**Focus Group Interview**

**Date: 25/06/2022**

**Signature of researcher: JL**

**Participants: Grade 9A Focus Group**

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

Participant 1: I joined the choir because I am **good at singing**.

Participant 2: I wanted to be a **part of an experience**. I already had some prior skills so I thought that it would be **fun to sing** in the choir. By prior skills I mean drama. In choir, I learn a lot of music terminology that could help me with my career.

Participant 3: I **enjoyed watching the choir perform** and I wanted to be part of that. What stood out to me was the **unity of the choir when they performed together**.

Participant 4: I sang in a choir at my previous Primary School. **My previous choir teacher was the reason why I came to Kearsney and motivated me to join the choir here**.

Participant 5: The choir looked like **a lot of fun**, but we work hard, and in the end, it is worth it.

Participant 6: I just **enjoy music such as instruments and also singing** and that is why I joined the choir.

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

Participant 1: I think it is **the togetherness**, for example, **after a performance we would celebrate and have fun together**. After a performance, we really get hyped up and get in circles and then we would just start trapping with each other. Trapping is where we would start improvising with each other on different instruments.

Participant 2: One person would bring a saxophone for example and another person starts playing the drums. It is almost like **one big party** where **everybody is just enjoying each other’s company**.

Participant 3: Yes, it is a gratifying feeling.

Participant 4: You feel at the centre of the world. **On stage**, thousands of people are looking at you, **you are the point of the attention,** and you are getting that attention.

Participant 5: It is certainly **the feeling after a performance**, knowing what you did well, it is the **sense of achievement**.

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

Participant 1: **You get to travel to many events** where we would perform at different places. Like the tour, **you get to travel across the world** and those experiences you get from that are really amazing.

Participant 2: For me, it is about **representing the school** when we travel.

Participants 3: You get to travel the world and **you get the opportunity to see and experience different cultures which become different when you compare the music with what we got here**. With one of the songs we’re learning, we will perform with a Ukrainian female choir, and the piece is a Ukrainian lullaby, I think it will be a cool experience.

Participant 4: I think **you learn to listen to others**. In this choir you are not just singing your own part, it is completely useless, even if you know your part, but if you don’t sing it together with the other people, you learn how to listen to others and piano. I think in a way, **it teaches us empathy.**

Participant 5: You also get to **learn more about commitment**. We come here very often to **prepare for the tour**, for example, right now it is the holidays for most of the boys, but we are **putting in work to have a successful tour**.

Participant 6: **Punctuality** is also a big thing, you have to be on time. If you know that a rehearsal starts at a certain time, then **you need to be there on time**. So it is **time management** for me.

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

Participant 1: The time. **It is very time-consuming**.

Participant 2: I agree, **we do not have extra time to study as the other boys do**.

Participant 3: Sometimes, **after a rehearsal, you would go home and think that I do not want to sing today**.

Participant 4: **For the past few weeks, we have been on stage every day**.

Participant 5: It is really **time-consuming.** But it is during those times that you just have to stick it out and results will come to you.

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: It **allows you to work cohesively with another person**. **Despite your differences and background, you can still participate.**

Participant 2: **Learning and singing in another language such as an English person singing a Zulu song, they get to feel a sense of that culture and what those people have seen**.

Participant 3: As a choir, we are all expected to sound the same in terms of intonation, etc. **None of us have the same voice, so we are all expected to go out of our comfort zone in order to compromise with each other and amongst our voices**.

Participant 4: **When you have to pronounce the lyrics, you might be struggling with a certain word but you could always turn to your mates and speak their language**. It is almost like a **bonding experience** as well. **It allows us to get closer, and actually understand what the words mean.**

Participant 5: As a choir, we all go through the same things. At the end of the day, **we all share something and that is friendships**.

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

Participant 1: **The whole experience**, **being with your friends, performances**, and the **goals that you set**. It is all just one big experience.

Participant 2: It gives me an **opportunity to represent the school**, **travels with the choir** to different places, and **further my understanding of music**.

Participant 3: It is **the bond** I have with **people who also enjoy doing the same thing as I do**. I**n choir, you get to form that bond with someone else and they also like what you are doing**.

Participant 4: Anyone in the entire school can write their names down to join a football team, but the choir is something special. You have to have that talent and ability, it is not like other clubs in the school.

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

Everybody: Yes.

Participant 1: You won't catch the soccer team singing in the showers. Approximately thirty minutes ago, **we were singing songs in the showers** and we would not have done it if the entire school was here.

Participant 2: Choir isn’t seen as something like first-team rugby, but if you are in the choir, you know exactly **the work you have to put in and it is basically the same effort and determination** **that a first-team rugby player** would put into his sports.

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?

Participant 1: Unfortunately not, due to things like **toxic masculinity**, **they make assumptions that choir is a gay thing** and it is not a very masculine thing to do. **Most people also believe that it is a waste of time**. The mature audiences realise what hard work was done beforehand and what it means to be in the choir. I think **social media is making it worse**, especially with what the youngsters are exposed to these days, for instance, **stereotypes,** and students won't know what choir is. Until they get on a stage or see us perform [everybody starts arguing].

Participant 2: The choir is the one thing in the school that actually succeeds the most [everybody starts laughing]. Unlike the first team rugby, they lose a lot, so the choir is the area in the school that really succeeds the most.

Participant 3: **People also have the perception from primary school that they did not have the greatest of choirs**. In primary school, you are not really a great singer, but when it **gets to high school, it tends to get a bit more serious**.

Participant 4: **You are seen as more manly by bashing your head on the field with a rugby ball,** but for **choir, it is not really seen as something in a boys’ school that is of acceptance**. It is **seen as whissy and full of stereotypes**. Once they get into the choir, they see that there is more commitment to it and harder than whatever they do in sports.

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

Participant 1: **I am motivated by my friends** and **the whole brotherhood**. We have something different from just normal people who participate in one club instead of the choir.

Participant 2: The **choir generally has a lot more opportunities** to offer than any other sports. I do not see the first-team rugby going to Austria. **I want to learn more things**.

Participant 3: **To be a part of a choir is being a part of something much greater than yourself**. It **helps you with your future**. In a company, for example, **everybody is working towards one goal and choir is like that**.

Participant 4: You can be 12 years old, or fifteen years old, it is the same experience for you.

Participant 3: Everybody is **equal in the choir**. In a school, you get your hierarchies and things, and the same is found in the choir, but **in the choir, everybody is seen as equal** at the end of the day. You are only as good as your weakest link in the choir. **When you look at Matrics or the choir leaders, you think, "Woah”, one day you could be standing there singing solos and things**.

Participant 4: Yea but some of them would laugh at you when you make a mistake...

Participant 3: There is a **responsibility**, and it is down to the individual to **adhere to those responsibilities**.