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## Perspectives on Popular Music Voice Teaching: A Systematic Mapping Review of Recent Literature

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### Abstract

This systematic mapping review explored scholarly and educational literature on popular music voice teaching published in English, Finnish, and Swedish between 2014 and 2020. The mapping included 177 publications, including peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, dissertations, and educational books. The literature was categorized into four so-called *dispositions*, the findings suggesting that popular music voice teaching is perceived either as an independent field of work or as part of the broader disciplines of voice teaching or instrument teaching. The literature was also organized into seven key areas and 33 topics, encompassing disciplinary issues, education, genre-specific singing, pedagogical methods and tools, voice students, voice science, and health and well-being. The analysis highlights the influence of author context and acknowledges an English-language bias, resulting in an Anglo-American emphasis in the reviewed literature.

### Keywords

Popular music singing, CCM singing, vocal pedagogy, voice education, popular music education, higher music education, professional knowledge, systematic review

## Introduction

This article reports on a review of recent literature on voice teaching (VT)<sup>1</sup> that focuses on popular music (PM) genres. Like many other professions, the VT profession has undergone extensive transformations over the past few decades, influenced by significant societal changes (see [Westerlund and Gaunt 2022](#)). The master–apprentice tradition has started to give way to more student-centred approaches, and voice teachers have had to adapt both to an ever-increasing diversity of musical genres and repertoires and to the specific needs of students and the music industry ([Fahey 2021](#)). The growing use of PM<sup>2</sup> in VT practices can be regarded as a means towards the ‘reconfiguration of professional work’ ([Noordegraaf 2016](#): 786) to meet these demands and changes. Professional development in voice education is further challenged by the fragmentation and comprehensiveness of professional knowledge. As in other music education disciplines, the field draws from a wide range of different scientific fields as well as practical, experience-based and tacit knowledge ([Danielsen and Johansen 2012](#)).

Although PM singing has been taught formally for decades, institutionalized voice *teacher* education, geared specifically towards PM genres, is still rare ([DeSilva 2016](#); [Bartlett 2020](#)), and the organization of knowledge in the field is still in its early stages. Moreover, despite the few existing programmes, the siloed nature of higher music education (HME) and its ‘tastekeeper’ practices might prove problematic in terms of the epistemological development of the field ([Dyndahl et al. 2017](#)). For example, in some contexts, PM voice teachers are still required to also have expertise in classical voice in order to be eligible for teaching positions in HME ([Cox 2020](#)). Yet, this requirement may result in a superficial approach to teaching PM, raising concerns about authenticity, canonization, gentrification and the relevance of such education in relation to graduates’ employability. These issues have been addressed especially in the scholarly field of PM education ([Green 2002](#); [Karlsen and Väkevä](#)

[2012](#); [Dyndahl et al. 2014](#); [Parkinson and Smith 2015](#)), gradually influencing VT practices as well.

This article examines the development and distribution of literature on PMVT and topics related to that field. It reports on a systematic mapping review of recent literature (2014–20) that included both scholarly and practice-based approaches. The purpose of the review was to contribute to the organization and understanding of existing knowledge within the discipline and to investigate how different perspectives or *dispositions*<sup>3</sup> were presented in the literature. Thus, the aim was to answer the following review questions: (1) *What dispositions can be identified in the reviewed literature on popular music voice teaching (PMVT)?* and (2) *What are the key areas and topics of PMVT in the reviewed literature?* The reviewed literature was published in either English, Finnish or Swedish. This selection was based on the first author’s context of research, and the inclusion of Finnish and Swedish reflects the aim to balance out some of the English-language bias ([Brunton et al. 2017](#); [Jackson and Kuriyama 2019](#)).

### Popular Music Voice Teaching as an Emerging Field

In western educational contexts, institutionalized training for PM singing began to increase in the 1970s<sup>4</sup> (e.g. [Mäkelä 2022](#); [Radionoff 2015](#)). The stereotypical narrative of a ‘pioneering’ PM voice teacher consists of a voice teacher with training in classical music and a parallel career as a pop, rock, jazz or musical theatre artist. Many of these ‘pioneers’ have later organized their experiential knowledge through writing books, developing VT methods, establishing HME programmes and/or conducting research on singing and its pedagogy in the PM contexts ([Benson 2020](#); [Hoch 2018](#)). Current PMVT practices have evolved out of these efforts.

A significant portion of the existing literature in English on teaching PM singing originates in the United States. In terms of publications within the North American context,

three key developments supported by professional organizations stand out. The first milestone took shape in 1985, marked by the commencement of a recurring column titled ‘The Bach to Rock Connection’ by Robert Edwin in the journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS). The second major event unfolded in 2008 with the publication of a position paper by the American Academy of Teachers of Singing (see [AATS 2008](#)) asserting the necessity of utilizing distinct pedagogical approaches for classical and ‘non-classical’ styles due to their historical, stylistic, physiological and acoustic disparities. The third milestone was reached in 2014, when NATS embarked on the publication of the So You Want to Sing book series, tailored for singers and singing teachers. A primary objective of this series was to address the different PM singing styles ([Hoch 2020](#)).

