

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING OF CONDUCTING IN THREE MUSIC DEGREE COURSES IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF BRAZIL: CURRICULAR STRUCTURE AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA DO ENSINO DE REGÊNCIA EM TRÊS CURSOS DE LICENCIATURA EM MÚSICA DA REGIÃO SUL DO BRASIL: ESTRUTURA CURRICULAR E ABORDAGENS PEDAGÓGICAS

ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO DE LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA DIRECCIÓN DE MÚSICA EN TRES CARRERAS DE MÚSICA DE LA REGIÓN SUR DE BRASIL: ESTRUCTURA CURRICULAR Y ENFOQUES PEDAGÓGICOS

https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n7-253

Submitted on: 06/21/2025 Publication Date: 07/21/2025

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The training of music teachers involves a complex range of knowledge, and it is crucial to understand how specific components, such as conducting, are effectively implemented in the teaching degree curricula. While general surveys indicate the presence of the regency, there is a lack of an in-depth understanding of concrete practices. This article aims to comparatively analyze the curricular structure (workload, positioning, prerequisites), the syllabus (thematic emphases, repertoire) and the pedagogical approaches (methodologies, activities, theory-practice relationship) of conducting teaching in three Teaching Degree in Music courses in the Southern Region of Brazil: Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel). Regional University of Blumenau Foundation (FURB) and State University of Londrina (UEL). The methodology adopted the study of multiple cases, of a qualitative nature, using documentary analysis (Political-Pedagogical Projects, discipline programs) and semistructured interviews with conducting professors and course coordinators. The results reveal significant divergences and convergences between the institutions. Variations in the total workload and semester/annual distribution are observed, reflecting different curricular organizations. The contents oscillate between an exclusive focus on choral conducting (UFPel) and mixed approaches including instrumental elements (FURB, UEL), justified by regional contexts and conceptions of teaching performance. The pedagogical approaches, although they share the practice among peers, differ in the use of specific materials, technologies and activities (such as working with Laban at UEL or final projects at FURB). The teachers' perspectives, unanimous as to the importance of conducting, differently emphasize the functions of leadership, integration of knowledge and development of teaching methodologies. It is concluded that the different curricular and pedagogical models have direct implications in the preparation of the future teacher, suggesting the need for a

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continuous dialogue about the role and optimization of the teaching of conducting in the licentiate, considering the multiple contexts of professional performance.

**Keywords:** Teaching of Regency. Multiple Case Studies. Curriculum. Regency Pedagogy. Music Teacher Training.

#### **RESUMO**

A formação de professores de música envolve um conjunto complexo de conhecimentos. sendo crucial compreender como componentes específicos, como a regência, são efetivamente implementados nos currículos dos cursos de licenciatura. Enquanto pesquisas gerais indicam a presença da regência, há uma carência de compreensão aprofundada das práticas concretas. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar comparativamente a estrutura curricular (carga horária, posicionamento, pré-requisitos), a ementa (ênfases temáticas, repertório) e as abordagens pedagógicas (metodologias, atividades, relação teoria-prática) do ensino de regência em três cursos de Licenciatura em Música da Região Sul do Brasil: Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel), Fundação Universidade Regional de Blumenau (FURB) e Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). A metodologia adotada foi o estudo de casos múltiplos, de natureza qualitativa, utilizando análise documental (Projetos Político-Pedagógicos, ementas das disciplinas) e entrevistas semiestruturadas com professores de regência e coordenadores de curso. Os resultados revelam divergências e convergências significativas entre as instituições. Observam-se variações na carga horária total e na distribuição semestral/anual, refletindo diferentes organizações curriculares. Os conteúdos oscilam entre um foco exclusivo em regência coral (UFPel) e abordagens mistas incluindo elementos instrumentais (FURB, UEL), justificadas por contextos regionais e concepções de atuação docente. As abordagens pedagógicas, embora compartilhem a prática entre pares, diferem no uso de materiais, tecnologias e atividades específicas (como o trabalho com Laban na UEL ou os projetos finais na FURB). As perspectivas dos professores, unânimes quanto à importância da regência, enfatizam diferentemente as funções de liderança, integração de conhecimentos e desenvolvimento de metodologias de ensino. Conclui-se que os diferentes modelos curriculares e pedagógicos têm implicações diretas na formação do futuro professor. sugerindo a necessidade de um diálogo contínuo sobre o papel e a otimização do ensino de regência na licenciatura, considerando os múltiplos contextos de atuação profissional.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino de Regência. Estudos de Casos Múltiplos. Currículo. Pedagogia de Regência. Formação de Professores de Música.

