The Peer Support Attachment Scheme for School Choral Teacher Trainer and Mentor

Paulina W. Y. Wong
Hong Kong Institute of Education, China

Jane W. Davidson
University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Abstract
This study concerned the development of reflective practices for both a choral teacher trainer and a mentor working in a school rehearsal setting. An overall aim was to investigate the development of a mentoring process for choral teacher training. Data were generated from participants through self-reflection, focusing on aspects for a comprehensive model for choral teacher training. Owing to the practical nature of the study, the study was regarded as ethnography, in a form of participant observation. The work had the added value of being part of a trial peer support attachment scheme for a teacher-training institute. It was regarded as a way of training academic staff as well as school teachers and students. The results of the investigation revealed that this kind of reflection-in-action could produce a very positive cycle of reflection for both the teacher trainer and the mentor.

Introduction
In a study on the development of school choral directors, Wong (2004) outlined that mentoring and attachment schemes were adopted by teacher training institutions as useful ways to gain insights in the work of a real school environment. Lehmann and Davidson (2002) noted that partnership or apprenticeship learning was a powerful and effective mode to develop increasing autonomy and self-regulated learning, a key feature for the choral director in a busy school environment. Zimmerman and McPherson (2002) also noted that self-regulation was a cyclical process in which the learner reflected on their prior performance along with the feedback obtained and made adjustment on their future performance, in which the constantly changing factors were the person, the behavior, and the environment. We believed that this reflective practice was best developed in student mentoring approaches to learning.

A reflective way of working for the choral teacher's training model should ideally be a means for the student choral teacher to innovate and reflect on the choral performance practice as a part of this professional development process. A study by Willis (1989), concerning the nature and value of professional development of school choral conductors, suggested that the novice choral teacher could be developed by an experienced choral teacher by providing support to encounter the demands within a teaching and learning situation.

In order to facilitate effective choral teaching and learning experience, Wilen, Ishler, Hutchison, and Kindsvatten (2000) suggested that a sort of "clinical supervision" and reflective teaching and action research should be conducted in the school-based partnership environment to enhance effective

teaching. Wilen and others (2000) viewed that a type of "clinical supervision" as an effective approach for the development of the beginning teacher or student teacher. The idea was for the learner to work intensively with a designated mentor or support-teacher to provide them with feedback on what effective behaviors were. Through the process of supervision, the student teacher and the mentor could work together in an intimate relationship through the teaching practice in a school setting. Mentoring as a process has structure and form and was hopefully aimed at providing the student conductor with a repertoire of strategies for coping with his or her questions and self-doubts. The mentor functioned as a sounding board, not someone simply to follow. It was essential for the mentor or support-teacher to observe the student teacher teaching, dealing with rehearsal and performance. Feedback on this practical process was a major component of the "clinical supervision" and could bring maximum advantage to the student. Specifically, such approaches enabled the student to understand how an experienced teacher dealt with children in the classroom. Furthermore, this kind of work could produce a positive cycle of reflection for both the student teacher and the teacher trainer. Although the principle aim of this kind of work has been for the classroom teacher to support the student, acting as a mentor, the teacher himself or herself can use the opportunity for self development, in other words, to gain insights into her or his own practices (Brooks & Sikes, 1997). The current study was developed within this context. The work described in the study dealt with an experienced music teacher who was the school choral director, and the first author, being a trainer of student teachers in the teacher-training institute for the bachelor's and postgraduate education programs. In other words, we offered peer support to one another. This was a "reflexive

turn" (see Davidson & Smith, 1997) in that we were able to realize how beneficial it was to observe and discuss strategies with colleagues of similar backgrounds and experiences. We were able to sharpen our skills and awareness for later mentoring of choral student teachers.

The research literature has already shown from the opinions of some elite Hong Kong choral directors through interview (Wong, 2004) that musical and social factors mingle in conducting. Also, within this context at least, choral singing activity is a teaching and learning process, and the choral tradition has largely emerged from an educational root. All these echoed well with the findings from a previous study (Wong, 2003), which analyzed four outstanding Hong Kong school choirs and their conductors' conducting and rehearsal behaviors, and contributed towards better understanding on the teaching and learning effectiveness within the choral rehearsal and performance process. The investigations revealed that effective choral conducting depended very much upon the human factors within the choral community. The study had identified a number of general trends for the choral directors' leadership. They were people with strong desire for achievement and willing to work for the best performance. As a result, due to positive influence of the choral directors, members for the choir shared the enjoyment of singing in a group. Besides, there was evidence to suggest that choral members also experience the value of teamwork under the direction and leadership of the choral directors. Findings of the study also confirmed that choral directors possessed the natural ability to manage all the music and non-music related matters both inside and outside the rehearsal situation. Besides, they were able to carry out effective and efficient rehearsal practices with great sensitivities and flexibilities to address the needs of the choral group and individual

members. Thus, the choral members were encouraged to work positively with an understanding within the choral community.