It can be argued that these milestones reflect distinct ‘waves’ or shifts in perspective within the literature on PM singing (cf. the waves of PM education research in [Allsup \[2008\]](#) and [Koskela \[2022\]](#)). Previously having been regarded as an anomaly, entwined with the prevailing narrative of its harmful effects on the voice (see [AATS 1986](#)), the first wave of literature brought new perspectives on PM singing. It was particularly focused on musical theatre singing and ‘belting’ ([Miles and Hollien 1990](#); [Schutte and Miller 1993](#)), often comparing these with western classical singing ([Björkner 2008](#); [Estill 1988](#); [Sundberg et al. 1993](#)). The second wave then shifted the focus to validating and separating the field from classical voice pedagogy and its ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach ([Bartlett 2014](#); [Fisher et al. 2019](#)). More recently, the third wave of literature documents different aspects of PMVT as its own autonomous line of work and produces new genre-specific knowledge ([Hughes 2017](#); [Reinhert 2019](#)). The different waves are not absolutely bound within certain periods, but seem to be more context dependent and subject to variance according to the contributing author’s own background or agenda. Notably, just as waves in nature are not separate entities, the literature may display overlapping perspectives, thus representing several ‘waves’ simultaneously.

## The Mapping Review

This article focuses on the outcomes of a systematic mapping review on recent literature of PMVT. Mapping reviews aim at ‘categorizing, classifying, characterizing patterns, trends or themes in evidence production or publication’ ([Booth 2016](#): 14) and may lead to unforeseen further reviews or ‘primary research’ ([Grant and Booth 2009](#): 97). Typical of mapping reviews, our review protocol was kept flexible and included defining the preliminary purpose and research questions of the review, selection criteria, search strategy, screening and data extraction methods, and a directive plan for further data synthesis ([Gough et al. 2017](#); [Newman and Gough 2020](#)). For reasons of readability, the following overview of the process is brief. A more detailed description can be found as [Supplemental material](#) ([Appendix 1](#)).

### *A Summary of the Purpose, Initial Selection Criteria and Search Strategy of the Review*

The first author started the review process in September 2020 with the aim of identifying the *key literature* in PMVT. The initial selection criteria for the range of the years of publication was set to 2008–20 in accordance with the second ‘milestone’ mentioned earlier (see [AATS 2008](#)). The initial exclusion criteria can be seen in our PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) diagram ([Moher et al. 2009](#)) on the right-hand column of [Figure 1](#). The initial strategy was to conduct both database searches and manual searches on scholarly search engines, specific journals and reference lists ([Table 1](#)). However, due to the assumed scarcity of specific scholarly literature, non-academic educational books were also included in the search. The search terms ([Table 2](#)) were first limited to English, but later Finnish and Swedish were included because of the first author’s plans to conduct further empirical studies on voice teacher education in these countries. The searches, first screenings and first quality and relevance assessments were conducted by the first author using a reference

management service RefWorks. The first and second author then adjusted the inclusion and exclusion criteria further based on the first screening.

**Table 1: The searched databases and journals.**

Database search	Web of Science, Scopus, Stockholm University Library’s books and articles, University of the Arts Helsinki Library Arsca (‘Library’s collection’ and ‘international e-materials’), EBSCO (Academic Search Elite, Education Resources Information Center [ERIC], International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance with Full Text, RILM Abstracts of Music Literature, RIPM Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals with Full Text, RISM Series A/II: Music Manuscripts after 1600, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts [LISTA], GreenFILE, eBook Collection [EBSCOhost], Teacher Reference Center, OpenDissertations)
Simplified search	<i>Journal of Voice</i> , <i>Journal of Laryngology and Otology</i> , <i>Journal of Singing</i> , <i>Journal of Popular Music Education</i> , Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Finna.fi
Manual search	Reference list checking, professional and personal contacts, contacting authors, <i>Studies in Musical Theatre</i> , <i>Australian Voice</i> , Amazon, bookauthority.org, Stockholm Public Library, Helsinki Metropolitan Area Libraries (Helmet), <i>Röstläget</i> , <i>Laulupedagogi</i> , <i>The Finnish Journal of Music Education</i>

**Table 2: The search string used for the advanced searches in English.**

Concept	Search terms
Singing	sing* OR voice OR vocal
Teacher	teacher OR coach
Pedagogy	education OR pedagogy ( <i>manual search incl. training</i> )
Popular music	‘contemporary commercial’ OR CCM OR ‘popular culture music’ OR ‘Afro-American music’ OR ‘rhythmic music’ OR pop OR rock OR jazz OR ‘rhythm and blues’ OR ‘country music’ OR ‘hip hop’

### *The Adjusted Selection Criteria*

In November 2020 the amount of data gathered during the first rounds of screening was deemed too large, and the need for further adjustments to the selection criteria was recognized. First, the chronological scope was halved, now starting from 2014, which omitted about one-third of the literature. Second, all non-peer-reviewed articles were excluded, which turned out to be a more complex task than expected and continued until the final stages of the study (see

[Appendix 1](#)). A small ‘catch-up search’ ([Brunton et al. 2017](#): 106) was conducted in December 2020 to cover the last journal issues for that year. Third, further searches in Finnish and Swedish were conducted in March 2021 ([Table 3](#)).

