**Focus Group Interview**

**Date: 26/06/2022**

**Signature of researcher: JL**

**Participants: Grade 12 Focus Group**

1. Explain your initial reasons for wanting to join the Kearsney College Choir.

Participant 1: I **enjoy music** and **choir is one of the best ways to dive into the different genres of music** and having to sing that in voice groups. **I do think that singing in a male choir creates a different sound than in a choir where females are added**. It feels more **solid** in a way.

Participant 2: I joined the choir because **I am on a scholarship**. I went to Michaelhouse, Hilton, and Kearsney to see which school I wanted to join but I felt Kearsney stuck out because of its **traditions** I feel like the **choir is highly respected** in the school and I wanted to be a **part of something big**.

Participant 3: Just **coming out of primary school as somebody who was never involved with music**, I was looking for a school where **music is taken as seriously** as I have hoped for it too. **I came from an all-boys primary school and there the choir boys were seen as less than the sports boys, but I did not see that when I saw the Kearsney Choir performing and how the boys who aren’t in the choir were treating the boys who are in the choir**. It was an entirely **new atmosphere of boys** who are **appreciated for doing music well**.

1. Describe your most enjoyable experiences since joining the choir.

Participant 1: **Seeing the progress from start to finish**. At the beginning of the year, I was quite pessimistic about the choir’s ability, but now this choir camp leading up to the international tour has exceeded my expectations. The choir sounds a lot better if you had to compare it to the beginning of the year.

Participant 2: In Matric you are experienced choral members so seeing them grow into the **younger guys and the progress they have made throughout the year is incredible to see**. The guys who weren’t in a choir before or never had any musical training, always give their everything on stage, giving you a **sense of pride and legacy**.

Participant 3: It is cool to know that you were involved in their development.

Participant 4: We have waited five years now to go on an international tour, but when we were younger, we really enjoyed **the tours to Sun City.** It is a different experience because I have been on tours for hockey but **going on tour with the choir is something else because it is 60 boys instead of 11 and you know everyone quite well**. You go on choir tours with a completely different mindset than going on a sports tour.

1. What are some of the benefits of singing in a choir for you?

Participant 1: For me, it is **self-confidence**. The choir is a completely different context to academics and sports, and **I take a lot of pride in this choir** since I joined in grade eight. **Slowly growing stage presence helped a lot in terms of building my self-confidence**.

Participant 2: Being in a choir **involves a lot of trusts**. **Trusting the person next to you to sing the right parts and come in on time**. Over time **we develop a strong sense of trust**. You know that you are not doing anything by yourself.

Participant 3: Being able **to help someone and assist**. When someone is doing something wrong while we are singing something, it is not about giving them a hard time but to rather **uplifting them**. Being a helping hand can go far in Matric. I still remember how the seniors use to help me when I was younger, but now it is that I have to help them now and that really **builds us up and grows us as an individual**.

Participant 4: Personally, being in a choir has taught me a lot of **self-discipline**. It is your **own responsibility to learn the music before a performance**.

1. What are some of the disadvantages of singing in a choir?

Everyone: **Time**.

Participant 1: Out of all the drawbacks, time is the biggest one.

Participant 2: **At Kearsney, the school doesn’t stop**. The number of **compromises I had to make between hockey and choir**, for example, to leave five minutes early from hockey to be on time for choir. It **just feels at times as if my whole day is taken up**.

Participant 3: But to be honest, if you want to be good at anything, it will take up a lot of time. I just always put that into consideration.

1. Do you think singing in a choir can bring diverse cultures together, and if so how, and if not, why do you think that is?

Participant 1: **The repertoire is what brings cultures together**. In a choir, you have whites, blacks, and Indians, and I think that singing a different repertoire of various cultures is good like singing European songs, German songs, and Ukrainian songs. **Not only externally does it show some form of unity within the choir in terms of racial diversity**, but also the fact of **coming together as a group and singing different songs** together is what really counts.

Participant 2: I think **what brings everyone together is to share a common interest which is music**. A lot of us think that this specific song that we are doing is helpful and **allows us to express ourselves in terms of our knowledge of different cultures**. When we sing “Thokoloshi”, people in Europe would not know what we are singing about but they **still get to understand what certain cultures are like in South Africa**.

1. Could you explain what you value most of being a choir member of the Kearsney College Choir? Elaborate.

Participant 1: **Harmony**.

Participant 2: It is the **focus when you are on stage** for 20 minutes of half an hour, it is as if **all of your problems are left** **behind** and you are just **focused on the conductor** and the choir you are singing with and that is **a feeling you cannot get anywhere else**. When those lights go on and the conductor’s hands come up it is like 60 odd people who are following him and they are all focused on one thing. That is truly special.

Participant 3: **It is capturing**.

Participant 4: I would say **reap what you sow**. **The work that you do behind the scenes will show on that stage**. The time and sweat will show on that stage. If we haven’t worked hard and we haven’t put in as much effort as should have, it will show on that stage.

1. Do the members of the Kearsney College Choir share a unique brotherhood (separate from the rest of the school)? Elaborate.

Everybody: Not really.

Participant 1: I feel that generally when people play a specific sport, you would get along quite well with the team that you are practicing with. I do not think that the choir is necessarily different from other team sports, it is just **another way to socially connect with other people**.

Participant 2: From our grade, I think you would have got different answers, **by the time you get to Matric you are mates with everyone,** no matter in which team you are pursuing in. But **being in grades eight and nine, being in the choir does allow you to have a better relationship with other boys because of the amount of time you spend with them and you do not know other boys as well**. When you have been in the school for five years with the same people in the school it does feel different.

1. What do your friends outside of choir think of you participating in the school choir? Do they tease you, or do they support your choice to participate in the choir?

Everybody: **They definitely give us a lot of banter**.

Participant 1: I just do not think they know what it feels like to be a part of the choir. **They do not understand the time and effort we put into the choir,** they do not see what we actually do.

Participant 2: **From the banter that I have experienced, it is not necessarily something negative,** it is just banter. **There is still some sort of respect for the choir**.

Participant 3: I think **a lot of it has to do with the stigma the choir has in terms of what boys think of the choir**. A lot of the time, **parents would idolise rugby but not support the choir** as much. I think a lot of **boys throw the shade on choral singing because they do not always understand it** that well.

9. What motivates you to continuously participate in choral singing at Kearsney College?

Participant 1: I think it is always **about getting better**. I spoke to s**ome of the juniors this week and when they see the soloists**, **they up their sense of vocals**. I always **seize the opportunity to get better at something**, it is a lot to do with my **musical development**.

Participant 2: For me, it is **about not wasting my talents**. I know that I **am decently talented in choir singing**. If I was a decent runner, for example, I would not stop running or playing rugby, so it has **a lot to do with the pride I have for myself**. I know I should always **use my talents**.