Doerksen (1990) developed an observation guide for evaluating teachers of music performance, along with the teacher behaviors and instruction guides which could be used as the performance indicators for the choral director within the choral rehearsal setting. All the listed components worked well with the literature reviewed above. Doerksen developed the type of guide to serve as an observation instrument for recording and describing the incidents and events happening within the music classroom. With the help of this instrument, it is possible to assess the choral student teacher's competencies in relation to rehearsal time usage, pacing, musicianship, enthusiasm and intensity, performance quality and accuracy of presentation within the teaching and learning process. Of course, the quality of the teacher-and-student interaction and quality of the classroom environment are also influential in the choral teaching and learning process, so assessing the complex relationships between teachers and choristers in the choral music classroom and how the choral director works in the classroom environment are also elements to be assessed as effective choral teaching and learning behaviors.

The work we surveyed was particularly relevant to the specific questions, for example, studies on how to nurture effective conductor and performer, including Balk (1990) and Baker (1992), who both stressed the importance of self awareness in how to unify the internal and external factors in musical communication within the process of rehearsal and performance. Additionally, Spencer (2000) developed a conceptual framework based on core elements of "Knowledge," "Techniques," and "Artistry" (p.86) to provide a solid foundation for choral conductor. However, rigorous practice was necessary if we were to establish work to be used in choral training. Owing to the practical nature of the work, we decided that ethnographic type of research was necessary. According to Brewere (2000), ethnographic type of research provided space for the researcher to be involved in an authentic setting situation by using various kinds of methods in a systematic manner to collect data for the study. Through this process, the researcher also worked as participant observer who could learn about the social meanings of that participating community within their daily practices, but not to impose any meaning on them externally. Denscombe (2003) also noted that, through the eyes of the participant observer the researcher would be able to capture the same experience as the participants within that community and to provide a profound understanding of the culture within their daily practices. This study had the added value of being part of a trial peer support attachment scheme for the teacher-training institute. It was being considered as a way of training academic staff as well as students. As an authentic, work-in-progress project, it had much more of an urgency and sense of "reality" to it than the previous theoretical and observation work presented in earlier research studies, including that by Spencer (2000). In the current study, the first author was one of the investigators, and a key participant in this study.

The three objectives of the study were:

1. To enable the first author as the researcher to review her own conducting skills alongside with those of the school choral teacher, and for both of us to engage in a form of peer support and learning to begin to explore how we might best understand and improve our choral directing skills, and also develop

ideas and strategies for mentoring student choral directors.

2. To investigate how we might provide the student teacher with the opportunity to experience effective choral teaching and learning in an authentic environment.

3. To investigate individual similarities and differences of choral directors in relation to effective choral teaching and learning, and to provide insights for the development of a model towards effective choral training.

Methodology and Design

As this study was essentially exploratory and was viewed as an ethnographic type study with one of the researchers working closely with an expert school choral director in a peer support attachment scheme, the majority of the data emerged from a qualitative-exploratory methodology. According to Flinders and Richardson (2002), qualitative research methodology could be seen as a viable research tool to provide in-depth study of the context and issues concerning music teaching and learning. Qualitative research might operate in different modes including case studies, participant observation, action research, ethnography, and verbal protocol analyses. For the purpose of the scheme, this qualitative research study was much in line with the mode of ethnography. Flinders and Richardson (2002) noted that ethnography could be viewed as a form of participant observation to look into a specific case in detail. It provided a thorough investigation in an authentic situation by obtaining field notes and interview data to explore and capture deep understanding of the meaning behind the human activities and human actions. As Eisner (1991) suggested, we were to focus on "matters of motive and in the quality of experience undergone in the situation studied," so it was hoped that, by using the ethnographic approach we would

bring insights to the practice under examination. Our major interactions were discursive, reflective, and qualitative. Apart from experiencing and then analyzing the supervision and support process in real time, video was used to record the rehearsals, and field notes were kept (Elliott, 2003). All of these provided data to draw upon, constituting a methodological triangulation.

Selection of Participants

Two participants were needed to meet the objectives of this study:

1. An expert choral teacher and with his or her three levels of primary school choirs (i.e., junior, intermediate, and senior).