**Table 3: Search terms in Finnish and Swedish.**

Finnish	<u>Boolean search string</u> : (laulunopettaja OR laulopedagogiikka OR laulu OR laulopedagogi) AND (rytmimusiikki OR populaarimusiikki OR pop OR afroamerikkalainen OR rock OR jazz) AND koulutus
	<u>Word search</u> : ‘laulunopettaja’ / ‘laulopedagogiikka’ / ‘laulu’ AND ‘opettaja’ / ‘laulaminen’
Swedish	<u>Word search</u> : ‘sångpedagogik’ / ‘sånglärare’ / ‘sångpedagog’ / ‘sjunga’ / ‘sång’

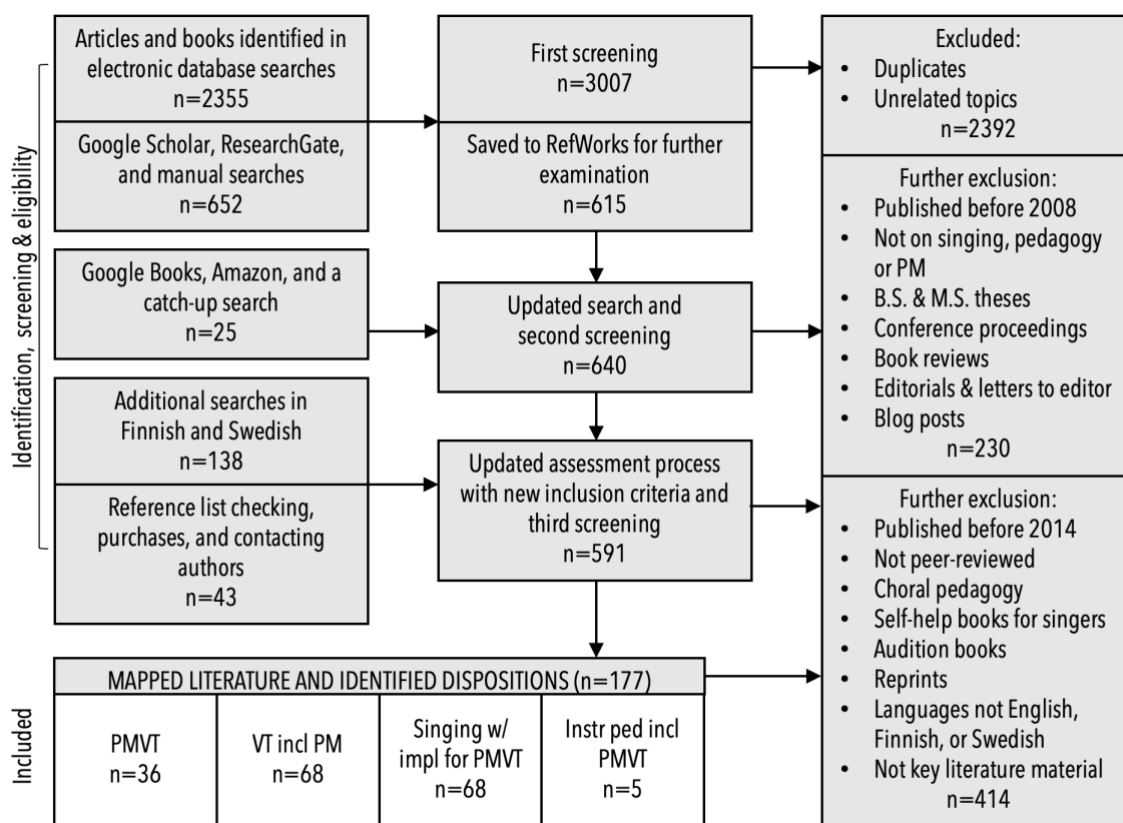
### *Mapping the Key Literature*

The third round of assessment was interlaced with the so-called ‘mapping’ (September–December 2021), where texts were organized into dispositions and coded by topic. Our PRISMA flow diagram ([Figure 1](#)) illustrates the process of inclusion and exclusion, and the resulting four dispositions. The use of coding in mapping reviews has been compared to the functionality of geographic maps, which provide an understandable overview of the terrain and certain topographical elements at the cost of ‘losing some of the detail’ ([Sutcliffe et al. 2017](#): 125). This kind of mapping is perceived as valuable because it (1) demonstrates and documents the breadth and characteristics of existing literature and uncovers possible gaps, (2) allows for better time and resource management that enables the reviewers to reframe, narrow and adjust their research questions and inclusion criteria and (3) produces beneficial information on the context that can support further analysis ([Sutcliffe et al. 2017](#): 126).

The resulting body of literature consisted of 177 publications: 101 peer-reviewed articles, seventeen book or handbook chapters, 21 dissertations and 38 educational books. The literature was organized into a ‘map’ ([Appendix 2](#): Tables 4.1–4.8) that included the name(s)

of first author(s), year of publication, country of author(s) or affiliation(s), type of publication and disposition type. The year of publication was defined by the date of the printing, but since some publications were published online prior to printing, the map also includes some publications that were printed in 2021 and 2022. The countries of the authors have been abbreviated using ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 country codes ([ISO 2021](#)). Because we were more interested in the locations of the institutions that facilitate research in PMVT rather than the original nationality of the authors, the country codes refer to the location of the affiliated university or country of residence mentioned in the author bio. Types of publication are indicated with an abbreviation (J = journal; B = educational book; BC = book chapter; HC = handbook chapter; D = dissertation; L = licentiate thesis). Further, the texts in Finnish or Swedish are indicated as FIN or SWE after the author's name.

