not Undertaking CPD by Gender

			Gender Identity			Total
			Male	Female	Prefer not to say	
reasons for no cpd ^a	Time	Count	7	11	0	18
	Expense	Count	4	10	2	16
	Availability of suitable opportunities in local area	Count	4	3	0	7
	Availability of suitable opportunities	Count	2	2	1	5
	Current conducting roles allow for on the job development	Count	5	2	1	8
	Unnecessary for you as an individual	Count	0	1	0	1
	Family Demands	Count	2	1	0	3
	Other	Count	0	1	0	1
Total		Count	12	16	2	30

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Group

Figure 31 Reasons for not Undertaking CPD

For many of the respondents, there was no one reason but perhaps unsurprisingly in the current climate, the two main hindrances to considering CPD were time and expense (Fig. 31). A number indicated that they felt their current roles offered enough in on the job development to negate the need for further CPD. It may have been useful to have interrogated this aspect further to find out more about the roles and the infrastructure of the choirs involved to determine if there were any external factors such as oversight by for example a charity that facilitated this view. In addition, the lack of availability of training in the local area was also a factor which was something expressed by I5:

'Being in Scotland, a lot of the ABCD courses are quite London centric, but there's more and more stuff going on up at the centre of the country.'

Given that there seems to be quite a healthy interest in CPD amongst the participants in this study, there do seem to be opportunities for the training providers to increase participation. However, the training providers should consider addressing the balance between the technical and non-technical aspects of the role, in particular, amending their training curriculum to include more training on vocal anatomy, technique and health. Additionally, they could consider the delivery modes for training to assist to facilitate a greater uptake, perhaps splitting longer courses into in person elements where that would be beneficial and online for other elements. This may also help reduce the barriers to participation such as time and expense.

6.Delimitations, Limitations, Reflection and Conclusion

Delimitations and Limitations

In hindsight, more attention should have been paid to the delimitations for this project from the outset. For the scope of the project, the response was good but some of the information supplied by the respondents proved to be surplus to requirements. This included information on the numbers and types of choirs conducted by the respondents to the survey which whilst interesting, did not address the aims of the survey; it may even have added to the dropout rate towards the end of the survey as respondents started to experience survey fatigue.

It was also decided not to examine the motivations for becoming a choral director as this was not directly related to the question of education and training. However, in light of some of the discussions in the interviews about the stresses and joys of being a choral director, this is a topic that would make an interesting topic for further examination.

In terms of the demographics of the respondents, there was no question on ethnicity as it was anticipated this would add a further complication to the meaningful analysis of the data. Again, a more focussed and in-depth study of the demographics of the choral conducting community may benefit from this data.

In terms of limitations, the main concern would be about the sample size. Although for a study of this duration and simplicity, the sample size of 95 respondents still produced a significant amount of data to analyse, however, it is possibly too small to be truly reflective of the UK choral conducting population as a whole and any recommendations made on the basis of the findings would need to be qualified on this basis.

There was also a significant response drop off rate towards the latter stages of the survey; this likely indicates issues with the survey structure and length, and should be borne in mind for future projects.

An opportunity was also missed to further examine the reasons for continuing to be an active choral singer, for example whether it was for pleasure or if professional singers, part of their work portfolio.

Another limitation of survey was the decision to circulate it predominately by social media; this may have skewed the sample in favour of social media savvy individuals and may have excluded a subset of the population that are not so engaged with social media. Any future projects should consider a mix of delivery platforms, including circulating the survey to choirs directly. This may promote a more representative response, although that cannot be guaranteed.

Reflection

There were several decisions made at the beginning of the project, that on reflection may not have been properly considered. This includes the introduction of new methods and tools for this study.

This was the first time that a survey had been undertaken and a number of mistakes were made in the structure such as the numbering and ordering of responses, the inclusion of text fields and number of options. Although not insurmountable, this added complexity to the analysis process which then took longer. Similarly, the introduction of SPSS at this stage required a period of familiarisation that stretched the timescales.

The introduction of interviews at this stage also prompted some reflection as the resultant coding exercise was a new activity and subsequently took longer to address.

Finally, the introduction of the survey and interviews at this point added another complication and that was a reluctance to publish the survey or contact the interview volunteers. This was driven by a concern that no-one would respond, and the study would be invalid. The use of these methods in an earlier assignment would have allowed for reflection and provided an opportunity to gain confidence. Fortunately, the response was very positive, and enough data was acquired.

During the process a number of subjects for potential studies were identified. These included:

- a) Gender identity and the exertion of authority, this could also be broadened to examine whether there is an ethnicity element to be considered.
- b) The occurrence of imposter syndrome in the choral conducting community. Three out of seven (43%) of the interviewees admitted to feelings of inadequacy which they labelled imposter syndrome.
- c) Motivations for becoming a choral director
- d) The impact of choral directorship on conductor's mental health and possible preventative strategies.
- e) Educational levels of a larger and more representative sample of the UK choral conducting community and whether it supports a more formal requirement for CPD.
- f) Comparison of UK choral conducting education and training with that of other Northern European countries to identify the similarities and differences.

Conclusion

Based on the population sample, UK choral directors are well educated and appreciative of the need for training. There is interest in CPD in short formats such as weekends, but time and expense are an issue, perhaps there is scope to broaden the availability of online courses for those elements that do not require an in-person course such as vocal health or advertising and marketing training.

However, there was a feeling amongst the interviewees that the available training is too focussed on conducting technique and does not address the other needs of the amateur choir choral director. The HE institutions in particular were felt to concentrate too much on training professional conductors for professional choirs when many will have amateur choirs in their portfolios, and it would help if the training reflected this.

Vocal health is an important issue based on this sample and the desire for vocal anatomy and health training, alongside vocal technique was strong. From the experience of the interviewees and the researcher, this has been only very lightly covered in their training, if at all. There was also mention of mental health benefits and risks, particularly in regard to involvement in well-being choirs. This is an aspect that had not been anticipated but given the increasing use of choral singing almost as a therapy, it is something to be borne in mind.

If the participants in this study are representative of the UK choral conducting population, there appears to be an appetite for CPD to provide the best experience to our choral singers. And whilst statutory regulation may not be the way forward, there may be some benefit in a voluntary system of accreditation that represents best practice overseen by the main training providers in choral conducting in tandem with organisations such as British Voice Association and possibly even health organisations such as the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. Accreditation by this organisation would be a guarantee of an understanding of most aspects of choral conducting and be recognised by prospective singers as well as committees and trustees.

7. References

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