2. The first author as the researcher and reflective mentor from the institute of education.

An expert school choral teacher was easily identified for this study. He was an outstanding primary school choral director involved in some of our previous research projects. Through the observation and in-depth interview process, we had been deeply impressed by this conductor's professionalism in his choral practice (Wong, 2003). Furthermore, through preliminary investigations, it was confirmed that he demonstrated effective choral direction. According to Bucci (2003), being effective and good in a school environment typically involved full recognition by students and different sectors in the school. This was certainly the case for this selected teacher. In fact, the selected expert choral teacher was not only music teacher in the primary school but had been in-charge of the three level choirs for over ten years. We decided to work with the three levels of choir, since any one working in this type of context would be expected to work with the different age ranges.

The role of the first author was pre-determined by her commitment to the entire project. Whilst her long choral conducting and teacher training experiences counted positively towards the task to be undertaken, the role of the second author became crucially important in helping to shape, plan, monitor, and analyze the data. In this way, the second author became a reflective and critical eye for the entire research process. It was important to stress, however, that all involvement by both participants was reconfirmed, and validated by a third party—an extremely renown and senior figure in the Hong Kong choral scene with university-level teaching experience.

Rehearsal Observation and Evaluation

All the rehearsals for the peer support attachment scheme were scheduled during lunch breaks, or after school, always as extra curricular sessions. In other words, these were the normal times for rehearsals, and nothing "special" was arranged for the study. In the study process, nine rehearsals were conducted by the school choral teacher, in which the first author took the role of participant observer, collecting field notes. Nine rehearsals were then undertaken following the same observation principles, in which the first author took the role of a school choral teacher to conduct the rehearsals, and the school choral teacher took field notes, acting as a participant observer. These rehearsal sessions were juxtaposed in such a way that each participant could observe one another and offer feedback. The school choral teacher and the first author offered one another feedback and discussion after each rehearsal in a process of peer evaluation. This offered one form of continuous data, whilst another source was a major de-briefing at the end of the 18 sessions.

All sessions, including the de-briefing discussions, were videotaped in their entirety using a Sony 8mm Handy-cam. The second author appraised all sessions, and the third-party validator looked at a cross-section of the data.

Materials

In order to facilitate both discussions and evaluation, an observation summary sheet was used. This was based in part on the assessment tools developed by Doerksen (1990). The appraisal items fell into six categories:

1. Balance and timing of the session;
2. Quality of rehearsal environment;
3. Quality of director-chorister interaction;
4. Demonstrations of choral knowledge, techniques, and artistry;
5. Observed efficient choral direction behaviors (based on communication modes); and
6. Any other striking matters.

The check-list formed the basis of the post-session discussion between the school choral conductor and the first author.

The Choirs and the Study Implementation

The three levels of choirs selected for this study ranged from primary 1 (approximately age 6) to primary 6 (approximately age 12) and comprised of 65 choral members, including the junior choir (Primary 1-2), the intermediate choir (Primary 3-4), and the senior choir (Primary 5-6). All choir members were recruited and trained to participate in the 53rd Hong Kong School Music Festival competition.

Results and Discussion

Large amounts of data were collected from these sessions. In order to structure the presentation of the emergent themes, we first offered a description of the types of data generated, and then looked in detail at the different themes in sequence. Note that we

undertook a first level of analysis on all data. The first and second authors then observed random highlights to look for consistency in the coding process. Then, we showed the school choral teacher highlights to ask for his feedback and impressions of the accuracy of our thematic analysis. This was part of the long de-briefing session we had that took place one month after the scheme. This allowed us time to reflect on the data, and gave us both time to reflect on the experience as a whole. These procedures were completely open-ended, so if the school choral teacher wanted to see more, we showed him. If the second author wanted to discuss a wording, we did it. The results presented here are expressed as our findings, though in fact, they represent a further level of discussion and triangulation between the two authors and the school choral teacher. These were then all shown to the third party for further comments and adjustments where necessary.

Balance and Timing of the Sessions

The quantity of video data from the sessions was daunting, and given the depth achieved in the discussions and the field notes, we felt that perhaps the most useful way to explore how much time was spent on teaching points, musical effects, singing, or off-task activities like having a break. There were some useful and immediately striking features to note from these rehearsal data when presented as such:

- Both conductors followed a similar pattern of emphasis within the sessions;
- The tendency was to spend slightly more time across all sessions on teaching points, but the first author did this slightly less than the school choral teacher;
- The first author spent more time singing through works and slightly less time having breaks;

- Both tended to give the senior choir the largest amount of off-task time, but this could be explained simply in terms of this being the longest rehearsal, and so both gave these students more break time.

