Creative Synergy: Using Community Theatre and Appreciative Inquiry for Young People's Critical Participation in

HIV Prevention and Education

Gerrit U. Maritz (MA) and Marié-Heleen Coetzee (DTech)

Drama Department

University of Pretoria

Author Note

Gerrit U. Maritz and Marié-Heleen Coetzee, Drama Department, University of Pretoria.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Marié-Heleen Coetzee,

Department of Drama, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0001 E-mail: marie-heleen.coetzee@up.ac.za and

marieheleen.coetzee@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper positions Community Theatre as an agency for development and education based on the educational principles of Freire and Boal's Theatre for Development. The paper argues that Appreciative Inquiry can enrich the practice of Community Theatre by approaching HIV and AIDS education as an *asset-based,* participatory, inclusive, learner-centred approach. The paper hypothesises that the infusion of the 4-D process of Appreciative Inquiry into Community Theatre processes aimed at HIV and AIDS education will enhance young people's agency as active participants and agents of change in their communities beyond the didactic notions inherent in ABC education approaches to HIV prevention. The paper argues that this approach can encourage meaningful participation and critical consciousness amongst young people in the HIV prevention response.

This paper presents a theoretical exploration of the ways in which Appreciative Inquiry can enrich the practice of Community Theatre when used in HIV and AIDS education as a tool for developing critical consciousness and meaningful participation among young people[1] in a development[2] context.

Over the past twenty years HIV and AIDS has challenged the foundations of every social, economic, religious, cultural and political structure in South Africa. From early responses to HIV and AIDS as a bio-medical issue (Fourie 2006:58) fraught with discourses around blood and semen, sex and drugs, and morality and retribution (Plummer, 1995: 255) to behaviour change programmes, social mobilisation, information, education and communication, South Africa took a targeted approach to young people[3] who could change the growth of the epidemic if educated around sexual behaviour and if individuals are empowered to make 'safe' decisions regarding sexual activity (Parker, 2004b:1).

These prevention programmes mostly followed the didactic ABC–approach of abstinence, 'being faithful' to one partner and using condoms; and have been widely criticised for their exclusivity and lack of adaptability to local contexts (Collins, Coates & Curran, 2008). HIV prevention programmes (including those using theatre as education/communication conduit) were/are framed according to immediate risk profiles of young people that need to be corrected, foregrounding information dissemination, individual behaviour change and positive health behaviours. Further, individuals were/are often positioned as the drivers of the epidemic and there was/is little encouragement to engage with the epidemic beyond risk behaviours.

Although there has been a shift towards participatory and peer-driven programmes that conceptualise sexuality as a "socially negotiated phenomenon" in HIV and AIDS education (Cambell and MacPhail, 2002:5), such programmes still seem to favour a *problem-based approach* to understanding risk, and the impact of HIV and AIDS. It is no different in programmes using theatre (Glik, *et al*, 2002:46).

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[1] The World Health Organisation (WHO) definition for young people applies and refers to a combination of youth and adolescents, namely the age group 10–24. The WHO considers adolescence to be between the ages of 10 and 19 and youth between the ages of 15 and 24. (WHO, 2006:1).

[2] Human development, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is: "… first and foremost about allowing people to lead a life that they value and enabling them to realize their full potential as human beings" (UNDP, 2006:5). Development takes into consideration all aspects of an individual's well-being which includes their health status, educational achievement and access, and economic and political freedom (Soubbotina & Sheram, 2000).

[3] As reflected in the SA National Strategic Plan (2007).

Problem-based approaches often position the educational programme within the authority of the 'outsider' as the expert depositing information in others' lives and positions young people as contributors to HIV and AIDS statistics, not as contributors of knowledge and information. This may lead to the learning experience becoming isolated and not transferable to the real life situations or to social constructs that may increase risk. In addition, the generalising of assumptions of risk, and homogenising of target audiences (Parker, 2004a) seldom takes into account contextual differences or already appropriate behaviours and practices. Research indicates that young people can easily indicate the problems and challenges that promote vulnerability but not necessarily the assets that may mitigate risk (LoveLife, 2008), thus pointing to the need for a shift in paradigm from a *problem-based to an asset-based approach* in HIV and AIDS programmes.