We further organized the literature into key areas and topics. This was at times challenging due to the large amount and heterogeneous nature of the data, and because, for example, longer texts such as educational books or doctoral dissertations often dealt with a variety of issues. It should therefore be noted that the mapping was to some extent a subjective exercise, not immune to criticism, and many texts could have been included under several topics and subtopics. In the following sections, we examine and summarize our observations and findings.



**Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram of this study. ‘PMVT’ is an abbreviation of *popular music voice teaching*.**

### Overview of Reviewed Literature

In this section we present the overall body of literature and some statistics regarding the geographic features, publication years and publication types. The following statistics will be presented by the geographic origin of publication, determined by the affiliations and countries of residence of the first authors.<sup>5</sup> About half of the first authors reside in North America (50.8%), a fourth in Europe (25.8%) and around a fifth in Australasia (18.6%). The two largest publishing countries by first authors’ residence are the United States ( $n = 88$ ) and Australia ( $n = 33$ ). In this data set, which includes Finnish, Finland ( $n = 13$ ) has the third largest number of publications. Six of them are in English. For reference, the Swedish publications include three

in English and one in Swedish. [Figure 2](#) illustrates the number of publications by country in a heat map, and [Table 5](#) displays more detailed information about the countries of the authors.

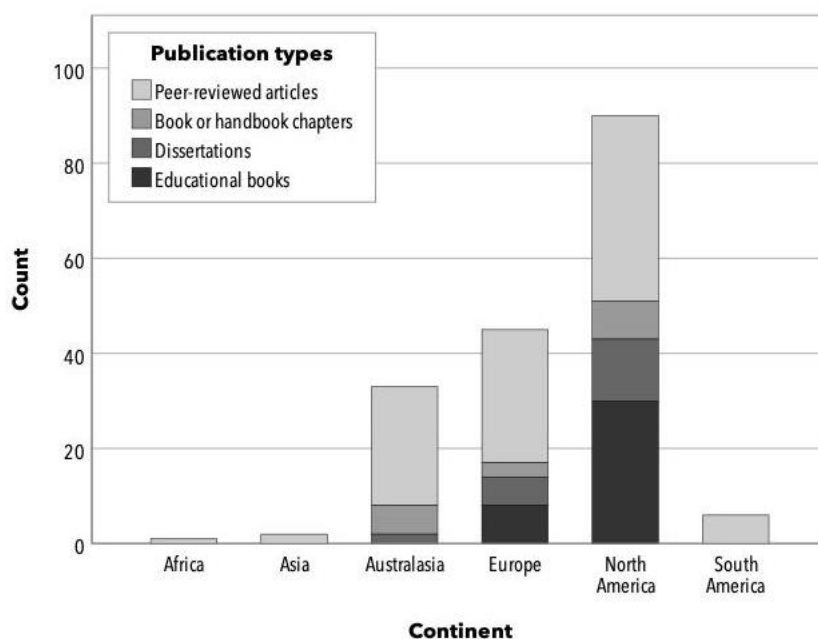


**Figure 2: Geographical heat map of first-author contributions by country of the reviewed literature.**

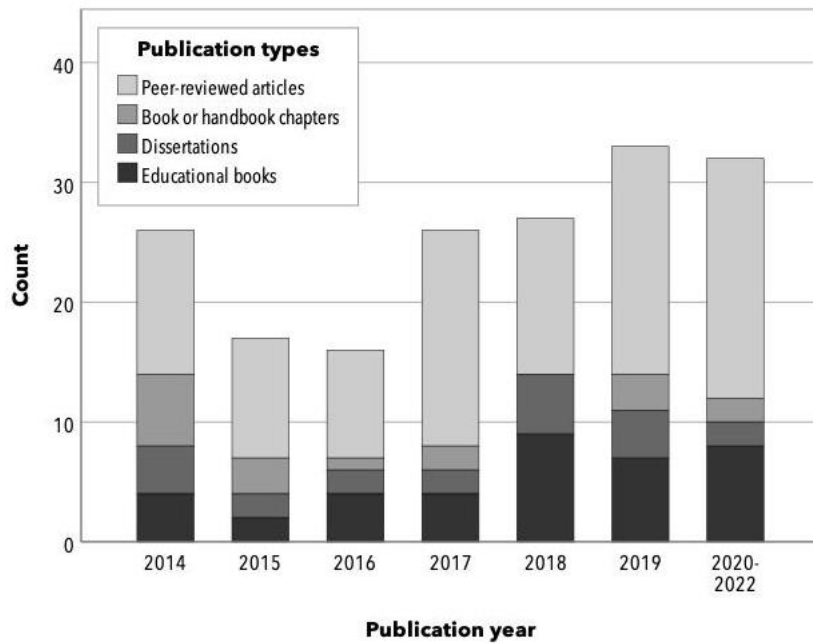
**Table 5: Reviewed literature’s first-author contributions by country, contributing countries represented by secondary authors, and countries represented by an individual author. Literature in Finnish or Swedish is marked with an asterisk.**

Africa (1)	NGA (1)
Asia (2)	CHN (1), THA (1)
Australasia (33)	AUS (33)
Europe (45)	AUT (1), CZE (1), DEU (4), DNK (3), EST (1), FIN (6+7*), GBR (10), ITA (4), NLD (1), POL (1), PRT (1), RUS (1), SWE (3+1*)
North America (90)	USA (88), CAN (2)
South America (6)	ARG (1), BRA (1), CHL (4)
Additional countries represented by other-than-first authors	BEL, ESP, FRA
Countries represented by an individual author	AUT, ARG, BEL, CHN, CZE, DNK, EST, NGA, NLD, PRT

[Figures 3 and 4](#) show how the publication types are distributed by continent and publication year. Educational books were found only in North America and Europe, whereas peer-reviewed articles were published in all continents. Book and handbook chapters and monograph doctoral dissertations were typical only in Australasia, the United States and European countries. [Figure 4](#) illustrates a slight increase in the amount of literature since 2014, especially visible in peer-reviewed articles and educational books.