Watching the video and looking at the overall documentation, it seemed that there were several straightforward interpretations of these data:

- The first author, was more used to dealing with musical matters than teaching matters when working with a choir;
- She was not the regular teacher of the choirs, so perhaps she was slightly more inhibited about focusing on these kinds of points; and
- She felt more of an urgency in her work, and so she gave the children less time to break.

As we began to have a consistent picture about the proportions of time that might be usefully spent on the different activities within a rehearsal, this kind of information is potentially very useful for the development of a curriculum for trainee directors.

Quality of the Rehearsal Environment

According to Doerksen (1990), this thematic area included degree of concentration, productivity, and mutual respect. We had broadly interpreted it as such, and generally both conductors appeared to have controlled and respectful atmospheres in operation – particularly evident in the video data. Several important points emerged from examining all the data sources for this thematic area:

- Both conductors were inclined to write about the environment more than to talk about it;

- Written comments became almost stereotyped responses to the checklist on this item. Consider the following three reports from the first author's field notes of the alternating sessions that the school choral teacher was directing while the author was observing: (a) Session 3: "From the very start, everyone is well-focused. There is never a sense of there being a shortage of strategies. The achievement of such focus is admirable." (b) Session 5: "They're transfixed. So controlled. There is always a strategy." And (c) Session 7: "The intensity speaks volumes. Everyone is working for the same goal."

The first author defended her comments by noting that the school choral teacher was so subtle in his use of personal focus and the interconnection of ideas to shape the sessions that she was genuinely impressed by his management of the sessions. However, there was a tendency for both to note similar sorts of things about the environment during each session, such as breaks offered to the choristers and the overall atmosphere achieved – relaxed, happy, focused, and so forth. The more problematic feature of the field notes was that there were some very good techniques revealed in the video that neither of them noticed or mentioned.

The use of triangulated data sources proved to be invaluable to highlight this particular issue. Observing the videos with the second author, we noticed some very powerful non-verbal cues were being used to set the tone of the rehearsal. For example, the school choral teacher would stand with his arms folded waiting for complete attention before moving on to a new point. The first author had a habit of looking towards the accompanist and then re-aligning herself physically, in order to signal a move from a relaxed to a more intense pace of working.

There was certainly evidence that both varied the pace of the sessions, though they did not mention it in their notes.

Quality of Director-Chorister Interaction

The first author had some concerns about 'going into' the school choral teacher's familiar environment, and asked him quite a lot about how she seemed to be behaving with the choristers, and, how the choristers seemed to be reacting to her. The school choral teacher offered very supportive comments. It was a time for the first author to reflect upon the necessity to establish good social bonds between director/teacher and choir. Generally speaking, the rehearsals she led were fine (controlled, fun, and a good working pace), and the school teacher seemed genuine in his support of the classroom control. But the first author could see from the video data in particular that the choristers were so 'in tune' with him, that some of her interactions were less successful than his. This was a lesson about how difficult it was to train and assess someone (a student choral director, for instance) when the choristers themselves needed to learn the working practices of the "new" conductor. So, although the peer support was principally aimed at the school choral teacher and the first author developing a mutual and trusting mentoring framework, this particular matter gave us insight into how both were intensely affected in different ways by the choristers. Again, this was a particularly useful reflection, bearing in mind that a student teacher often faced a choir with whom the teacher has worked for more than one full year. The student teacher would inevitably feel less in control of the whole environment. The school choral teacher was quick to realize this difference between our abilities to interact with the children, based on familiarity. But, he emphasized the point that they did respect the first author, and that as the rehearsals went by, the children were

more adapted to her style. Of course, by analyzing the video, she could also see that there were many examples of the first author demonstrating good interactions with the choristers. For example, she held their attention; she was warm and sufficiently liberated to enable them to move around the space and try out demonstration ideas. Furthermore, by the end of the ninth session, the children were really beginning to understand her gestural codes. This highlighted, therefore, the positive role video could play in a reflective collaborative research project. Perhaps without the possibility to *see* herself, the first author would not have been so convinced that she was controlling her interactions with the choristers.

Looking at the field notes, she was perhaps overly engaged with the point about familiarity, as she referred to the school choral teacher's excellent interactions with the children in every session. It was clear that he had an advantage, and she was highlighting her disadvantage. It seemed like she wasted energy and showed some of her own fallibility. There were other topics she mentioned far less, though when we observed the video, it was evident that there were matters she could have noted that were equally striking. For example both used quite a lot of peer modeling between the children, giving the children responsibilities within the sessions. They were both relaxed, often picking up on one another's ideas from session to session.