Peer and Participatory Programmes

The South African National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS (2007) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education has identified the need to strengthen and develop participatory programmes to protect the health of young people amid the HIV and AIDS epidemic (UNESCO, 2009:15), focussing on prevention as a priority area and young people as a specific target group. The *meaningful participation*[4] of young people in educational, development and prevention programmes is central to their own and their community's development (Cook-Sather, 2002:3).

When young people (as community members) are involved in identifying solutions to problems they are more likely to remain committed to implementing actions that may result from the process (Collins & Rau: 2000, 25,26). Further, the risk of imposing inappropriate development strategies is lessened if local knowledge and understanding is tapped into. Long before these reports, the work of Freire (1985, 1996) and Boal (1996, 2000, 2006) proposed the involvement of people, including young people, in educational attempts that encourages personal and social transformation.

We would argue that the South African context positions HIV prevention and education in a development paradigm and demonstrates the need for educational programmes that can enable young people to become

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[4] The process of engaging young people as partners for the purposes of strengthening their commitment to education, community and democracy and that it continuously acknowledges the diversity of young people (students) by validating and authorising them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge and experiences throughout education in order to improve their communities (Fletcher, 2005:7).

constructive and critical citizens - meaningfully participating in community and social development - positioning young people as *assets* with knowledge of the social identities and structures that promote their vulnerability, rather than as at-risk statistics.

The question arises as to what an appropriate, asset-based approach to peer education through theatre that allows for meaningful participation and a contextualised understanding of HIV and AIDS could be? This paper will argue that the organisational development tool, Appreciative Inquiry located within Community Theatre practices that has Freire and Boal at its roots, is such an approach.

Community Theatre

Although we are aware of the debates surrounding the names and terminology when using theatre for educational and development purposes, as well as the term 'community'[5] *per se*, our use of 'community theatre' for the purposes of this paper is as follows: a "participant-driven participatory and hybrid mode of theatrical engagement" (Conrad, 2004:4) that is locally relevant, socially engaged, socially critical, socially reflective, promotes culturally appropriate modes of expression and is devised in relation to particular communities to contribute to the social and cultural capital of that community -mobilizing personal and collective stories towards a change agenda [6].

Community theatre's reliance on participation, community realities and the collective stories and values of the community holds strong linkages to the work of the pedagogue Paulo Freire and theatre practitioner Augusto Boal in relation to dialogue, conscientisation and praxis[7], as well as the asset based approach of Appreciative Inquiry. Although the connections between the work of Freire and Boal are often acknowledged

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[5] Following Anderson (1991:6-7), 'community' can range from a geographical, temporal and spatial entity to a conceptual and cultural unit, that is maintained by and constituted through, narrative. Imaginings of homogenous and unified communities present binaries of belonging around inclusion and exclusion. For the purposes of this article, 'community' is seen as a "symbolic construct" around which stories of collective identity and collective repositories of meaning is created.

[6] The current focus on community-based participatory research on HIV and AIDS highlight the need for partnership building and power-sharing between researchers and communities, thus highlighting the need to remove 'outsider-driven' interventions and knowledge building (Rhodes, Malow & Jolly, 2008; 2010). Whilst a community-based participatory research approach may assist in identifying *needs and priorities* in a community, it does not necessarily identify or explore the *assets within communities* that move beyond priority setting and a 'shopping list' of needs that has to be negotiated within existing structures to address these issues

[7] The work of pedagogue Paulo Freire and theatre practitioner Augusto Boal is rooted in the education movement of the 1960s and 1970s**.**

