

# Exploring the potential of the process drama convention of dramatized poetry to enhance anger-management skills in adolescent girls

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This article investigates the way the methodology of process drama, and specifically the convention of dramatised poetry, can enhance the anger-management skills of adolescent girls. The article presents findings from a recent study that set out to teach anger-management skills to adolescent girls using process drama conventions. The argument explores the notion of process drama propounded by the prominent applied drama scholar Cecily O'Neill (1995) and the applicability of this methodology for stimulating the perception, awareness and identification of various forms of anger as prerequisites to anger management in adolescent girls. As the adolescent girl finds herself at the crossroads of childhood and adulthood, emotions of frustration and anger towards parents and peer groups often surface. It is therefore beneficial for her to be empowered with the insight and skills required to identify and manage her anger. The fictitious world within process drama creates a safe space where sensitive issues can be explored without uncovering personal issues. Poetry is, in many instances, loaded with emotional content and can therefore be used as a vehicle for considering emotional issues that would otherwise not be possible. This article therefore reports on a multidiscipline research project, namely the *dramatisation of poetry*, as a convention of the methodology of *process drama*, to enhance *anger management*, as an *emotional competence* in the 14- to 15-year-old adolescent girl.

**Keywords:** process drama; dramatised poetry; emotional intelligence; anger-management; adolescent girls

This article investigates the way that the methodology of process drama, and specifically the convention of dramatised poetry, can enhance the anger-management skills of adolescent girls. The findings of an empirical case study are explored in order to present examples illustrating the influence of the methodology of process drama on the learning processes associated with teaching emotional competency skills. This is done with specific reference to anger management. Anger management was chosen in tandem with the subject-specific aim of dealing with difficult emotions (South African Department of Education 2003, p. 28). This article outlines the attributes of anger as a strong emotion which holds potentially destructive qualities. Anger affects both the body and the brain by causing various hormones to be secreted. This article reflects on the adolescent development phase in the female and the notion that anger-management skills can be taught based on the research of a variety of scholars, such as Goleman (1998), Mayer and Salovey (1997), Crawford (2007) and Feinstein (2009). Illustrations from the empirical case study will be discussed in order to demonstrate how the conventions of process drama, especially dramatised poetry, can develop the building blocks of anger

management. These building blocks are based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997, p. 10) definition of emotional intelligence, suggesting that perception, awareness and identification of emotions are prerequisites for emotional management.

### **Process drama**

In order to contextualise the empirical study and frame the argument put forward in this article, the notion of process drama - in relation to its broader field, namely applied drama - needs to be framed. Since the 1990s the terms 'applied drama' and 'applied theatre' have been used to refer to, among other approaches, drama in education, theatre in education, process drama, community drama, prison theatre, and theatre in health education. Although there are conceptual, methodological and contextual differences associated with applied drama/theatre, it is perhaps best defined by its collective aims of 'personal and social transformation [rather] than by the various forms it can take' (Conrad 2004, p. 4).

Applied drama is a 'dramatic activity that primarily exists outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions, which [are] specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies' (Nicholson 2005, p. 2). It entails a synergy between drama/theatre-based practices and approaches and participatory theatre (Nicholson 2005, p. 2; Prentki and Preston 2009, p. 2), resulting in a hybrid mode of theatrical engagement that is socially critical and reflective, and aims at involving individuals and communities in identifying collective concerns, analysing challenging conditions and exploring possibilities for communal action or change (Maritz and Coetzee 2012). It is an embodied methodology, calling for experiential and physical involvement in the exploration of, and empathetic engagement with, abstract knowledge in order to foster understanding or learning.