The first author's overly tough self-criticisms indicated that in an assessment or support process one brought his or her own agenda to the forum, however objective one was trying to be. The implications here are quite profound: Students who are less experienced, may feel intimidated by the skills of their school mentor or academic mentor, so it would be important to find a

way of helping them not to feel under-skilled.

Of course, working in an Eastern cultural tradition, children generally tend to be very respectful of authority figures. However, we were aware that the children could and would see a student teacher in a particularly different light to a familiar teacher, or even a peer collaborator.

Demonstrations of Choral Knowledge, Techniques, and Artistry

Given that the school choral teacher had participated in previous studies, the first author had a fair idea of his range of skills. Interacting with him in the peer support scheme, she realized that they were able to share and discuss ideas for mutual benefits. The easiest way to show how they admired one another's work was to consider how they reported these elements. To do this, we have shown in Tables 1 and 2 summaries of the first author's observations of the school choral teacher on these skills across the three levels of choir, and his comments on her. As can be seen, both participants were largely drawing upon a very similar repertoire of experience to attain their musical and artistic goals. They also drew on all communication modes, individually and in combination. It was interesting that the school choral teacher felt the first author was "innovative" for asking him to "share" the session with her. Indeed, he wrote in his field notes about this particular session:

> This is a fascinating experience. I am learning so much about how to "support." It is certainly about feeling secure enough to share peer support like this has really helped me to look at my work and also to see the choristers with a fresh eye. Simply because I am the only music teacher in this school and I have no one to share with.

Table 1
Summary of First Author's Observation Field Notes on the Nine Rehearsals Conducted by the School Choral Teacher across the Three Levels of Choir

Choir Involved*	Demonstrations of choral knowledge, techniques and artistry, considering communication mode used.
A1, A2, A3	Warm up exercises incorporating extensive body movement session clearly working at an advanced level to prepare the body, mind and the voice of the choristers. *Demonstration – body movement.*
C1, C2, C3	Targeted warm up sessions to prepare the junior choristers with clear concept on breathing, legato singing, and posture. *Demonstration with much verbalization.*
B3, C3	Creative speech motifs were introduced for the intervallic drilling within the warm up session. *Verbalization.*
C1	Choristers of the junior choir were encouraged to dance and swing along with the music when working on new repertoire. *Non-verbal demonstration.* Creative noodle pulling gestures were introduced to work on the intensity of a long sustaining note. *Conducting-like gestures.*
A2	Chinese Kung-Fu and sword-dance were introduced to capture the space and movement between musical phrase and expression. *Non-verbal demonstration / strenuous physical work.*
A1, B3	Conducted the song with expressive facial expression and gestures for the choristers to follow the mood within the unique interpretation. *Non-verbal / conducting style gestures.*
B2, B3	Work out the details for clear diction within the parts. *Verbalization.*
C1	Stress the importance of vowels formation for choral singing and work it out with some fun movement pictures. *Verbalization.*
C1, C2	Through recorder playing and curve line drawing, demonstration of the idea of expressive movement within a musical phrase. *Demonstration.*
Choir Involved*	Observed novel and effective choral direction behaviors, focusing on communication modes.
A2, A3, B2, C2,	Moral teaching was frequently found within the rehearsals to provide the choristers with meaning connections to their life experience and the musical context. *Verbalization for transfer effects.*
A2, B1, B2, C3	Intensive small group coaching was introduced to ensure the quality in part-singing. In one rehearsal, most of the choristers were required to leave the rehearsal room. Small group coaching was carried out. *Verbal and conducting gesture work, in sequence and multi-modal.*
A2, B2, C1, C2, C3	Interesting slogan and games were introduced within the rehearsals to cheer the choristers and provided fun through the teaching and learning process. *Verbalization and demonstration / critical thinking for choristers.*
A1	The pianist is a Mandarin speaking woman who was invited to provide coaching for the choristers to refine the Mandarin diction. *Verbalization*
A2, B1, B2, C1	Good eye contact with choristers to communicate with them during the rehearsal and the choral teacher always walked around the rehearsal room to conduct the choir without the score in hand. *Non-verbal communication and conducting gesture.*

*A = senior, B = intermediate, C = junior; the number refers to the rehearsal.