(Epskamp 2006:12), they have not been explicitly articulated or linked to asset-based approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry as proposed in this paper[8]. Freire and Boal's work have been used across the world as participatory tools in building democracy and analysing social challenges to transforming reality through direct action (Singhal 2004:152) and for us, form the cornerstones of our understanding of Community Theatre. Neither Freire nor Boal necessarily consider asset-based approaches to issues being addressed, but does consider, the asset of the knowledge, experience and participation of community members. It is in this regard Appreciative Inquiry can contribute to Community Theatre practice.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is an organisational development tool used to manage change imperatives or transformation processes in the corporate sector. It is increasingly used by development agencies for community development initiatives (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003:27; Morsillo & Fisher, 2007). At its core, Appreciative Inquiry is a search for potential and a means of creating positive transformation within an organisation. It does not simply focus on problem areas to be changed, but looks at what the best in a current situation is, and what it might be, to "help ignite the collective imagination" (Watkins & Mohr, 2001:14) and mobilize for change. The organisation, as a community, is seen as a rhizome of "connections of life-giving potentials: relationships, partnerships, alliances and ever expanding webs of knowledge and action", beliefs and systems that harnesses the power of the collective and optimizes human functioning (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005:1 & 5).

Dialogues among people within organisations and communities shape their realities and collectively shape images of the future (Watkins & Mohr, 2001:28). By asking positive questions that conjures images of structures, systems or even moments that were deemed positive, anticipatory images are created through dialogue and thus begins the positive inquiry that may lead to further positive images . This is based on the *heliotropic hypothesis* that people *move* towards positive images (Watkins & Mohr, 2005:29), that narrating the future is self-fulfilling (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003:75) and is achieved through the 4-D cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny).

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[8] Although oral and practical evidence suggests otherwise (Kidd, 2008; Samba 2009), available printed sources seem to suggest that Appreciative Inquiry has not yet been applied to Community Theatre practice.

In the *discovery phase* participants discover what gives life to the community when it is functioning at its best, placing value on the 'positive' and to affirming that as instrumental to change. *Dreaming* becomes the stage where the positive image is realised as a definite possibility and passion to achieve the image(s) is stirred. In the *Design* stage participants are encouraged to share exciting discoveries and possibilities so as to build a common vision of what is desired and undertake to give way to a collective will. The *Destiny* phase constructs the future through innovation and action.

Each phase offers the opportunity for critical reflection and is the motivation or catalyst for the next phase. Once new understanding and visions of the future have been created, the process can be continued to discover new opportunities for change, building on the new understanding and vision created. The 4-D cycle holds implicit linkages to the principles and processes proposed by Freire and Boal in education and theatre.

Foundations for Meaningful participation through Boal and Freire.

The meaningful participation of young people refers to young people's ability to democratically participate in the development process. This does not mean that young people simply choose a play or performance or the topic for such a performance, they need to be actively involved as actors, directors and scriptwriters throughout the process. The four Freirian principles of dialogue, praxis, conscientisation and experience, as well as the Boalian notions of Knowing the Body, Making the Body Expressive, the Theatre as Language and the Theatre as Discourse, provide guiding principles for framing Community Theatre in the HIV and AIDS response for young people and form the cornerstones for the infusion of the Appreciative Inquiry approach into Community Theatre. The development of a new Community Theatre performance by the young people themselves allows for the production of an original group generated piece.

Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire proposes that cultural power, as a form of human production, "are intimately connected with the structuring of different social formations and it is this very culture that assists human agents to transform society" (Freire 1985:xxi). We argue that it is particularly Freire's notion of cultural power, embedded in the educational principles mentioned above, that holds many similarities to Appreciative Inquiry.. Freire, however, also recognises the hegemonic implications of culture that legitimise and perpetuate dominant and oppressive cultural values. Freire (2005: 39) proposes that education should work towards the

principle of critical consciousness (*conscientização*) of such hegemonic implications and a critical awareness of social, political and economic realities so as to take informed action.

Freire's principle of *dialogue* holds that a democratic and dialogical interaction between educator and learner allows participants to interrogate and reflect on, and re-imagine experiences, concerns and perspectives collectively in order to transform personal and social reality, rather than positioning learners as empty vessels wherein educators 'deposit' educational matter through the ritualistic educational pedagogy of information dissemination and memorisation (similar to many HIV prevention programmes) - the "banking method" of education (Freire 1996:53). This foundation of communal engagement and dialogue that embeds the critical learning imperative of Freire's pedagogy and offers a "language of possibility" (Freire 1985: xii–xiii) as development tools that and find a strong connection with Appreciative Inquiry and Community Theatre.