For the purposes of this article, we will explore the notion of process drama, as put forward by the prominent applied drama scholar and practitioner Cecily O'Neill (1995), and its associated methodologies in relation to the broad aims of applied drama. We will also explore the applicability of this methodology for stimulating the perception, awareness and identification of various forms of anger as prerequisites for anger management in adolescent girls. O'Neill based her work on the main tenets of the iconic drama-in-education practitioner, Dorothy Heathcote, and her compatriot Gavin Bolton, to develop a mode of applied drama that would be manageable in educational circumstances for school teachers (O'Toole, Stinson and Moore 2009, p. 103). There is no clear-cut difference between drama in education and process drama, as process drama evolved from the former (O'Toole *et al.* 2009, p. 200). Both refer to a mode of applied drama that encourages learning through drama/drama as a mode of learning and the use of drama as a methodology in an educational context. Process drama is based on the notions of reflective teaching and learning (Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe 2004) and action-reflection interplay (Bolton 1999, 2003; Taylor 2003) to stimulate learning. As such, it is a participatory, learner-centred methodology launching the participants into fictitious realities or 'a dramatic elsewhere' (O'Neill 1995, p. 45) through various conventions, including the conventions primarily used in this research, namely role play, improvisation and dramatised poetry. Placing the participants in parallel realities empowers them to examine situations, problems or issues from various perspectives within the safe parameters of make-believe environments (O'Neill 1995, p. 45).

In practical terms the educator (or participants) suggests a scenario in which the

participants can engage in role play, improvise around the situation or problem and experientially explore possibilities and choices relating to the issues. This, in turn, enables them to reflect on this 'make-believe' world themselves within the 'real world' (O'Neill and Lambert 1990, p. 11). The learning content is thus concerned with 'matters of human significance' (Bowell and Heap 2013, p. 12) - personalising knowledge and fostering a multilayered engagement with the learning content. The 'double consciousness' that is encouraged by suspending disbelief and accepting the 'reality' of the fiction, and the simultaneous immersion in that fiction through role play, allows participants to observe themselves in the fiction, while simultaneously participating in the fiction (Lehmann and Szatkowski 2011, p. 40). This creates a situation where the participant fluctuates between empathetic involvement and a more 'objective' detachment. In so doing, different perspectives on the same dramatic moment are created. Consequently, a learning mode is produced, namely that of the participant-in-role looking from the inside out and, simultaneously, that of the spectator-participant looking from the outside in. This is referred to as 'metaxis' - being in two modes at once - namely that of reality and that of fiction (Bolton 1992). The oscillation between distancing and immersing allows for embodied understanding, critical thought and layered reflection (Munro and Coetzee 2007). Conventions associated with process drama are actively applied to foster metaxis. For the purposes of this article, we selected as the dominant points of engagement in the context of process drama the conventions of dramatised poetry and the creation and performance of rap poetry. Rap poetry is a literary genre with which the young can associate, as confirmed by Kirsch (2011): 'If rap is mainly a genre for and by adolescents, it is largely because its notion of artistic self-assertion is an adolescent one - a fight for status in a closed hierarchy.' These conventions will be further explicated in the discussion on the empirical study below.

The methodology of process drama 'reconstructs' reality within a fictional world in which dramatic conventions can operate as described above. Following from this, the convention of dramatised poetry provides the participants with poetry that imparts: (1) an emotional, subjective depiction of a person's experiences or emotions (the person 'is' the poet or the voice in the poem), as well as; (2) an opportunity to engage with the material by; (3) physically and vocally expressing the images, symbols, emotions and points of view in the poetry.

This article argues that the immediacy and condensed impact of a poem as a multilayered construct of meaning and feeling in a process drama context can enhance emotional competence in young female adolescents. Poetry is often loaded with emotional content and thus serves as a point of departure for discussing emotional issues that would otherwise prove difficult to engage with (Reiter 1997, p. 173). The poem offers a space for discussion and exploration without intruding on the privacy of the participants, on the one hand, while opening up avenues for personal and empathetic identification with a topic, on the other (Boone 2006, p. 2).

This article specifically illuminates the way process drama conventions can engage with learning material related to anger management. Process drama combines different disciplines in one entity, namely the *dramatisation of poetry* as a convention of the methodology of *process drama* to enhance *anger management* as an *emotional competency* in 14- to 15-year-old adolescent females.