## **RESUMEN**

La formación de profesores de música implica un conjunto complejo de conocimientos, y es crucial comprender cómo componentes específicos, como la dirección, se implementan eficazmente en los planes de estudio de las carreras de magisterio. Si bien las encuestas generales indican la presencia de la regencia, existe una falta de comprensión profunda de las prácticas concretas. Este artículo busca analizar comparativamente la estructura curricular (carga horaria, posicionamiento, prerrequisitos), el programa de estudios (énfasis temático, repertorio) y los enfoques pedagógicos (metodologías, actividades, relación teoría-práctica) de la docencia de la dirección en tres carreras de Magisterio de Música en la Región Sur de Brasil: la Universidad Federal de Pelotas (UFPel), la Fundación Universitaria Regional de Blumenau (FURB) y la Universidad Estatal de Londrina (UEL). La metodología adoptó el estudio de casos múltiples, de naturaleza cualitativa, mediante



ISSN: 2358-2472

análisis documental (Proyectos Político-Pedagógicos, programas de las disciplinas) y entrevistas semiestructuradas con profesores de dirección y coordinadores de carrera. Los resultados revelan divergencias y convergencias significativas entre las instituciones. Se observan variaciones en la carga horaria total y la distribución semestral/anual, lo que refleja las diferentes organizaciones curriculares. Los contenidos oscilan entre un enfoque exclusivo en dirección coral (UFPel) y enfoques mixtos que incluyen elementos instrumentales (FURB, UEL), justificados por los contextos regionales y las concepciones del desempeño docente. Los enfogues pedagógicos, si bien comparten la práctica entre pares, difieren en el uso de materiales, tecnologías y actividades específicas (como el trabajo con Laban en la UEL o los proyectos finales en la FURB). Las perspectivas de los docentes, unánimes en cuanto a la importancia de la dirección, enfatizan de forma diferente las funciones de liderazgo, la integración de conocimientos y el desarrollo de metodologías docentes. Se concluye que los diferentes modelos curriculares y pedagógicos tienen implicaciones directas en la formación del futuro docente, lo que sugiere la necesidad de un diálogo continuo sobre el papel y la optimización de la enseñanza de la dirección en la licenciatura, considerando los múltiples contextos del desempeño profesional.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza de la Regencia. Estudios de Caso Múltiples. Currículo. Pedagogía de la Regencia. Formación del Profesorado de Música.



#### INTRODUCTION

The training of music teachers in Brazil faces the continuous challenge of articulating musical, pedagogical and cultural knowledge in a meaningful way for professional practice. Within this panorama, conducting teaching represents a curricular component of potential relevance, addressing competencies that touch on leadership, non-verbal communication, musical interpretation and group management, valuable skills for music educators who often work in contexts of collective practice (FIGUEIREDO, 2006; FUCCI AMATO, 2009). Previous studies, such as the survey that gave rise to this investigation (GRINGS, 2011), have shown that, although conducting is present and required by legislation (BRASIL, 2004) in music degree courses in the Southern Region, its concrete implementation varies substantially in terms of workload, nomenclature and curricular positioning. This finding highlights a gap in the understanding of *how* this teaching is effectively structured and experienced in institutions.

The literature points to the need to go beyond general descriptions and investigate specific pedagogical practices and the underlying formative objectives (LAKSCHEVITZ, 2009; TEIXEIRA, 2010). In view of this, this article proposes to deepen this issue through a detailed comparative analysis, focused on the second stage of the master's research (GRINGS, 2011). The main objective is to analyze and contrast the curricular structure, the syllabus and the pedagogical approaches related to the teaching of conducting in three selected Music Degree courses in the Southern Region of Brazil – Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel), Regional University of Blumenau Foundation (FURB) and State University of Londrina (UEL) – which stood out for the largest mandatory workload dedicated to the discipline. It seeks, with this, to identify convergences and divergences in the adopted models, to explore the logics that sustain them from the perspectives of the subjects involved (teachers and coordinators) and to discuss the implications of these different configurations for the training of the music teacher, considering the complex relationship between the technical training of the conductor and the pedagogical training of the music educator (FIGUEIREDO, 2005; ULRICH, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research on which this article is based adopted a qualitative approach, as it is considered the most appropriate to explore in depth the nuances and meanings attributed by the participants to the phenomenon of conducting teaching in specific contexts



(CRESWELL, 2007; BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994). The research was designed in two interconnected phases. The first phase consisted of a documentary survey and mapping of all the Teaching Degree courses in Music offered in the Southern Region of Brazil (RS, SC, PR), identifying the presence and workload of the discipline of conducting in the curricula (GRINGS, 2011). The results of this initial phase informed the selection of cases for the second phase.