Praxis refers to the process of creating/negotiating/applying knowledge through experience and informed action in the context of socio-cultural values (Freire 1996:81) with the intention to change these. Dialogue, praxis and conscientisation actively engages with the lived realities and cultural power embedded in learners' social reality - positioning the lived *experience* as *knowledge* in the above context (Freire 2006:75). Freire's pedagogy aims to shift learners from an object-status (acted upon) to a subject-status (act upon their knowledge). This enhances agency to act upon, transform and create new possibilities for their world(s).

Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal similarly aims to empower people through theatre to become aware of oppressive contexts so that they can change it collectively. For us, Boal provides a method to Freire's pedagogy. Boal does not position theatre as the agent of change but as the agency through which change may be experienced (Boal 2000:122, 138). Boal transposed Freire's call for dialogical education and participatory interaction to theatre by introducing the notion of the 'spect-actor' who partakes in and watches the theatrical event simultaneously (Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman 2006:3). The spect-actor subverts the hierarchy between performer and audience, shifting the audience members from object-status to a subject-status. Freire's notion of the "language of possibility" (Freire 1985: xii–xiii) is also visible in what Boal (2000:131) refers to as *Theatre as Language*, where telling or re-enacting a real-life situation creates the opportunity for change. It is essentially the capacity that human beings have to observe themselves in action and being able to change those actions that resonates with Freire's notions of critical consciousness and reflection. As with Freire's consideration of praxis and

the desire to change oppressive situations, it is people's perceptions of how their reality is influencing their future that creates a powerful image of change (*heliotropic principle*).

Knowing the Body is an experiential, embodied process similar to conscientisation where participants are made aware of their own bodies, their bodily possibilities and deconstruct the ways in which their bodies have internalised and embodied internal and external oppressors (Boal, 2000:126) . This contributes to shifting subject-object relationships and destroy internalized opinion that blocks authentic and critical thinking.

Making the Body Expressive (Boal 2000:130) elaborates on Freire's principle of dialogue in that it allows for words, thoughts and emotions to be expressed through the body and requires physical participation and action from participants. We see this as 'praxis-in-practice', where the process of conscientisation takes an active, embodied form towards praxis; a rehearsal for change.

Theatre as Discourse centres on the continuous critique and reflection on personal or community realities and a continual emphasis on multiple interpretations (Babbage, 2004:61), This process facilitates the remaking and un-making of the subject/object dichotomy that underscores the transformative potential Boal's work. Thus, Boal adds aesthetic reflexivity to Freire's notion of reflection.

Although work of both Freire and Boal have invited criticism, they challenged traditional social, theatre and educational theories that promoted passive engagement of individuals in education, political and development initiatives.
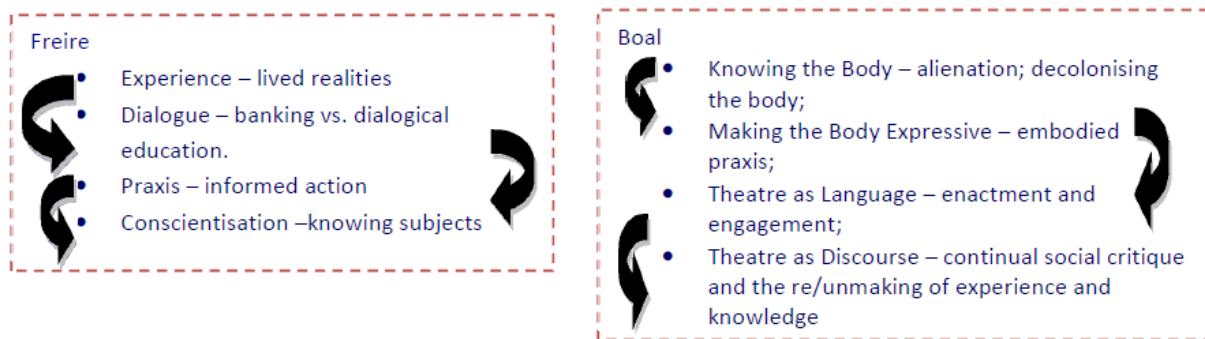

FIGURE 1: The overlapping principles of Freire's educational approach and Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed.