## **Emotion and the female adolescent**

In order to select and structure learning material related to anger management effectively, essential aspects of the adolescent developmental phase in females have to be taken into consideration. Adolescent females have strong emotional needs and one of their development tasks is to learn how to manage their emotions (Silk, Steinberg and Scheffield Morris 2003, p. 1869). Adolescent females experience anger and aggressive feelings more intensely than their male counterparts (Underwood 2008; Simmons 2002). Moreover, girls are more easily hurt and upset by conflict than boys are (Underwood 2008, pp. 137-138), and frustration and anger towards parents and peer groups surface time and again. Furthermore, girls are confronted with constant changes on a physical, emotional and social level (Jensen 2006, p. 105). The frustration they experience, as well as uncertainties regarding identity, can lead to emotional outbursts and covert anger. Accordingly, it may be beneficial for girls to be empowered with insight and skills regarding the awareness, identification and management of anger (Adams and Berzonsky 2004, p. 284).

However, *emotion* as such, as well as the emotion of *anger*, should first be defined. There is consensus amongst scholars that emotions are complex (Sternberg 2003, p. 397). According to Sternberg (2003, p. 397), emotions capture brain functions, bodily urges, environmental changes as well as cognitive appraisals. Damasio (1999, p. 284) explains that emotions are necessary for survival. For the purpose of this article emotions are defined as a state of perceived change with the incentive of survival. Emotions are 'feelings of feelings' that occur when a transient change takes place in an organism's neural patterns and the same state of change is registered by 'knowing' or 'sensing' it consciously as a 'feeling' in the organism (Damasio 1999, p. 282).

The study focused on anger as a strong emotion with destructive qualities that is manifested and expressed in various ways, depending on individual or cultural contexts (Ellis 2003; *Mosby's Medical Dictionary* 2009, p. 434). A reading of *Mosby's Medical Dictionary* and Long and Averill (2002, p. 131) positions the emotion of anger as an emotional reaction that is identifiable by extremes in rage, hostility or indignation. Such a reaction is associated with the attribution of blame for that which is perceived as wrong. There is a desire to rectify the wrong and prevent it from recurring, which may or may not include aggressive behaviour. Whilst anger can be regarded as functional in particular and controlled circumstances, it can become pathological when the 'response does not realistically reflect a person's actual circumstances' (Long and Averill 2002, p. 131).

Anger is often based on fear (Adams and Berzonsky 2004, p. 67). The fact that one cannot think clearly when angered is a physical, neurological verity (Mayer & Salovey 1997; Beck 2000).<sup>1</sup> Withdrawing from the situation that angers one (Stein and Book 2001) or suppressing emotional responses are general emotional behaviours pertaining to this emotion. In order to *prevent* the anger from recurring or solve the problem that stimulates the angry feelings, emotional competence is needed. These skills or emotional competencies can be taught (Mayer & Salovey 1997; Goleman 1998; Weare & Gray 2003; Crawford 2007; Sylwester 2007; Feinstein 2009;). The basic principles of anger management for this age group are available in various textbooks, making the learning material for anger management clear and accessible (Vernon 2006, p. 2).

## **The value of anger management for the adolescent female**

Anger-management skills for the adolescent are of importance to many educators. During this period brain maturation is not yet complete: 'the brain is still developing during the teen years and brain maturation does not stop at age 10, but continues into the teen years and even into the 20s' (Giedd et al. 1999). Impulse control, planning and decision making are primarily frontal cortex functions and are still maturing during this developmental phase. The occurrence of greater irrationality during adolescence is important for this study, since its rationale is to improve emotional management or self-facilitation. The adolescent's experience of emotions is more frequent and more intense than during childhood and adulthood (Silk et al. 2003, p. 1869). Jensen (2006, p. 101) argues that adolescents are susceptible to risky behaviour, have trouble anticipating the consequences of their behaviour, and are still learning to understand their new emotional states. Consequently, their perceptions of the emotions of others are lacking and they have difficulty regulating self-worth. Smetana (1991) confirms that theoretical and empirical research supports the view that shifting power dynamics results in conflicts of interest and a higher density of disputes in the life of the adolescent, especially with parents. In general, the adolescent is to a great extent occupied with numerous emotional development tasks and needs the support of their significant others and the educational system (Jensen 2006, p. 105). Adams and Berzonsky (2004, p. 284) list a broad range of emotional competences that have to be developed during these years, such as to:

...regulate intense emotions, modulate rapidly vacillating emotions, self-soothe independently, ...understand the consequence to self and other of genuine emotional expression versus dissemblance, use symbolic thought to reframe. a negative event to one that is less aversive.