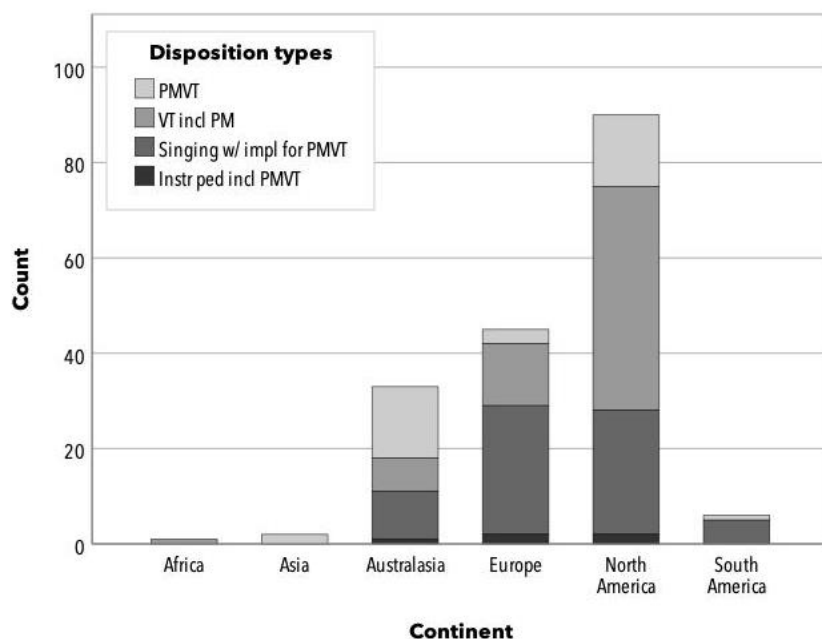
**Figure 3: Publication types by continent.**



**Figure 4: Stacked bar diagram of publication types by year.**

### Dispositions

Regarding our first review question, the following four dispositions were identified in the mapping: (1) literature with the main focus on PMVT, (2) literature on VT that discusses PM genres in relation to other musical genres (VT incl PM), (3) literature on singers or singing with implications for PMVT (Singing w/ impl for PMVT) and (4) literature on instrument pedagogy including PMVT (Instr ped incl PMVT). [Figure 5](#) shows how the four types of disposition are distributed according to the authors' continent of residence. North America contributed the largest share of literature that incorporates PM genres into the more general discipline of VT (disposition 2), both in terms of quantity and proportion within the continent's literature. Interestingly, despite a significant difference in the total number of publications between the United States and Australia, the number of publications focusing mainly on PMVT (disposition 1) is similar in both countries. Most of the literature from Europe focuses on the singing voice (disposition 3).



**Figure 5: Disposition types presented by continent defined by the first author’s affiliation.**

### Key Areas and Topics in the Reviewed Literature

In this section we will examine and summarize the literature in smaller segments according to the seven identified key areas with related topics and subtopics ([Appendix 2](#)). In the interest of textual conciseness, all 177 references were not cited in the ensuing discourse. In our choice of references, we have deliberately decided to highlight publications representing the first disposition (see references in [Appendix 3](#)). However, readers are encouraged to consult the tables in [Appendix 2](#) for a more detailed picture of the described literature.

#### 1. *The Voice Teaching Discipline*

The literature with a clear focus on the discipline of VT forms 24.3 per cent of the reviewed data (Table 4.1). All publication types were represented, and notably about a half of the included dissertations in this review were on VT practices (see Table 4.2). The key areas can be divided into two dispositions: the first representing PMVT specifically ( $n = 15$ ), and the second paralleling PM singing with other genres, most often with classical singing ( $n = 28$ ).

This area emphasized voice teachers' personal views on VT and included many interview studies. The 'master teacher' PM voice teachers sometimes appear under their own names, and many of the same teachers have been interviewed in different works ([Benson 2020](#); [Hoch 2018](#); [Naismith 2019](#)). The rest of the interview studies anonymize their interviewees (e.g. [Cox 2020](#); [Mesiä 2019](#); [Roll 2014](#)). Literature on PMVT practices also includes teachers' own descriptions of their practices, a literature review linked with such practices in Thailand, and a more philosophical take on PMVT practices in Finnish.

The second disposition literature included similar contributions, with the difference of juxtaposing or paralleling PM singing with classical singing. Additionally, it included guidebooks and book chapters on VT incorporating different genres. Paralleling genres, 'cross-training' and 'functional training' seem inherent to literature on musical theatre, as it usually involves a variety of genres. Unsurprisingly, this literature was mainly from the United States, where HME is mostly geared towards classical voice performance or musical theatre. Thus, several of the publications were doctoral dissertations (Doctor of Musical Arts) on teaching PM in a classical VT studio. Other topics included in this area were the history and development of the classical VT discipline, discussions of the current demand for PM genres, and examinations of the emerging need for the so-called evidence-based VT practices.