The second stage, whose data are the main focus of this article, was developed as a multiple case study (YIN, 2005). This methodological strategy allows for a robust comparative analysis, increasing the external validity of the findings by examining the phenomenon in different scenarios (YIN, 2005). Three institutions were selected, one from each state in the Southern Region, based on two main criteria: (1) having the highest total workload in *mandatory conducting disciplines* in their respective state, as identified in the first phase; and (2) geographically representing each of the three states in the South (GRINGS, 2011). The choice for a high workload was based on the assumption that courses with greater time investment in the discipline would offer more elements for analysis and reflection on their contents and practices. The selected institutions were: Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel-RS), Regional University of Blumenau Foundation (FURB-SC) and State University of Londrina (UEL-PR) (GRINGS, 2011).

Data collection in all three cases involved the triangulation of sources and techniques, aiming at greater reliability (MARTINS, 2006). The following were carried out: (a) Documentary Analysis: in-depth examination of the Political-Pedagogical Projects (PPPs) of each course and the detailed teaching programs/plans of the disciplines offered. This analysis aimed to understand the formal curricular structure, the declared institutional objectives, the syllabus, the syllabus and the recommended bibliographies (GRINGS). (b) Semi-structured interviews: in-depth conversations with the professors directly responsible for teaching the conducting disciplines (four in total: one at UFPel, one at FURB, two at UEL) and with the coordinators of the music degree courses at each institution (three in total). The interviews, guided by flexible scripts (GRINGS, 2011), sought to capture the perspectives of the participants on the organization of teaching, the methodologies and pedagogical approaches effectively used (the "curriculum in action"), the difficulties and potentialities perceived, the desired formative objectives and the role attributed to conducting in the integral formation of the music teacher. All interviews were audio-recorded, with prior consent, and later transcribed for analysis (GRINGS, 2011).



The collected data (documents and transcripts) were organized and submitted to content analysis (LAVILLE; DIONNE, 1999), seeking to identify recurring themes, patterns, convergences and divergences between the three cases, in an iterative and inductive way (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994). The comparative analysis focused on the aspects of the curricular structure, contents, pedagogical approaches and the functions attributed to the regency, relating the findings to the theoretical framework on curriculum, regency pedagogy and teacher training discussed in the dissertation (GRINGS, 2011).

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

comparative analysis of the data collected at UFPel, FURB and UEL allows us to draw a detailed picture of the similarities and, mainly, the differences in the conception and implementation of conducting teaching in these three music degree courses.

## **Curricular Structure, Workload and Positioning**

The total workload dedicated to mandatory conducting courses, although high in the three selected cases compared to the regional average, presents notable variations: 136 hours at UFPel, 144 hours at FURB and 120 hours at UEL (GRINGS, 2011). This difference, which reaches 24 hours between FURB and UEL, signals different priorities in the allocation of curricular time. Even more significant is the structuring: UFPel distributes its workload in four sequential disciplines of 34 hours each, offered from the 5th to the 8th semester, which suggests a gradual and continuous progression over two years. Crucially, these disciplines have as a prerequisite those of Choral Laboratory, indicating a strong link between choral practice and learning conducting (GRINGS, 2011).

In contrast, FURB concentrates its 144 hours in two subjects of 72 hours each, in the 7th and 8th semesters, and UEL offers its 120 hours in two annual subjects of 60 hours each, in the 3rd and 4th year (GRINGS, 2011). The concentration at the end of the course is a common characteristic and justified by the interviewees as necessary to ensure the musical maturity of the students and allow conducting to act as a space for the synthesis of previous knowledge (theory, perception, harmony, instrument/voice, history). Coordinator B (FURB) points out that at this stage "students are already able to assimilate the contents well, to also value the discipline, to be aware of the importance that conducting will have in their future work" (GRINGS, 2011, p. 87). Professor C (UEL) argues in a similar way about the need for previous skills to analyze scores. UEL's annual serial regime also distinguishes it from the other two, which operate on a semiannual basis (GRINGS, 2011). These



structural differences imply different learning rhythms and may reflect different philosophies on curricular integration.