Regulation of emotions is one of the primary development tasks of the adolescent (Adams & Berzonsky 2004, p. 67).

Adams and Berzonsky (2004, p. 284) state that, if an emotional management framework is well established during the transitional period of adolescence, it will persist into adulthood. Elias et al. (2003) submit that empirical research has established that collaborative activities, based on providing adolescents with opportunities for social-emotional competence development, can be successfully implemented.

Brown (1998, pp. 12-13) builds a strong case for inviting adolescent girls to voice their strong feelings and to name the sources of ill treatment in order not to become victims of their coming of age. Brown (1998) recommends that female adolescents should realise that *not* naming anger encourages self-doubt regarding the interpretation of reality, as they risk losing the capacity to identify the source of their pain. It is in this regard that this research aims to make a contribution. Our process drama workshops, which constituted our empirical research, encouraged female adolescents to voice their emotional perceptions and actively explore their personal emotional structures without intruding on their privacy.

## **The empirical research**

The empirical research consisted of three different case studies.<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this article the first case study will be reported on. Through this case study we will illustrate the convention of dramatised poetry as a process-drama methodology for exploring

aspects of anger and anger management in a group of adolescent females. This case study took place at a small private, bilingual school in Pretoria that caters for learners with minimal learning difficulties and/or emotional problems, who struggle to fit into mainstream schools. The learners had not been exposed to drama activities either in their school or privately. The Life Orientation teacher supported this initiative, as one of the Grade 9 Life Orientation subjects is 'dealing with difficult emotions' (Revised National Curriculum Statement 2005, p. 26). Consequently, six workshops were presented over a period of two weeks during school hours and eight adolescent girls aged 14 to 15 years participated.<sup>3</sup> This article will elucidate the activities of *workshops one* and *four*, which were specifically concerned with the perception, identification and awareness of anger and anger-related feelings, as well as their expression. The other workshops all worked in support of these aims. For the purposes of this article, the selected workshops under discussion provided appropriate data that show a trajectory of development.<sup>4</sup> Activities in these workshops aimed to create an understanding of the destructive qualities of anger and their consequences. As such, these workshops served as specific examples of the way the convention of dramatised poetry could be employed to facilitate the development of anger management as an emotional competency skill.<sup>5</sup> Mayer and Salovey (1997) define the parameters of emotional intelligence skills as follows:

The ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings which facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional intellectual growth. (p. 10)

The participants were guided towards a realisation of the complexity of anger and the importance of regulating it.

During *workshop one* the facilitator requested the participants to list what angered them. The participants revealed the incidents and things that generally irritate adolescents, for example, people who do not listen to what they have to say, people who tease them, people who hurt animals, and siblings who do not respect their privacy. It was significant that none of them openly mentioned any parental conflict. As indicated earlier, most frustration and anger experienced by adolescent females are related to parental conflict, which, according to Robin and Foster (2003) may be regarded as an intrinsic part of this period. The adolescent girls in this group acted in congruence with their inherent respect for relationships by not openly discussing conflict with their most significant others. This reluctance to discuss relational conflict in public hinted at the possibility that, when discussing adolescent conflict in a group, the use of metaphors as encountered in poetry might be more effective than a direct approach.

In this activity the participants were asked to find their own variants of anger and anger-related feelings. The listing of these feelings took place in talk circles and elicited, for example, the following words: jealousy, irritation, frustration, hate, rage, uneasiness, scorn and wrath. This underscores the definition of anger found in *Mosby's Medical Dictionary* (2009, p. 434). Congruent with the learner-centred approach of process drama, prior knowledge of the participants was assessed though this listing before the participants were supplied with Parrott's list of angry feelings (2001, p. 27) for comparative reflection. The participants were divided into small groups and had to draw from their own as well as Parrott's list to create rap rhymes on the topic of angry feelings as a means of

acknowledging, voicing and engaging with their sources of frustration and pain in line with Brown's (1998, p. 12-13) suggestion.