## *2. Higher and Further Education*

This small key area dealt with tertiary voice teacher training and PM voice teachers' work in HME (see Table 4.3). While the literature in the previous area discusses teachers and their practices, some in the context of HME, this area considers curricular aspects of teaching PM singing or teacher training. The literature includes existing and hypothetical examples of tertiary PM performance programmes ([Hughes 2020](#); [Reinhert 2019](#)). As for voice teacher education, [DeSilva \(2016\)](#) reviews existing PM programmes in the United States and [Bartlett](#)

(2020) reports a cross-training programme in Australia covering both PM and classical genres. Voice teachers' opportunities to specialize in singing voice rehabilitation and the curricular aspects of including clinical observation and mentorship in voice teacher training programmes in the United States are considered ([Gerhard 2016](#); [Gerhard et al. 2020](#)). Given the shortage of tertiary PM voice teacher programmes, the lack of literature in this key area is not surprising.

### *3. Genre-Specific Singing*

The literature on genre-specific singing was comprised mostly of guidebooks with a focus on the singer or a specific PM genre with articulated implications for VT (see Table 4.4). These guidebooks provide general information about how to practice PM singing and offer genre-specific listening examples and exercises, as well as specialized knowledge on, for example, certain extreme singing techniques, artistry, performing, improvisation and equipment. The more general guidebooks come from European countries ([Soto-Morettini 2014](#); [Hapuoja 2015](#); [Van Doorn 2016](#); [Zangger Borch 2019](#)). It can be speculated that contributions similar to the examples in Finnish and Swedish are probably found in other languages in other non-English-speaking countries. Most of the style-specific guidebooks belong to the *So You Want to Sing* series by *NATS*, already discussed earlier. Most of the books in this series include almost identical curated chapters on voice science, vocal health and audio enhancement technology.

### *4. Pedagogical Methods and Voice Teacher's Tools*

The second largest key area considers pedagogical methods and voice teacher's tools (see Table 4.5) and represents all dispositions and publication types from Australia, North America and several European countries. The topics were arranged alphabetically and include accompanying, acting, artistry, body-based knowledge, commercial methods, curricula, entrepreneurship, improvisation, pedagogical issues, repertoire, technological tools and

terminology as well as vocal exercises and warm-ups. The diversity of the topics provides insight into voice teachers' everyday work and how different types of interdisciplinary knowledge inform VT.

The literature displayed topics aimed at voice teachers of all genres, as well as some specialized knowledge topics that are relevant only for certain teachers. However, the question of where to draw the line between generalist and specialist knowledge is complex. The subtopics that referred specifically to PMVT dealt with, for example, terminology, analysis of artists, acting tools, teaching improvisation for singers, loopers, pitch correction software and marketing the voice studio.

#### *5. Voice Students, Society, and the Music Industry*

Voice students are arguably the most important group of stakeholders for the voice teacher profession (see Table 4.6). Yet the literature included only a few studies on students' expectations and perceptions of VT. Previously, the most studied voice student types have been tertiary level students or professional singers within a certain age range. With the widening of the VT discipline, especially with the inclusion of PM genres, voice students now seem to be of all ages. This has also broadened the awareness that students of almost all ages need coaching, on both amateur and professional levels. As biological changes are especially prominent in the human voice, the literature, particularly that from the United States, offers insight into the voice changes that occur in adolescence and during menopause. It also considers the variety of genders and how to teach transgender singers. The general shift from master–apprentice traditions to more student-centred practices has opened space for discussions on the specific voice education needs of professional voice users, such as schoolteachers and music therapists.

Because students are influenced by their surrounding societies and the music industry, these topics often overlap in the literature. Social and industry changes affect PM voice teachers as much as their clients, which is why singing teachers have been interested in exploring the career prospects of professional singers. Stereotypically, topics focusing on professional PM singers' portfolio careers and entrepreneurship derive from Australia, whereas the literature specifically concerning the musical theatre industry comes from the United States. Another nation-bound feature, visible in this particular data set, is Finnish authors' interest in teaching beginners in recreational settings, which may reflect Finland's institutionalized system of out-of-school music education and related academic trends.

#### 6. *Voice Science and Singing Technique*

This key area includes scientific studies on voice and singing with explicit implications for VT (see Table 4.7). The reviewed studies either list pedagogical implications or use voice teachers as subjects in the studies. Interestingly, this area contains the highest percentage of studies on PM genres where comparisons to classical singing are not included. This might indicate that approaching PM singing through so-called hard sciences has been perceived as the most effective way to legitimize PM singing academically. A quarter of this literature consists of specific studies in commercial voice training methods, such as Complete Vocal Technique (CVT) or Estill Voice Training (EVT). While voice science studies are important for increasing the understanding of the singing voice, some of the studies seem to mainly seek to legitimize existing methods through curated research, which could be seen as problematic.

The most distinct features of the publications in this key area were that all but one were peer-reviewed articles, published mainly in the *Journal of Voice*, and that they contained the most geographical variation. Part of the studies examined the physiological or acoustic features of a phonation type or a technique such as belting, twang or extreme vocal effects. Other studies

approached singing through interpretation or specific musical genres. This area even included studies on the effectiveness of vocal warm-up exercises and forms of voice therapy.