The first author was deeply affected by these experiences, and we could not stress enough the benefits of this experience for both participants.
Contents in these tables have the potential to be used as a stock of techniques for conductors. Furthermore, it did seem particularly pertinent to the Hong Kong context in that some types of references were quintessentially Chinese—noodle pulling, Tai-chi, dog-panting, and so forth. We stress again that perhaps their work would be less appropriate in a different cultural context. As the independent validator pointed out,

Table 2

Summary of the School Choral Teacher's Observation Field Notes on the Nine Rehearsals Conducted by the First Author across the Three Levels of Choir

Choir Involved*	Demonstrations of choral knowledge, techniques and artistry, considering communication mode used.
A1, A2, A3	Systemic kinesthetic warm up strategies were put forward to prepare the senior choir for clear concepts of breathing, placement, and tone production for choral singing. Clear target: older, more mature chorister. *Demonstration and verbal instruction.*
A2	Effective hand pulling gestures were introduced to build up the energy for the sudden change of dynamic within the musical phrases. Introduce the post-it paper to provide a visual image on the hand pulling gestures within the rehearsal. Really engaging the young chorister. *Demonstration involving non-verbal conducting style gestures.*
A3	Hands and fingers turning gestures were introduced to enhance the circulation of breathing to support a well projected and relaxed singing tone. *Conducting-style gesture to facilitate technique.*
B2	Silent singing was introduced for the choristers to work out the mental sound image of the melodic contour. *Non- verbalization!*
C2	Boat rolling gesture was introduced for the choristers to experience the duple swinging motion. *Non-verbal / demonstration.*
B3	Special attention towards the drilling of English diction with clear illustration on some difficult words. *Verbalization.*
A2	Made use of the volley-ball striking motion to project the voice forward and to provide a ringing tone on the upper register. *Non-verbal / demonstration.*
C2	Introduced the mix and match part-singing activities to prepare the junior choristers for the independent part singing abilities. *Verbalization and demonstration.*
Choir Involved*	Observed novel and effective choral direction behaviors, focusing on communication modes
A1, B1	Willing to work together within the same rehearsal as a partner to solve a problem for the part singing section. *Multi-modal communication between director, peer, and choristers.*
B1, B2	Choristers were invited to use silent hands up gestures and body movement to demonstrate their full awareness and confident on all the entrances of their own part within the difficult two part section of a selected piece. *Demonstration for musical technique—focus on non-verbal work for embodiment.*
A1, A2, B1	Expressive conducting gestures were introduced to remind the choristers on the expressive elements within the music in relation to the tone production and articulation. *Expressive conducting gesture, used by choristers as well as director.*

*A = senior, B = intermediate, C = junior; the number refers to the rehearsal.

children in choirs and in schools in general were expected to behave (or rather it was demanded that they behave) with extreme personal and disciplinary control, in a manner not found in European or North American contexts.

The overall peer support was a delightful and reciprocal experience. We realized that communication modes were really all critically important. Highlighting their all-importance demonstrated that these needed to be very carefully introduced to the students.

Any Other Striking Matters

This final section was diligently completed in our field note checklists, but it has many overlaps with the other sub-sections. However, we have maintained the order, with the bracketed figures referring to the number of sessions involving this topic. It highlights, in a summative way, what was

particularly beneficial and interesting to each participant at a given moment, and it showed how the participants were trying to develop skills as much as observing those of the peer. The topics that emerged are listed below:

1. Optimizing communication using conducting gestures (12);
2. Working on stylistic elements connected with the repertoire (12);
3. Clarifying technical points relating to musical effects (11);
4. Discussing qualitative elements of the choral sound, e.g., the balance and how to best achieve it (9);
5. Focusing on vocal techniques and exercises (8);
6. Matters relating to director-student musical interactions (8);
7. Matters relating to director-student social interactions (6); and
8. Queries about management issues (3).

Some points are almost identical to points offered on the check-list, but discussing the fact that these were placed as separate "striking points" with the school choral teacher and the first author, it seemed that there was some motivation for them to place these topics separately, at the end of the field notes, highlighting their importance.

Conclusions

As the sub-sections above revealed, this investigation provided much information. On the one hand, the quantity of data generated was difficult to represent qualitatively. The sub-divisions and illustrative quotations hopefully provided an indication of the richness of the material generated, and showed that we were able to structure the points in a coherent manner. The points provided us with far more insights about the core skills that needed to be acquired by a student (trainee director), but more relevantly to the aim of the current

investigation was the huge benefits the school choral teacher and the first author experienced from their close collaboration as demonstrated. At the final post-session de-briefing conference, we revisited and discussed the earlier sessions and watched clips of video, the participants assessed their own approaches to the scheme, and several interesting points emerged:

1. Both commented on the depth of insight obtained through triangulation, especially for *seeing* and *hearing* differently.
2. Reflecting on a colleague's work provided the participants time to consider how skills and competencies might be developed in one another.
3. Both realized how important mutuality, trust, and openness were for the process to work.
4. There was a tendency to be overly critical of personal practices, and even use opportunities to observe the other person and self-reflect – which was helpful – but sometimes to criticize too – which was quite a negative experience.

