

***HOOKED: A TRULIFE PRODUCTION ABOUT TEEN DRUG AND
ALCOHOL ABUSE / ENGAGING ACTION RESEARCH AND
POSTMODERN THEATRE PRACTICES IN DEVISING A THEATRE IN
EDUCATION PROJECT***

**BY
NANCY STRAUSS**

NOVEMBER 2019

*HOOKED: A TRULIFE PRODUCTION ABOUT TEEN DRUG AND ALCOHOL
ABUSE / ENGAGING ACTION RESEARCH AND POSTMODERN THEATRE
PRACTICES IN DEVISING A THEATRE IN EDUCATION PROJECT.*

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Drama and
Performance Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

2019

Durban

November, 2019

Supervisor: Tamar Meskin

DECLARATION

I (209534565) declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed:

.....

Nancy Strauss (Candidate)

November, 2019

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree/ do not agree to the submission of this dissertation.

.....
Tamar Meskin (Supervisor)

November, 2019.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



03 December 2015

Mrs Nancy Leigh Strauss (209534565)
School of Arts
Howard College Campus

Dear Mrs Strauss,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1748/015M

Project title: *Hooked: A TruLife Production about teen drug and alcohol abuse* / Engaging Action Research and postmodern theatre practices in devising a Theatre in Education project

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 27 November 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shamila Naidoo
On behalf of Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Supervisor: Ms Tamar Meskin
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School Administrator: Ms Debbie Bowen / Mr Sabelo Gumede

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To Colin and the Trulife team for welcoming me into their organisation and bringing their very best to creating this work.

ABSTRACT

Theatre in Education (TIE) has a long history of impact and development, and in South Africa, has been particularly instrumental in bringing about social change, challenging young people to reflect on their lives and their role in society. In this dissertation, I explore the usefulness of Action Research (AR) for the process of devising a TIE production using a case study of Trulife, a non-profit organisation working in schools across KwaZulu-Natal. Action Research has been shown to be useful in education but has not been properly explored in the context of the devising process for TIE programmes. This dissertation is structured into three parts – the initial establishment of the literature and a theoretical framework; followed by a description of the practical creative project and script; and concluding with a description of the methods used to reflect on the work as well as key observations and reflections.

Central to this dissertation is the script of *Hooked*, a TIE programme which focuses on the impact of young people's decisions relating to drug and alcohol use. The script, which is included in Chapter Four, was created using collaborative devising – with a focus on brainstorming, improvisation, and borrowing the storyboarding technique from the world of film. The study explores how the process of devising for TIE programmes relates to the intersecting ideas and frameworks of practice as research, self-reflection and the AR method, using postmodernism conceptually to examine how subjective truth is communicated and also practically as a stylistic approach to best engage high school learners using theatre. The data was drawn from both the script itself, group interviews with the participant actors, and my own observations captured in private journaling.

The most important finding of this work is that AR was not only useful for helping to streamline the devising process but was already deeply ingrained in the way the team of creators and performers approached the task of creating a new TIE production. The benefits of using AR in guiding devising are explored, while parallels to other cyclical processes found in self reflection and theatre are acknowledged.

This study contributes both to the field of TIE – suggesting that AR can be a useful tool for devising, and calling for future studies aimed at further developing and refining AR for TIE – and to my own personal development as a creative practitioner involved in producing TIE productions.

PREFACE

The original title of the creative project that forms part of this work was '*Hooked*', as per the accepted proposal. However, at the end of the creative process, the participants decided to change the name to '*DNA: Drugs 'n Alcohol*'. This was done as one of the closing scenes of the play makes use of this acronym as a play on words. The new title therefore felt more suitable to the creative team with whom I was working.

However, this change in the title of the production happened too late to effect a 'change of title' form for the research. This will be done post-examination, with relevant changes made to the written dissertation.

For now, the body of this dissertation refers to '*DNA: Drugs 'n Alcohol*' as the title, while the Abstract and title page make reference to the old, official title, '*Hooked*'.