### *7. Health and Well-being*

The development of technology has increased the general understanding of voice problems. This has led to more research on vocal health, and several peer-reviewed studies on PM singing were identified (see Table 4.8). Some of the literature still seems to carry remnants of previous attitudes on the dangers of PM singing, and readily associates PM genres with a lack of training and voice problems. In some cases, PM is even linked with poor lifestyle choices, the consequences of which voice teachers must communicate to their students. However, the voice teacher's role in supporting students' vocal and even mental well-being was well addressed in the literature. Interestingly, only one of the articles considered the voice teachers' well-being, in this case hearing loss.

### Gaps Identified in the Scholarly Literature

Before moving on to our discussion, we would like to shed light on some gaps identified in the scholarly literature. Systematic reviews, traditionally associated with medical fields, have been gaining more ground in the social sciences, especially in education ([Zawacki-Richter 2020](#)), and have been considered important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, such summaries provide educators with an insight into a large body of 'evidence', and secondly, pointing out gaps in the existing literature may encourage further research in these areas ([Coverdale et al. 2017](#)). As noted by [Danielsen and Johansen \(2012\)](#), music teachers use a variety of different kinds of knowledge, not just scholarly verified knowledge, which is one reason for also including educational books in our review. Topical comparisons between the educational and scholarly literature revealed some gaps in the scholarly contributions, discussed in the following.

Despite a few exceptions, there was generally little empirical research on voice teachers who work with PM genres, their working conditions, or work opportunities. When it comes to, for example, entrepreneurship, the scholarly literature focused on singers, whereas voice teachers' entrepreneurship was regarded only indirectly. Also, although the literature included a few reports on PM performance programmes and voice teachers' work on a tertiary level, empirical studies of current PM voice teacher training programmes were notably lacking. Furthermore, even though the need for so-called 'evidence-based' practices was expressed, we did not identify studies on how these kinds of practices or training in voice science are implemented in practice. The reviewed scholarly literature only occasionally addressed topics of equality, diversity, and inclusion in VT. Furthermore, except for a few studies, there was little empirical research on voice students' experiences of VT. Considering the specificities of teaching PM singers, topics such as studio work or industry standards were discussed by several authors, but the pedagogical implications were only briefly touched upon. In sum, there was a notable paucity of empirical research on the specificities of PMVT and related teacher training.

## Discussion

In this section we will first discuss the findings in relation to the review questions, and then proceed to consider some other emerging observations. Our first question addressed how PMVT was regarded in the reviewed literature. We divided the literature into four so-called dispositions during the mapping process. Generally, PMVT was either discussed independently (disposition 1) or in relation to a general VT discipline (disposition 2). It was also sometimes viewed as part of a larger field of instrument teaching (disposition 4), in which case one of the first two dispositions was included in this view. The literature also regarded the field of VT as serving different stakeholders and responding to external demands from students, the music industry, voice science and medical professions (disposition 3).

It is important to note that the identified dispositions are not necessarily unrelated, but reflect the cultures and discourses in which they were produced. They also represent the various purposes of the texts and agendas of the authors; some authors have even contributed to several of the dispositions. Moreover, it should be noted that our fourth disposition, which places voice teachers in an institutionalized setting together with teachers of other instruments, was underrepresented in this review. It is likely that the search terms and strategy did not reach all of the available literature on instrument pedagogy that mentions PM voice.

The second review question addressed the key areas and topics of the literature. We divided the reviewed literature into seven key areas, 33 topics and an additional 96 subtopics. A summary of the areas and topics is listed below.

1. Literature discussing the VT discipline. PMVT was either viewed as the main interest in the publication or as incorporated into a more general voice education literature. The subtopics included different kinds of VT practices and descriptions of the development of the discipline(s).
2. Literature on VT and teacher training in HME focusing on curriculum.
3. Singing guidebooks, including both general and specialized knowledge of PM genres, with implications for VT practices.
4. Literature suggesting a variety of pedagogical methods and tools for VT, including knowledge about different aspects of teaching PM singing, such as improvisation, repertoire, exercises and technological tools. The topics also included, for example, curricula, pedagogical issues and entrepreneurship.
5. Literature on topics related to changes in the voice, the special needs of certain voice user groups, and students' expectations of VT.
6. Voice science literature investigating vocalization from the perspective of genre, voice training methods, singing techniques and function.

7. Literature on health and well-being, including notions on voice teachers' own health and their role in students' health and well-being.

Reflecting on the topics covered by the reviewed literature, again, the disposition and employment context of the author seems relevant. It could be hypothesized that much of the so-called scholarly literature has been written by authors holding positions in higher education institutions, reflecting on those practices. Therefore, scholarly literature on, for example, private studio teachers' work was not extensively covered. It is thus important to point out that the findings from this review would have looked quite different without the inclusion of educational books. The practice-based literature covered much of the literature gaps, including for example genre-specific styles, teachers' entrepreneurship, as well as children and beginners as students.

Another observation has to do with our chosen method of systematic mapping. Traditional literature reviews have been criticized for easily resulting in one-sided and vague results that disregard all available literature on a given topic ([Santos et al. 2007](#)). When conducting the manual reference list checks as part of the screening process in this mapping review, we noticed that much of the reviewed scholarly VT literature referred to the same pool of, often non-peer-reviewed, literature published in disciplinary journals. Thus, the ongoing discussions on 'evidence-based' VT might benefit from a closer inspection of what kind of knowledge is credited as scientific 'evidence' and on what grounds. By the same token, as the actual scientific value of the peer-reviewed literature in the map ([Appendix 2](#)) was not assessed, a critical stance is required of the reader.