The literary genre of rap was employed as it is associated with rhyming, and is a form of spoken poetry that usually grows from the need to protest or communicate a grievance (Bradley 2009). It supports the aggressive stance that the participants are bound to display when expressing anger, safely channelling their embodied engagement and mediated emotional involvement with the emotion (Konijn 2000, p. 199). It is important to mention that process drama does not work with 'raw' emotion, but rather with mediated emotion, as explicated by Konijn (2000). The rap rhymes therefore served as a creative way to explore and express angry feelings.

Two examples of the rhymes that were created and that added value to the learning process about anger are provided below:

*I am so angry right now...  
I just can't help thinking of the things you said!  
It's repeating itself over and over again in my head!*

And:

*What do you do when you're upside down  
and jealousy and anger come around  
When you burst into rage feelings grow into hate  
When irritation swells like a balloon and  
grows like a full-blown moon?  
Do you stand and fight?  
Do you run and flee?  
What do you do with anger?  
A dam dadi dum dadi dee...*

In the following activity the participants had to perform their rap rhymes. Hence, embodiment and enoicement of the mediated anger took place. What was perceived by the facilitator as a 'fun and easy' activity was perceived by some of the participants as highly stressful. As previously indicated, these girls had had no previous opportunity to engage in drama activities and were hesitant and unsure of themselves. Alberts, Elkind and Ginsberg (2007, p. 72) maintain that the adolescent is an intensely self-conscious or image-conscious individual in a group set-up or activity. Nevertheless, the facilitator encouraged them to participate in the performance of the rhymes, as physicality formed the basis of the dramatisation of the poetry in *workshop four*. Through this activity the participants became more confident about performing in front of each other. The outcome was indeed reached as they had no qualms about performing their poetry to each other in the following workshops.

As process drama does not seek to entertain but rather to understand, the small groups in the workshop acted as an audience for each other, resulting in learning through observation. Process drama, according to Morgan and Saxton (1987, p. 22), creates a taxonomy of personal engagement by drawing the learners into the meaning and the expression of the work. Morgan and Saxton (1987, p. 22) furthermore suggest that there is interplay between meaning and expression when the participants are well immersed in the experience of process-drama conventions such as improvisation and role play, or the dramatisation of poetry. These conventions offer the participants opportunities to

experience the learning material empathetically from the 'inside out', as well as cognitively from the 'outside in', thus creating a state of metaxis. The participants therefore learnt more about anger by exploring the meaning of anger through writing their own rap rhymes. Expressing the rhymes affectively engaged them with the 'feeling' of anger, whilst they could simultaneously gain deeper cognitive insight through the physical expression.

*Workshop four* explored the consequences of anger through the convention of dramatised poetry. The participants were given two published poems as examples of people dealing with the negative results of aggressive anger styles. In this activity the participants were not required to delve into their personal anger styles to reveal strong emotions or personal anger. Chavis and Weisberger (2003, p. 2) explain that when one reads or hears a poem, one responds cognitively, emotionally and with one's senses, as the poem 'elicits responses at so many levels' at once. The facilitated, mediated emotional involvement committed to by exploring the poems provided through role play, improvisation and dramatisation allowed for emotional distance and reflection, and hence metaxis. Following Chavis and Weisberger (2003), the authors propose that the empathic engagement with the feeling content of the learning material fosters understanding of different points of view. In doing so, participants become aware of their own position in relation to that of others and thus a cognitive and reasoned understanding of the emotion is promoted.

After having read the first poem, *Anger* by Gavin Marshall (2008), the group had to prepare and perform the poem in choral verse style. The participants had to emphasise the important words in each stanza. During the preparation, the facilitator provided guidance such as a suggestion to increase the volume when phrases were repeated. As the participants prepared and rehearsed the poem and experienced the emotions in the poetry, they explored the use of gestures and facial expressions. The impact of the vocalisation in ensemble intensified the affective meaning of the poem and stimulated emotional involvement. Accordingly, they created an aesthetic sound (and movement) 'picture' of the emotions when performing the poem both in the meaning and the expressive frames (Morgan & Saxton 1987, p. 21). The facilitator observed that the participants could integrate the multi-layered meanings explored with their embodied and enoiced performances. The participants were simultaneously observing from 'the outside', distancing themselves from the consequences of anger as depicted by the poem, as well as experiencing the emotional impact of the consequences of anger as voiced by the poem from the 'inside out'. This again is an example of metaxis (Bolton 1992).