# **Contents Covered: Emphases and Scope:**

The thematic cut of the contents reveals a fundamental divergence. UFPel directs all its conducting teaching exclusively to **choral singing**. The detailed program (Appendix B of the dissertation) shows a clear progression: basic gesture and adult choir (Conducting I), the process of musicalization and specificities of children's/youth choirs and vocal changes (Conducting II), deepening of gestures and musical analysis (Conducting III), and practice with diverse repertoire (Conducting IV) (GRINGS, 2011). Teacher A justifies this choice by the predominance of choral practice in the performance of the graduate and by his view of singing as a privileged pedagogical space. FURB and UEL, on the other hand, adopt a mixed approach, contemplating both aspects of choral and instrumental conducting. At FURB, while Conducting I introduces general techniques with choral application, Conducting II explicitly expands to "other instrumental and vocal formations", addressing repertoire for "choir, orchestra and band" (GRINGS, 2011, p. 88). This is aligned, according to Coordinator B, with the strong presence of school bands and instrumental groups in the region. UEL, in its menus and in the program, also provides for the study of various formations (orchestra, band, choir), indicating a more comprehensive vision from the beginning. Elements common to all include the study of gestural technique (time signatures, dynamics, articulations, entrances, cuts, fermatas), analysis of scores (melodic, rhythmic, formal, text-music relationship), planning and rehearsal dynamics. Specific topics such as vocal preparation (UFPel, FURB), history of conducting (FURB), use of the baton (UEL) and Laban's theory of movement (UEL) appear in a more punctual way (GRINGS, 2011).

### Pedagogical Approaches and Theory-Practice Relationship:

Teaching methodologies actively seek to connect theory and practice, albeit with varied strategies. The **practice of conducting among one's classmates** is a pillar in the three courses, seen as essential for initial development and to create a safe environment for exposure (Teacher C, UEL; Professor A, UFPel). UFPel articulates this practice with the Choral Laboratory groups, providing an experience closer to a formed choir. FURB implements a final project in Regency I where each student takes the lead of a small group of colleagues to prepare and present a play, including written planning, aiming to simulate a "real situation" of work (Teacher B). UEL stands out for the intentional use of **additional resources**: Teacher C uses filming for students' self-assessment and online videos



(Youtube) for analysis of different styles of conductors, in addition to introducing percussion (body, instrumental, words) as a means of practicing conducting beyond singing, connecting it more directly to school musicalization practices (GRINGS, 2011). Professor D (UEL) incorporates principles of **Laban's theory of movement** to develop body awareness and gestural expressiveness, and strongly encourages the **external observation** of choir and orchestra rehearsals, with detailed reports, as a way to expand the students' repertoire of strategies. Didactic materials such as handouts (FURB, UEL) with theoretical excerpts, musical examples and gestural diagrams are also used. Flexibility in choosing the repertoire according to the profile of the class was also mentioned (Teacher C, UEL) (GRINGS, 2011). **Teaching Perspectives and Training Objectives:** 

There is a remarkable convergence among the interviewees on the multifunctionality of conducting in the training of music teachers. All emphasize the development of leadership and communication (verbal and non-verbal), considering conducting a "condition" to enable collective musical activities at school (Professor A, UFPel) (GRINGS, 2011, p. 81-82, 92). The function of integrating and applying **knowledge** from different areas (theory, perception, history, instrumental/vocal practice, pedagogy) in a coherent musical performance is explicitly recognized, functioning as an "amalgam" (Coordinator C, UEL) (GRINGS, 2011, p. 106, 109). Equally important is the acquisition of teaching methodologies and strategies for working with groups, going beyond the mere gestural technique (Professor D, UEL; Professor B, FURB). Preparation to act as a conductor in contexts outside the school (social projects, church choirs, community groups) is seen as a possibility and a field of work for graduates, especially in the face of the lack of professionals (Coordinator A, UFPel; Professor B, FURB), but the primary training aimed at is that of the music teacher for basic education. Professor A (UFPel) and Professor C (UEL) clearly articulate this vision of conducting as a pedagogical tool (GRINGS, 2011).

#### **Influences of the Institutional Context:**

The differences observed cannot be dissociated from the specific contexts. The nature of the institution (federal, state, municipal with mixed funding) can impact everything from the administrative structure and faculty (such as the greater segmentation at UFPel) to possible institutional resources and focuses. The strong tradition of bands and choirs in the Blumenau region is explicitly cited by Coordinator B (FURB) as a justification for the inclusion of instrumental content. The absence of specific courses of Bachelor's Degree in



Conducting in Santa Catarina may put greater pressure on the FURB degree to meet this demand, unlike in RS and PR, where there are other options for more specialized training (GRINGS, 2011). The dialogue (or lack thereof) between the music and education departments within each university can also influence the degree of integration between musical and pedagogical knowledge in the conducting curriculum.