The English-language bias was evident in the reviewed literature; for example, half of the reviewed literature originated from the United States and a fifth from Australia. The inclusion of Finnish and Swedish searches balanced out some of the English-language bias, uncovering especially country-specific educational literature. All educational contexts reflect

the values of the surrounding society, meaning that things that are considered essential in a certain context may appear less meaningful in others. The different geographical emphases in the reviewed scholarly literature included, for example, an Australian interest in the PM job market and entrepreneurship, an emphasis on musical theatre in the United States, and a European and South American concern with voice science. It is also worth highlighting that voice teachers working in academia face different requirements from their employers in terms of the number of scholarly articles to be published yearly.

Related to the language bias, it may be worth considering the influence of the possible gatekeeper or ‘tastekeeper’ ([Dyndahl et al. 2017](#): 449) practices of academia. Should a voice teacher specialized in PM genres hold a master’s degree and thus be eligible for doctoral studies, the strict time frames for conducting such studies might limit the student’s possibilities or motivation to publish their work in languages other than their native language. Their research may also be steered towards other disciplines based on senior researchers’ interests, such as school music education, instrument pedagogy, musicology or acoustics. To summarize, although the mapped literature represents countries from around the world, drawing condensed conclusions on how PMVT is approached in each country or continent is not feasible based on English-language or scholarly publications only.

When reflecting over the ‘waves’ of literature on PM singing, discussed earlier in the text, the three suggested waves were perceivable in the reviewed literature. For example, musical theatre singing and repertoire as well as ‘belting’ have been covered in relation to western classical singing by many doctoral dissertations from the United States. This kind of literature usually considers PM singing through a canonized lens of classical voice pedagogy (see [Parkinson and Smith 2015](#)). The ‘separate pedagogies’ discourse is present in most of the literature that discusses institutionalized contexts of PMVT. It could be argued that in some cases institutionalization may have created a certain barrier to progress, as even the voice

teachers who mostly focus on teaching PM genres get stuck in a ‘not-one-size-fits-all’ discourse, repeating mantras about the differences between PM and classical singing. Having said that, the so-called third-wave literature was well represented in this review, especially in the educational books and research articles on vocal function, often linked to certain commercial singing methods. Thus, in many contexts there seems to be a gap between the institutionalized and independent practitioners’ interests in terms of disciplinary knowledge. Nevertheless, the increase in interdisciplinarity, ongoing advances in research, and the growing number of knowledgeable professionals with their own specific interests and expertise are constantly expanding the scope and depth of existing knowledge structures. An interesting question in the future may be where to draw the line between so-called core knowledge and specialized knowledge, and on whose terms.

## Conclusion

This systematic mapping review examined the dispositions, key areas and topics in scholarly and educational literature on PMVT published in 2014–20. The review included literature from all continents, but due to an English-language bias it mostly represented an Anglo-American perspective to teaching PM voice. The inclusion of Finnish and Swedish in the search process informed the findings somewhat, but more studies highlighting the non-English contexts would widen the understanding of the different dispositions through which the field is regarded. A more in-depth assessment of the scientific value of the mapped scholarly literature was outside the scope of this mapping project but would greatly benefit the field.

This review serves as a tool for voice teachers and researchers alike. It provides ample possibilities for conducting future studies and meta-analyses on individual topics, certain statistical elements such as the gender of the authors, or even comparing the outcomes of educational and scholarly literature. With the progressively increasing amount of literature and

the growing number of disciplines that inform VT, the question of what can and should be considered generalist and specialist knowledge for voice teachers necessarily arises. The literature displays tendencies of regarding PMVT both as its own independent line of work and as a subfield incorporated into the larger VT field. This dichotomy should be better acknowledged when considering the professional development of individual practitioners and practices.

### Supplemental Material

The map of literature including Tables 4.1–4.8 ([Appendix 2](#)), the related reference list of the reviewed literature ([Appendix 3](#)), as well as the document encompassing a detailed description of the search strategy and review process ([Appendix 1](#)) are available at Zenodo (see [Keskinen and Juntunen 2024](#)).

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## Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included as supplemental material; further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Endnotes

1. We use the term of *voice teaching* (VT) instead of *voice pedagogy* to refer to the whole field of teaching voice, including not only pedagogical decisions, actions, and the teacher-student relationship, but also professional development and the overall development of the profession.
2. To link this article with the established field of popular music education research, the term ‘popular music’ (PM) is used. This umbrella term includes, e.g., pop, rock, soul, R&B, country and western, hip hop and rap, funk and in some cases jazz, musical theatre, folk and world music. Typical alternative terms in the Anglo-American context of VT also include ‘contemporary commercial music’ (CCM; [LoVetri 2008](#)), ‘popular culture musics’ (PCM; [Hughes 2010](#)) or an English translation of the Nordic term ‘rhythmic music’ or ‘pop/jazz’ ([Mesiä 2019](#)).
3. ‘Disposition’ is used here in the sense of an inclination or a particular way of regarding things due to cultural and contextual factors.
4. Berklee College of Music (MA, USA), which focuses on ‘contemporary’ styles, was founded already in 1945.

5. 44,1 per cent of the literature was co-written by more than one author, of which 78.2 per cent were co-written with authors of the same country of origin.

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