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LIST OF KEY ABBREVIATIONS

TIE	Theatre in Education
NPO	Non-Profit Education
PBO	Public Benefit Education
DIE	Drama in Education
PaR	Practice-as-Research
AR	Action Research

INTRODUCTION:

Starting the Journey

Theatre has nothing to do with buildings or other physical constructions. Theatre – or theatricality – is the capacity, this human property, which allows man to observe himself in action, in activity. Man can see himself in the act of seeing, in the act of acting, in the act of feeling, the act of thinking. Feel himself feeling, think himself thinking.
– Augusto Boal¹.

Theatre in Education (TIE) can be broadly defined as the use of theatre as an educational tool (O’Toole, 1976). It is the ability of theatre – as Augusto Boal spent his life exploring – to transform the mind and prompt thought, feeling and ultimately change. I first encountered TIE as a school girl, passionate about drama but limited in experience and exposure. Even as a teenager, I was fascinated by the TIE programmes that passed through our school - some were awful and felt so dated and out of touch; others were gripping and thought provoking. While at university studying Dramatic Arts, I was required to create a TIE project as part of a course on using drama and theatre as a social/educational tool (see Morris, 2002 for a description of this course work). This application of an art form I loved so much, to attempt to stimulate a positive change in society, was particularly compelling and fascinating. I have since spent a year with a TIE theatre company² full-time, and as a teacher have volunteered occasionally with Trulife, the group with whom I will be working for this research.

¹ Boal, Augusto. 1995. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Routledge.

² Silver Ring Thing is in an organisation which originated in the United States of America, but was brought to South Africa in 2005. It made use of a TIE programme containing original drama performances, dance, music and multimedia to promote a message of sexual abstinence. Their target audience was High School aged youth, across all socio-economic levels, with the goal of the TIE programme being for each audience member to make a decision to abstain from sex until marriage, signified by purchasing and wearing a silver ring (*What is Silver Ring Thing*, 2015).

As a teacher, who engages in the process of education daily, but also in constant reflection (albeit mostly informal) about that educational process, I see the development of this TIE project as a chance to investigate the role my knowledge and training plays in the creative process. This is particularly fascinating as the actors at the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) with whom I will be working - whom I also personally know from past experiences - have little if any formal theatre training, yet often demonstrate an almost instinctive and natural grasp of the key theatrical concepts evident in their work and the theories underpinning its creation. The most pertinent of these is the presence of a strong postmodern approach evident in their thinking about their work (its approach to the relativity of 'truth', multiple perspectives, and a very local, specific audience as outlined by Hutcheon (2004)); as well as the postmodernist stylistic features found 'on stage' in their existing TIE programmes (such as non-linear narrative, the use of multi-media, a borrowing from popular culture and a wide range of genres, and the use of episodic or even fragmented scenes as identified by Silverman (1990), Fortier (2002) and Lehmann (2006)) . My research aims to contextualise the work Trulife are doing, as I create a new TIE project with their team, adopting a similar style, within the South African, postmodern context in which they are situated.

I have also been exposed to Action Research as a methodological approach while exploring Trulife's work and conducting this research. This is an innovative self-reflexive form of research which applies a problem-solving cycle to allow researchers to investigate and improve upon their own practice (Whitehead, 1995). Previously, Action Research has been used, in education, by teachers or other professionals in that field, to investigate their practice in the classroom or school-wide community (McNiff, 2007; Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead, 2013). However, the application of the Action Research method as a way of both devising theatre, and understanding my own practice as a TIE programme creator, is intriguing and offers great potential for future study. This TIE project creates a platform from which Action Research may be explored further as a method of research and practice in TIE programme development, a field in which it has historically not been widely applied.

It is the combination of my own interest in theatre as an educational tool, my enquiry into the way Action Research might play a role in the creation of a TIE programme, and the reasons the Trulife actors have for creating work using such strong postmodern features (without a formal academic understanding of postmodernism as a philosophy or theatrical style), that has led me to conduct this research. What I aim to achieve can be summed up in two broad objectives:

Key Objective One:

To devise a TIE programme promoting the prevention of Drug and Alcohol abuse amongst Durban teenagers that engages Trulife's existing postmodernist performance model. This comprises the practical, creative component of this project.