The participants mulled over these points, and from them, the school choral teacher and the first author came up with the following points for consideration, which seemed to encapsulate their practical work and the authors' concerns.

Awareness

Considering how they worked as practitioners and as peers, a major theme to emerge in their final de-briefing conference and discussion (which was stimulated by Doerksen's guides) was that from the on-set, they were both very aware of their environments physically, and also in terms of creating variety in the rehearsal. There were many examples of these types of awareness, but they drew out the following for discussion. The physical environment was to

include (a) using the whole room for the choristers to try out movement exercises, and (b) adjusting the position of the choir during a rehearsal to optimize the acoustic features of the rehearsal space. Variety was to include (a) avoid spending too much time on a single activity, and (b) changing the intensity levels of working from highly concentrated to broadly entertaining, including humor, for example.

Structure

Both emphasized the advantages of having a plan and a beginning, the middle, and an ending activity to the rehearsals. They felt that this had benefits for the director and the children. They also saw techniques as structure for use in facilitating learning, such as modeling techniques. The conversational structure of the warm up, the main section and the run-through were accepted as a must. They also felt that mixed communication modes and balancing time on- and off-task was important. These support the literature surveyed. Lehmann and Davidson (2002) stress the importance of modeling and the use of metaphors as powerful techniques not solely to enhance individual understanding and practices, but also to show the need for a potential integration and interconnection between "knowing what" and "knowing how." As Spenser (2000) claims within his model, techniques not only refer to the skills and tools employed in a physical manner by the choral conductor. In fact, the application of all these techniques are infinite and situational, through which, the conductor can demonstrate the knowledge previously gained by "knowing how."

Productivity

Related to both awareness and structure, both participants discussed the value of the rehearsal producing results for the short and long term. These results were process-oriented in the sense that in a continuing manner, it was important for the choristers to learn and progress. But, there was a sense of a product too. They agreed that it was important for each session to have an achievement.

They also agreed that productivity was as important for the participants as the choristers, especially for gauging where they needed to work next, but also to reflect on their own developments and achievements within the overall choral process. Both acknowledged that the experience of the peer work had facilitated this specific insight. They mulled over this point in terms of its potential for formative and summative assessments of trainee directors and the choristers themselves.

Social Dynamic and its Impact on the Musical Dynamic

As experienced practitioners both participants were surprised by how the observation process had made them reflect upon the degree of social skill required in making the musical dynamics work. They had to have just the right amount of seriousness in their gesture to achieve a specific musical effect. They had to be aware of their impact upon the choristers, but perhaps for the first time, both recognized the depth of impact the choristers had upon them. How their behaviors shaped how the conductors directed the rehearsal sessions.

Individuality

Individuality was allied to the previous point in that both participants were aware that they had quite different personal styles, and so relationships with the choristers were different. The first author was a performer, and was rather strong in her physical presence and in tone when addressing to the choirs. The school choral teacher was witty, caring, and had a different persona in the rehearsal. We could see the two different characters having influences,

but being complementary in terms of how they could look at one another and learn.

The reflection encouraged by the nature of the collaborative research seemed to take both directors on a journey that deepened their own practices in the session and their thoughts about their work outside of the rehearsal context. But, moreover, it was, without doubt, a useful way to begin to think about how working with student teachers could be approached.

There were a couple of other matters that emerge from scrutinizing these data. The most important was that, from the start of this study, the first author was focused on the more musical aspects of choral direction. There is a side to choral work in Hong Kong that this study does not address at all, that is, the often highly choreographed sequence of non-verbal gestures the children learn in order to animate their songs. However, the first author's attention has been deliberately on the rehearsal as a forum for learning music. Generally she avoided this gestural work. It is of course a skill the choral director would need to acquire, and in developing a curriculum and mentoring process, it would be ideal to accommodate training for this kind of work.