Creating Synergy through Appreciative Inquiry

We will now discuss the ways in which Appreciative Inquiry can promote dialogue, reflection and action, critical consciousness and meaningful participation of young people in the HIV and AIDS response in a Community Theatre context. Building on Freire's notion of critical consciousness, the Discovery phase highlights the potential to move HIV prevention beyond didactic notions of risk behaviour inherent in HIV and AIDS education and to open up a critical inquiry into HIV and AIDS to broaden the social, cultural, political and economic determinants of risk behaviour. In order for the Discovery phase to achieve progress towards conscientisation as proposed by Freire, this phase needs to promote dialogue through Boal's stage of Knowing the Body interwoven with the stages of Making the Body expressive and Theatre as Language. This is done by engaging young people in dialogue and embodied performative action about what it is in their lives that they feel good about, what they have the ability to control and making the conscious choice to inquire as to the life-giving forces in their communities and positive moments that moved participants emotionally.

Critical dialogue, based on Socratic Questioning[9] (resonating with Freirian dialogue and conscientization) positioned against an asset-based approach, allows for the discovery into the positive to be challenged in terms of the realities of the young people. The dialogue centres on interrogating strengths and assets rather than failures and challenges. For example, questions about young people's abilities directly related to risk could open up discussions around HIV and AIDS. In practice this would imply rather than telling young people that multiple concurrent partnerships are putting them at risk of HIV and that this requires the remedy of faithfulness to one partner, first conduct an inquiry into the nature of relationships and why young people feel good about relationships or being in relationships, the issues around multiple concurrent relationships and why they are taking place and putting young people at risk, which emphasises personal resources and opens up the learning experience beyond a simple problem–remedy paradigm. Young people can narrate the high points in their relationship experiences and draw on that to identify achievements, insights and inspirational moments in those experiences. That in turn fosters positive emotional experiences and positive possibilities in a relational and generative space.

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[9] In essence, the Socratic dialogue is a commitment to inquiry, to further learning and discovering rather than accepting the truth as it is perceived (Romney 2005:4).

Put into action, facilitators can engage young people in Boalian exercises (such as Forum theatre[10]) that allows them to unpack such key moments, highlights their strengths and allows for the possibility of changing existing structures or notions (such as masculinity or the interconnectedness of social networks), participants can discover the relationship between social, cultural, political and economic factors and risk behaviour and the focus on the assets they have – both individual and communal. By merging this with Knowing the Body, the learning process takes on a physical dimension that promotes participation and creativity whilst building on notions of critical consciousness. Young people may consider their social networks, friends or families as strengths that promote their ability to receive an education, learn from each other or that keep them safe and reflect on stories that highlight these strengths or abilities. Practically, young people can engage with images of reality *vs*. the reality of images. They can then be requested to enact and embody these strengths and, by using techniques such as Image Theatre[11], other participants can interrogate these images and make them stronger. Embodiment creates images that can stimulate the heliotropic principle. The Discovery phase further brings together the imperatives of participation and dialogue and the impetus to move participants from being spectators in the learning process to spect-actors who are able to make inputs into the process and change the outcome of the narrative/performance.

The second phase of Appreciative Inquiry, the Dream phase allows the Community Theatre process to frame the power of the positive image based on the discoveries made in phase one. Having established their strengths and embodying these, collective strengths can now be used to develop collective images and narratives of what their world could be like. It takes the shared experiences and consciousness that was raised among young people one step further, it creates the link between HIV and AIDS and their future, where it allows them the opportunity to possibly imagine a future free of HIV and AIDS or where they are able to manage the impact of HIV and AIDS on their communities (again supporting the heliotropic principle). Embodying, 'storying' and 're-storying' possibilities and the future can build confidence in their knowledge and their ability to effect change. Through spect-acting, participants can re-evaluate experiences, thus looking at these experiences as if the 'self' becomes