As the group and the facilitator reflected on this experience, the consequences of anger were discussed. The participants revealed that they could relate to the feelings voiced in the poem. They also wished (as stated in the poem) that they could 'handle their anger right', that the anger would stop destroying who they were 'inside and out' and stop making them 'do wrong things'. This empathic awareness was accessed through the convention of dramatised choral work and served as an example of the fact that, by performing poetry, participants can find meaning.

During the next activity the participants proceeded to read another poem, *Who owns the anger?* by Gerda Le Roux (2011). The aim of this activity was to create an awareness of ownership; that one has a choice in regulating one's anger and that unregulated anger can cause feelings of isolation and remorse. This, in turn, increased their emotional experience and insight into emotional competence. During the dramatic performance of this poem, the facilitator observed the relevance of Gallagher's (2005, p. 8) statement that



movement informs and shapes cognition. The participants integrated the meaning of the words effectively with meaningful movements and in so doing became, yet again, personally engaged with the meaning of the poetry. The participants demonstrated through their performance of the poem that they could envoice and embody the asymmetrical, tensed kinaesthetic character of anger.

After 'de-roling', participants reflected out of role on the inside-out experience of their own anger by creating their own poems. This was done as a means of 'journaling'. The facilitator did not interfere, make any suggestions or assist the participants during this activity. The mere fact that they could write these poems acts as proof of their personal engagement with the subject of anger. During verbal reflection on this activity, they shared the realisation that it was difficult for them to manage their anger and that the emotion of anger let them behave in ways that they did not appreciate. The following are extracts from two self-written poems of this group:

Participant A:

*This anger is killing me inside  
I'm losing my friends faster than my tears  
Why does this demon possess me?  
this demon called anger  
I hate you  
Just disappear before I do  
My anger s like a devil wolf dangerous and untamed  
can never be broken.*

Participant B:

*I hate the anger  
It's choking me  
I can't breathe  
It's taking me down  
deep deep down to the ground  
I don't know what to do  
I do' t know where to go  
I am lost in my anger.*

These poems evince their perception and awareness of, and their identification skills relating to, anger and indicate that fertile ground has been prepared for the facilitation of teaching on anger-management skills. The commitment of the participants to the activities, the level of their emotional dedication demonstrated, and the emotional engagement reflected in their personal poetry are evidence of the applicability of process drama as methodology. By creating their own poems on anger, the participants reflected on the differences and similarities between their own anger and the anger depicted in the poetry provided. It was thus clearly demonstrated that the participants understood the complexity of anger.

According to Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2003), emotional competence should be accessed experientially in a group, where the synergy of collaborative learning is

paramount. The workshops offered an experiential learning experience in group format through the enunciation and embodiment of the poems. As such, the methodology accessed in this workshop draws directly on the conventions of process drama. Rokotnitz (2011, p. 79) states that process-drama conventions create insight into issues, attitudes and one's own emotions. In doing so, it stimulates the meta-cognitive activities that Sylwester (2004, p. 6) proposes. In these workshops, poetry provided an avenue for exploring fictitious experiences related to anger and feelings about anger. This space could be safely entered by the participants in order to stimulate personal or personalised awareness on a cognitive, physical, emotional level about anger and its consequences.

Through process-drama conventions the participants were encouraged to engage cognitively and emotionally with their perception, awareness and identification of anger, resulting in meta-cognition. These conventions created a safe space for negotiation between the participants' experience of the poems and their own realities in order to stimulate their insight into the emotional experience of anger. This, in turn, led to insight into the emotions of others which assisted in increasing interpersonal understanding, which, according to Jensen (2006, p. 101), is generally absent during adolescence. Such empathetic engagement could possibly reduce feelings of isolation (Boone 2006, p. 3) by providing a collaborative space for venting explosive feelings, as suggested by Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2003). The workshops magnified the focus on the experience of anger in a condensed way (Bresler 2007, p. 1257), allowing for the anger to be experienced by proxy to create the necessary distance from the experiential, embodied engagement with anger that is needed for critical reflection. The process-drama activities expressed anger, angry feelings and their consequences, allowing the participants to 'rehearse for life' by looking at 'reality through fantasy' as O'Neill and Lambert (1990, p. 13) propose. In doing so, the workshops dealt directly with Jensen's (2006, p. 101) concern that adolescents have trouble anticipating the consequences of their behaviour.