Similarly, we have not discussed specific works and how different conductors give emphasis to different aspects. This is again a relevant topic as it interfaces with the choreography and also the types of Chinese and European style repertoires used. Indeed through discussions with the school choral teacher it became apparent that it might be useful to experiment with scores to see how each director would prepare material before a rehearsal. This is, of course, a good example of how the ethnographic approach enables progression within the project itself. It was flexible enough for us to change the rules. Furthermore, towards the end of our post-conference, both directors felt that it would

be very helpful, given the focus on the conducting process itself, to get an independent validator to evaluate their work. The major findings within the current study echo well with Spencer's (2000) ideas. Collaborative learning is an effective strategy for providing space for self-regulated learning. Through this study, we can also confirm with Zimmerman and McPherson's (2001) suggestion in that self-regulation is a cyclical process, in this case, to improve the director's performance to work in different rehearsal situations and along with flexibility and sensitivity to tackle all the constantly changing factors, including the person, the behavior, and the environment. As part of the reflective research cycle, these opportunities presented themselves during the discussions, influencing the course of the research process.

The school choral attachment scheme was a valuable experience, both in the research material it provided and in the personal and professional development it facilitated for the expert choral teacher. The benefits of this experience for the choral teacher could be summed up by a quote from Dauling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995):

Teachers learn by doing, reading and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see. This kind of learning enables teachers to make the leap from theory to accomplished practise. In addition to a powerful base of theoretical knowledge, such learning requires settings that support teacher inquiry and collaboration and strategies grounded in teachers' questions and concerns. To understand deeply, teachers must learn about, see and experience successful learning-centred and learner-centred teaching practises. (p.598)

REFERENCES

Baker, A. L. (1992). Creating conductors: An analysis of conducting pedagogy in American higher education (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1992). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 53*(07), 2285A.

Balk, H. W. (1990). *The radiant performer: The spiral path to performing power.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Brooks, V., & Sikes, P. (1997). *The good mentoring guide.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brewer, J. D. (2000). *Ethnographic.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bucci, T. T. (2003). Researching expert teachers: Who should we study? *The Education Forum, 68*(1), 82.

Calhoun, E. (1993). Action research: Three approaches. *Education leadership, 51*(2), 62-65.

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughline, M. W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(8), 597-604.

Davidson, J. W., & Smith, J. A. (1997). A case study of newer practices in music education at conservatoire level. *British Journal of Music Education*, 14(3), 251-269.

Doerksen, D. P. (1990). *Guide to evaluating teachers of music performance groups.* Reston, VA: Music Education National Conference.

Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of education practice.* New York: Macmillan.

Elliott, J. (2003). Collecting, analyzing, and reporting data in action-research: Some methods and techniques used in the assessment for teaching and learning project at HKIEd. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education and Development, 6* (Special Issue 1), 181-219.

Elliott, J., & Morris, P. (2001). Education reform, schooling, and teacher education in Hong Kong. In Cheng, Y. C., Chow, K. W., & Tsui, K. T. (Eds.). *New teacher education for the future: International perspective* (pp. 147-166). Hong Kong/The Netherlands: Hong Kong Institute of Education/Kluwer.

Flinders, D. J., & Richardson, C. P. (2002). Contemporary issues in qualitative research and music education. In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (Eds.), *The New Handbook of research on music teaching and learning* (pp.1159-1175). New York: Oxford University Press.

Lehmann, A. C., & Davidson, J. W. (2002). Taking an acquired skills perspective on music performance. In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (Eds.), *The New Handbook of research on music teaching and learning* (pp.542-562). New York: Oxford University Press.

McPherson, G. E., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Self-regulation of musical learning: a social cognitive perspective. In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (Eds.), *The New Handbook of research on music teaching and learning* (pp.542-562). New York: Oxford University Press.

Neuen, D. (2002). *Choral methods and techniques.* CA: Schirmer Books.

Spencer, M. C. (2000). Conducting pedagogy: Teaching through musicianship (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 61*(04), 1335A.

Wilen, W., Ishler, M., Hutchison, J., & Kindsvatter. (2000). *Dynamic of effective teaching.* New York: Longman.

Willis, D. O. (1989). The nature and value of professional experience in the development of choral conductors (Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University, 1989). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *50*(09), 2702A.

Wong, P. W. Y. (2003). Effective choral conducting: A case-study investigation of four elite primary treble choirs and their conductors who are working in Hong Kong. In L. C. R. Yip, C. C. Leung, & W. T. Tong (Eds.), *Curriculum innovation in music: Proceedings of the 4th Asia-Pacific Symposium on Music Education Research* (pp. 407-412). Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Wong, P. W. Y. (2004). *The Development of the Primary School Level Choral Director in Hong Kong.* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, U.K.

Zimmerman B. J., & McPherson, G. E. (2002). Self-regulation of musical learning: a social cognitive perspective. In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (Eds.), *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning* (pp.327-347). New York: Oxford University Press.