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[10] In Forum Theatre the Joker performs a play about an identified challenge with no solution. The play is then performed a second time and here the spect-actors have the opportunity to decisively intervene in the performance and change it. Boal (2000:141) asserts that whilst it is not theatre's place to illustrate what could be considered the correct course of action, it can offer a means by which all possible actions may be explored and considered. Through this process real action becomes possible because the spect-actor is left with a sense of incompleteness that can only be addressed once real action is taken or, in other words, they act on these challenges in real life (Boal 2000:142).
[11] Image theatre is the exploration of abstract concepts such as emotions and relationships (and real situations) through the creation of still images. Participants use their own bodies to 'sculpt' or express attitudes and emotions (Boal, 2006b: 15)

'another'. Embodied storying/re-storying allows for distance from the experience - allowing experiences to be seen and critiqued in new ways (aesthetic reflexivity) and create a concrete, tangible image of the future. Participants thus literally enter, enact and symbolically live and experience the futures they envision and create, rather than merely thinking about it. This again relates closely to Boal's notion of a rehearsal for change. In practise this will emphasize the leadership position of young people and allow them to imagine and enact a time and space where HIV and AIDS may no longer be a challenge, or where they, as young people, have the ability to change the course of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. This will allow young people the opportunity to reflect and act on this knowledge through their critical consciousness and enact scenarios of change reflected heliotropically against the perceived reality. Through the theatre-based techniques related to Boal's Making the Body Expressive, it allows them the opportunity to engage with the language of possibility, moving away from traditional HIV and AIDS education programmes that outline negative scenarios.

For example, when young people have grounded their learning on HIV and AIDS from an asset-based approach and engaged in exercises where their bodies have been used to explore not only theatrical techniques but also constructs of risk, they can now reflect and act on the stories and issues identified and elaborated on in the first phase. They can move to playing with these stories and images of masculinity for example and portray images of masculinity through Image Theatre and Forum Theatre that in an ideal world would not promote risk. In this way, images representing participants' and their contexts' optimal potential can be created, selected, embodied and interrogated. By highlighting and illustrating these ideal images, dialogue on what the steps are to achieving these ideal images will further support dialogue and the inquiry into change and what is needed for change. This identification of what is needed for change, what systemic or cultural change may need to occur for change to happen, is what Watkins and Mohr (2002:14) refer to as the art, in Appreciative Inquiry, of asking questions that strengthen the capacity of a community to comprehend and anticipate potential.

Phase three, the Design phase, becomes the actual rehearsal for change, where young people bring together their discoveries and their dreams to develop theatre-based communication strategies on HIV and AIDS that addresses their specific community context with themes based on what they consider to be real and relevant to them and their communities –and act on it. The language of possibility becomes the theatre of possibility that they are able to share with their communities and peers and the phase where praxis occurs – the reflection

becomes the action. This phase holds specific relevance to the heliotropic principle (Bushe 1998:3). The Design phase also captures what Freire refers to as the "language of possibility" and what Boal refers to as "theatre as language" where the ability of theatre to reflect the everyday lives of young people becomes the source of dramatic learning based on the knowledge and experience of young people. As Boal mentions, although the theatrical techniques may be fictitious, the experience is concrete and this may be the tool that would assist in contextualising HIV and AIDS for young people beyond sex education towards a development issue (Boal, 2000:141).

The purpose of the Design phase is to develop a set of propositions in which the positive core of their abilities and strengths are highlighted and illustrated. In the context of this paper this will imply that young people are now designing interactive programmes for themselves and their peers that bring across the assets they have discovered in themselves and their communities that mitigate risk to HIV and AIDS and propose solutions to the challenges of risk reduction for young people. The participation of young people in dialogue on social systems that create vulnerability based on their own knowledge and understanding and the simultaneous theatrical techniques that promote critical learning around HIV and AIDS assumes that the content of the programme they will develop will be framed in the realities of their peers and as such will be an appropriate reflection of the challenges young people face in relation to vulnerability. Again, Community Theatre holds potential for bringing these images to life creatively through its active involvement of young people in portraying their strengths and realities through theatre-based techniques.