The poetry created by the participants is reflective of the acknowledgement, insight and even remorse regarding the overwhelming, seemingly irrational effects of anger and the related feelings. Conflict caused by anger was captured by one of the small groups in their rap rhyme:

*Do you stand and fight?  
Do you run and flee?  
What do you do with anger?*

The published poems shared with the participants offered a model and provided the participants with a stimulus for writing their own poetry. The participants were challenged to express what anger does to *them*, as voiced in the existing poems. We have called this 'confessions of the effects of anger'. The following selected excerpts from the participants' poems depict moments of intense self-awareness and anger awareness, which, in turn, relate back to Mayer and Salovey's (1997, p. 10) building blocks for anger management skills:

*The anger is strong.  
I try to defeat it but it wins.  
I don't need you and your danger.  
You destroy my life the  
horrors you bring.  
You tear me apart.*

*Anger - a dark room in my soul.  
Shame on me, hiding in a cage of anger.  
My anger causes me to be what I don't want to be.*

The fact that the participants could express such valuable insights about their own experiences of anger and angry feelings indicates that they may be ready to start managing their anger.

## **Conclusion**

Narey (2009, p. 2) states that '[l]earning is the process of making sense or creating meaning from experiences' and posits that arts-based learning facilitates this multi-modal process for all learners. The enunciation and embodiment of poetry and poetry's strong metaphors encourage participants to engage empathetically with the learning material and make meaning of it. This multi-modal integration of body, mind and emotions when engaged in the process-drama conventions such as dramatised poetry stimulates learning on an affective level. Such conventions open up symbolic and metaphorical systems through which not only are emotions discovered, but cognition is stimulated, as was displayed in the participants' own poetry and reflections. The emotional and cognitive experience of, and reflection on, anger through the poetry thus created a need for answers to 'man in a mess' (Bolton 2003, p. 59) questions, and emphasised the 'matters of human significance' (Bowell and Heap 2013, p. 12) that underpin applied drama strategies.

Dramatised poetry as a process-drama convention creates a shared metaphor that forms a connection between participants that can be used to explore, rather than expose, their own personal 'messy' anger. We contend that poetry is a valuable tool for investigating emotions and emotional manifestations such as anger. Dramatised poetry, in the context of process drama, may serve as a methodology to advance deeper learning on inter- and intrapersonal levels and assist in resolving relational or social problems such as how to manage one's anger. This is done by integrating experiential, embodied and implicit learning processes holistically.

## **Notes**

1. An interrogation of this claim falls outside the scope of this article.
2. The research project that contained the three case studies was cleared by the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria and the DoE. No restrictions were placed on the project. Letters of informed consent containing information about the nature of the project and participant involvement were signed by the parents/guardians and the school principal. Letters of assent were completed by learners after it was explained to them, as they are under 18 years of age. In accordance with ethical requirements, matters such as data storage, voluntary participation, confidentiality and withdrawal without consequence were addressed in the letters. This article includes exemplars of the poetry generated, which is undertaken with full permission from the participants, so long as anonymity is guaranteed.
3. This group consisted of English- and Afrikaans-speaking girls who could operate effectively in both languages and who come from middle-class families in the Pretoria area.
4. The other workshops consisted of a trajectory of sessions addressing the main building blocks of emotional competence, namely the identification, expression and interpretation, understanding and management of the emotion of anger in oneself and in others (Goleman 1998, p. 24). In order to reach these outcomes a combination of

process-drama conventions such as role play, writing in role, tableaux, dramatised poetry and 'mantle of the expert' was employed.

5. It is important to mention that the authors do not assume that the workshops were necessarily the only aspect that facilitated awareness of emotional competence and associated skills related to anger management. However, as the workshops are aimed at this goal, the discussion that follows demonstrates a direct response in and to the aims and content of the workshops.

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