Concluding this section, the comparison between UFPel, FURB and UEL demonstrates that, even among courses with a high course load of conducting, there are distinct curricular and pedagogical models, shaped by historical, regional, institutional factors and by the conceptions of teachers about the purposes of music teacher training.

#### CONCLUSION

This study sought to deepen the understanding of conducting teaching in the training of music teachers, starting from a general overview of the Southern Region of Brazil for a detailed comparative analysis of three representative cases (UFPel, FURB, UEL). The initial survey in the first phase of the dissertation (GRINGS, 2011) confirmed the widespread presence of conducting in the curricula, but also its great heterogeneity in terms of workload and structure, indicating a lack of consensus on its weight and place in training (GRINGS, 2011). The comparative analysis, the second phase of the dissertation and the focus of this article, corroborated and detailed this diversity, revealing different models of implementation even among courses that dedicate considerable curricular time to the discipline.

The findings demonstrate that the curricular structuring (sequence of disciplines, prerequisites, semester/annual regime), the delimitation of contents (exclusive choral focus vs. mixed approach) and pedagogical strategies (emphasis on different practical activities, use of technologies, articulation with other disciplines) vary significantly between UFPel, FURB and UEL. This diversity reflects not only specific institutional and regional contexts, but also different interpretations of which conducting skills are priorities for the future music teacher who will work predominantly in basic education, but who can also find spaces as a conductor of amateur groups.

One of the most expressive results was the **unanimity** found among the 56 students participating in the three cases regarding the **importance of conducting** in their education, using terms such as "essential", "fundamental" and "very important" (GRINGS, 2011, p. 80, 87, 104, 114). This student perception, coming precisely from those who experience the curricula with a higher workload, reinforces the legitimacy and relevance of this formative



component, in line with the national guidelines (BRASIL, 2004) and the perspectives of the teachers and coordinators interviewed.

The functions attributed to conducting by the participants (leadership, non-verbal communication, integration of knowledge, collective teaching methodologies, and, secondarily, preparation to conduct specific groups) confirm the view of conducting as a powerful pedagogical tool, which transcends the gestural technique and is directly articulated with the demands of teaching practice in music (FIGUEIREDO, 2005; ZANDER, 2008; ULRICH, 2009). The discussion about the dichotomy between musical education and pedagogical training (Professor A, UFPel; Coordinator B, FURB) finds in the teaching of conducting a privileged space for integration, as defended by Professor A: "When I work in conducting classes with students, the whole issue of gestures and work methodology is present [...] all the essential transposition that is in relation to the technical domain at the service [...] of a musical education project" (GRINGS, 2011, p. 109).

The **implications** of these different training models are significant. A training with an exclusive emphasis on choral conducting (UFPel) can prepare the student in great depth for this specific context, but may leave him less prepared to deal with instrumental groups. Mixed approaches (FURB, UEL) offer greater amplitude, but potentially with less depth in each area. The choice for a greater or lesser workload, and its distribution throughout the course, also impacts the development of skills. There is no single ideal model, but the analysis suggests that reflection on the training objectives, the profile of the desired graduate and the demands of the professional field should guide curricular choices, seeking greater articulation between the components of training. The possibility of offering elective courses, such as at UDESC and UFRGS, emerges as an interesting alternative to reconcile a common base with deepening in areas of specific interest to students.

This study, by focusing on three specific cases, offers a detailed picture, but not generalizable to the entire region. **Suggestions for future research** include: (1) Case studies in institutions with a low course load or where it is integrated with other disciplines, to contrast perspectives and results; (2) Ethnographic or participant observation research focused on pedagogical interactions within conducting classes, detailing the methodologies in action; (3) Longitudinal studies with graduates of the different curricular models, evaluating the impact of conducting training on their professional trajectory and practice; (4) Investigations on the implementation of specific pedagogical approaches, such as Laban's Theory of Movement, in the teaching of conducting in Brazilian contexts; (5) More in-depth



analyses on how different institutional structures and educational policies influence the configuration of music degree curricula, including the teaching of conducting (GRINGS, 2011). Such investigations would contribute to a more informed debate on how to optimize the training of music teachers in Brazil, enabling them to face the challenges and potentialities of collective musical making in the various educational spaces.



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