During this phase, in practice, young people collectively agree on the themes that emerged from the previous two phases in relation to themselves, their community and HIV and AIDS, again moving away from an external notion or agenda on what the major risks are for young people, and creating the space where risk is negotiated by the young people themselves and put into a perspective that applies to their social reality. For example, there could be the argument that young people may not consider high-risk sexual activities such as multiple concurrent partnerships or refusal to use condoms as significant to them and as such not reflect these in their performance. In the context of applying Appreciative Inquiry, the Joker system can be used by the facilitator to interrogate the themes and content as developed and proposed by the young people as would be done in Forum Theatre. Where young people develop images or scenarios that do not reflect factual information on HIV

and AIDS, the facilitator should be able to guide the young people through a process of active and relational reflection based on facts that would allow them to approach the scenarios differently. The Joker system becomes a way to guide the learning process. The system is, however, not for the exclusive use of the facilitator and the Design phase offers the opportunity for young people to become familiar with this system where Socratic Questioning will challenge not only their own, but also their peers' interpretation of risk and solutions as portrayed in their theatre programme. The skill of learning Socratic Questioning, as positioned by Freire and Boal, will stimulate the development of a critical consciousness that allows young people to move beyond the acceptance of HIV and AIDS information as one-dimensional prescriptive remedies for risk. This kind of questioning and consciousness is not located in practices or languages that require participants to identify failures and challenges – languages that speak to negative emotional states, the breakdown of relationships and self-criticism – but in languages of possibility, affirmation and growth.

The final phase, the Destiny phase, becomes a series of actions through the performance of the play that supports on-going learning and innovation or 'what will be', as explained by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003: 9) in the context of organisational development. It takes the internal and group-focused learning that leads to praxis one step further, allowing for the opportunity to further act on the positive images that were created by sharing them with others. It also holds the opportunity to share these experiences with stakeholders that can enact further change.

The Community Theatre/Appreciate Inquiry process asserts Collins and Rau's (2000: 25, 26) view that young people become the most important resource for social mobilisation when they have gone through their own social mobilisation experience. Practically, young people may now proceed to engage as agents of the mobilisation process by engaging other young people in similar processes or by presenting their performance to their peers. The participants now need to move beyond the confines of the group and seek out and connect with structures that will be able to guide and support the implementation of the programme and offer other support services for their peers in order to link the messages and information they provide to actual services and support structures. Some may be present in the community already (such as voluntary counselling and testing services or support groups for young people living with HIV and AIDS) or some may need to be created or strengthened (access to

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education or anti-retroviral medication). Here young people could also consider electing a group of advisors which could consist of key local stakeholders that could support the implementation of the project and ensure that there is a supportive environment for its implementation. This can be linked to the democratisation of education and participation as positioned by Freire and Boal, where young people are free to negotiate participation and involvement with key authorities.

Building on the appreciative and asset base, young people may now dialogue and enact provocative suggestions to community members seen as being able to influence change at a higher level. This can be linked to the democratisation of education and participation as positioned by Freire and Boal. Since Appreciative Inquiry focus on potential, it could mark a shift in the manner in which HIV and AIDS theatre programmes are traditionally produced, as well as a change in approach, content and outcome. This is done by highlighting the 'life-giving' forces (the positive contributions, events or structures that are celebrated and contribute to a sense of well-being in the community) of the organisation (the community) that may produce a heightened sense of purpose and ultimately contribute to improved communication and understanding of how change is possible within current community realities.

Appreciative Inquiry allows participants an opportunity to reflect on the reality of their situation, unpack reality as a social construct and engage with the possibility of changing the status quo. Through the discovery and dream process it has the ability to unleash creative energy within participants. This learner-orientated approach allows for the transformation of young people as objects in HIV and AIDS education to subjects by using their knowledge and experience. Young people are further positioned as agents of change by going through their own social mobilisation campaign to expand their ability as peer educators. The content of negative stereotypical behaviour introduced by many theatre programmes are negated in preference for life-affirming constructive behaviour and experiences of young people that are framed as relevant and appropriate to their culture(s) and context.

