"SING? NOT ME!"
A STUDY OF STUDENT TEACHERS' SINGING SELF-EFFICACY

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ABSTRACT

This study documents the singing self-efficacy beliefs of 165 primary teacher education students at a New Zealand university. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in order to establish a singing self-efficacy profile for the group under investigation, and to explore the factors which influenced the development of their beliefs. Participants completed a questionnaire containing Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. Data on gender, age and ethnicity were also collected. In-depth interviews were conducted with three students who identified as having low self-efficacy.

Analysis of the quantitative data revealed a wide range of singing self-efficacy beliefs. Although the study found no differences in self-efficacy on the basis of gender or age, Maori students appeared to hold more positive beliefs about their singing capability than European/Pakeha students. Three factors, other people, the self, and musical experiences, emerged as significant in the development of students' singing self-efficacy.

Because of the prevalence of performance-oriented goal structures in New Zealand school music programmes, and because of fixed rather than incremental conceptions of singing ability, individuals who learn to sing accurately early in their lives are more likely to develop high self-efficacy in singing. The study revealed little evidence of the impact of vocal development research on beliefs about singing capability.

Student teachers with low self-efficacy in singing often express anxiety about how they will meet the requirement to teach singing as part of the classroom programme. There is also a strong likelihood that teachers will perpetuate the practices which contributed to their own beliefs about singing capability. It is important therefore to understand how singing self-efficacy develops and to identify classroom goal structures which facilitate the development of both singing skills and positive singing self-efficacy.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of the impetus for this study came from my personal experience of teaching music to preservice teacher education students. In class and informal discussions students gave vivid and often poignant descriptions of experiences which had contributed to their low self-efficacy in singing and which affected their attitude towards compulsory music curriculum courses. Many student teachers openly expressed their anxiety about attending the music curriculum course and the body language of others was reminiscent of patients in a dentists' waiting room. Unsolicited remarks such as "You'll have your work cut out to do anything with me" or "I haven't got a musical bone in my body" were frequently heard. Attendance at their first music lecture was often prefaced by students asking "Do I have to sing?" closely followed by an apprehensive "Do I have to sing by myself?"

As a teacher educator I was concerned about how students such as these could be helped to develop the confidence necessary to mount effective classroom music programmes for the children they would teach. As a music educator I was angered by the ill-informed practices which left so many individuals so unnecessarily damaged. As a human being, I was distressed that so many people should be denied the opportunity to participate in one of life's great pleasures – singing. These three passions motivated me to begin the study, sustained me through the long toil, and continue to absorb much of my thinking time.

I have many people to thank for their help over the months that this study has been taking shape. I am indebted to the students who participated so willingly in the study, and for the openness with which they responded. I also wish to recognise the many students who did not take part directly in this research, but whose stories motivated me to want to know more.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of my initial supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs, who gave generous guidance in the early stages of the study, and introduced me to self-efficacy theory. To Dr. Alison St George, my main supervisor, and Professor James Chapman, my second supervisor, I

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