The Destiny phase of Appreciative Inquiry is not the end of the learning process. Appreciative Inquiry is a cycle. By putting into action what they have learnt and by visualising this new knowledge and new vision of change

through Community Theatre, young people are now placed as development agents in their community. The initial focus of the development imperative was HIV prevention and, by focusing on HIV and AIDS education, young people have gone beyond learning just about risks behaviours; they have contextualised risk behaviour as socially, economically, politically and culturally determined. They have begun to interrogate structures that promote vulnerability beyond individual risk behaviour and will now be ready to apply these to other issues and challenges. By linking these skills to Community Theatre, theatre becomes a discourse for learning for young people. They can continue to develop new performances based on the skills they acquired and, through the performance, young people will encourage other young people to participate in the change imperative thus further strengthening their agency for social mobilisation.
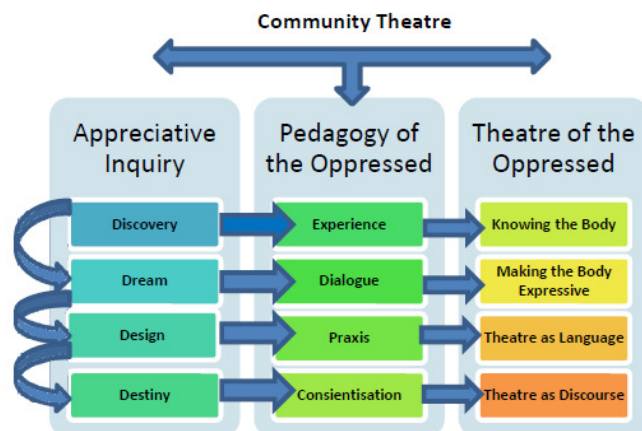

FIGURE 2: Creative Synergy – The Community Theatre/Appreciative Inquiry Model.

Conclusion

This article proposed a theoretical framework for a synergy of approaches in addressing young people's meaningful participation through Community Theatre in the HIV and AIDS response. Consciously fusing principles and approaches from the work of Freire and Boal with Appreciative Inquiry and Community Theatre can promote critical consciousness, participation and the ability to promote images of possibilities and transformation within an asset-based approach. Appreciative Inquiry, Community Theatre, Boal and Freire foreground the intention to discover, deepen understanding and to foster innovation in social organisational arrangements and processes. They assume that people or communities have cultural agency, hold existing experience and knowledge and are

able to enact change based on this knowledge and experience. The strength of the combination of the Boalian, Freirian and Appreciative Inquiry approaches lie in the creative synergy between participants' intellectual, emotional, visceral and kinaesthetic engagement with the topic within a context of positive reinforcement. This synergy of methodologies requires implementation and evaluation in order to test its efficacy.

Appreciative Inquiry offers possibilities for developing a communally aware, integrated, critical, synergistic approach to Community Theatre in the context of HIV and AIDS education. These possibilities stem from the fact that the inquiry invests in human capital, is participatory and inclusive, uses personal and collective stories towards change, is locally relevant and focuses the change imperative beyond the over emphasised individual behaviour change imperative towards a socially mobilised and developmental change imperative. This does not mean that it moves away from the problem-posing theories of Freire and Boal; it rather focuses the inquiry towards the building of new knowledge around positive images and positive realities.

Whilst Appreciative Inquiry appreciates the knowledge that young people may already have of HIV and AIDS, the process also generates new knowledge and new ways of understanding HIV and AIDS in a broader context and allows opportunities to re-imagine their futures and heliotropically move towards positive images. Community Theatre programmes using an Appreciative Inquiry approach in HIV and AIDS education becomes distinctive in that it is critical, yet affirmative and asset-based, relying on the positive core of young people and the positive values they attribute to their communities and their own lives. It uses theatre-based techniques to deepen the learning experience through action and reflection, to embody and critically rehearse praxis and change. Continuous efforts to strengthen educational responses using young people as assets may help to negate the impact of HIV and AIDS on communities and create the desired social mobilisation that could transform societies.

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