Key Objective Two:

To investigate the application of Action Research in devising a TIE programme within a postmodern context. This second part of the research focuses on developing a theoretical understanding of the Action Research process and how this can be used to develop a TIE programme. I will also use the practical project created to reflect on the role of the researcher in a devising project. Key questions I look to answer are,

- i. How can the Action Research model contribute towards devising a TIE programme?*
- ii. What are the benefits of using Action Research as a method of reflecting on the devising process?*

In discussing how the two objectives were achieved, this dissertation has been divided into three parts. Each part follows a journey which parallels the journey of theatre-making that Boal outlines in the quote chosen to open this writing. Part One, entitled 'The Act of Seeing', establishes the groundwork in which my research can be situated. In essence, what we are 'seeing' is the lay of the land both historically and currently, to better understand the context in which this work is placed.

It opens with a discussion of the literature surrounding TIE, beginning with an account of its history and development. The key features of a TIE programme, as well as some noteworthy examples relevant to this particular project, are examined. The discussion then moves to establishing a theoretical framework which focuses on postmodernism as both a philosophy

influencing my research paradigm and a theatrical style underpinning Trulife's creative choices.

Once a clear understanding of both TIE and postmodernism has been established, Part Two – 'The Act of Acting, the Act of Feeling' - begins. 'Acting' and 'feeling' in this instance refer quite aptly to the creation of the theatre production. Acting on stage, as well as the evocation of feelings that the actors call for, are the primary focus of this section. The methodology used in the practical development of the TIE programme is unpacked - devising techniques used to create the TIE programme are outlined, as they relate to the practical aspect of this research. This is followed by the full script of the creative project.

Part Three, named 'The Act of Thinking' focuses on my thinking about this research, reflections on the experience and lessons to be learned. It begins by outlining the methods used to analyse the data generated (namely the script, the team's comments made in interviews, and my own observations recorded in journals). Practice-as-Research is the use of practical processes, in this case devising, as a primary research tool in which the researcher and participants can reflect on their practice. Related to this, self reflection is explored as a key method. Action Research is then discussed as a method that can add to the devising process, as well as a method for reflecting on my own observations and work.

The final two chapters of Part Three work hand in hand to explain the project and provide a description of my research findings; followed by any observations and insights that can be drawn from this research. Limitations and areas for possible future study are briefly outlined, before a brief conclusion.

Trulife's work in many ways is the inspiration behind this research, as without them my interest in TIE and its application in a contemporary South African context might never have been given a platform to be explored. A brief introduction to this organisation is therefore necessary. I therefore begin now by introducing the group used as participants in the creation of the TIE programme – Trulife – before providing brief insight into the topic of the TIE programme, namely drug and alcohol abuse in South African teens.

i. An Overview of Trulife

The company I will be working with on the creative aspect of this project is Trulife, which forms a subsidiary of the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) and Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), Restoration of Hope. Trulife was formed in 2011 and operates throughout KwaZulu-Natal. Their main work is the creation and performance of original theatre productions with an educational focus, which they perform in schools. To date they have produced five TIE programmes, all of which are still currently performed: *Justice*, which aims to empower youth to embrace social justice and make a positive difference in their communities, no matter their age (March, 2011); *Copyright*, which deals with identity and self-image (June 2011); *I Heart Sex*, which aims to promote healthy and safe sexual decision making in teens (December, 2011); *Bullying*, showing the causes and harmful effects of bullying in schools (June, 2014), and *Human Trafficking*, their latest production which highlights the dangers of modern-day trafficking in persons (January, 2015).

These five programmes each target learners in different Grades, ranging from Grade Six to Grade Twelve, and are designed to be followed up with a Life Orientation curriculum³ provided by Trulife in Life Orientation classes. Trulife also offer workshops as a follow up resource to the initial production, which unpacks the performance and its themes with more depth and allows learners the chance to voice their thoughts and ask questions, solidifying their learning. Trulife's vision is stated as being to "Train young people on vital subjects: self-identity, peer pressure, sex and identity; Raise them up to reach their full potential in these areas; and Release them to do great things in this city" (Trulife, 2015). The team summarise this vision in a catchy slogan: TRAIN, RAISE, UNLEASH.

³ Life Orientation is a compulsory subject taught in all South African High Schools. In the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, issued by the Department of Basic Education in 2011, Life Orientation is defined as "the study of self in relation to others and society" (p. 8). The topics covered in this mandated curriculum range from social and environmental responsibility, to democracy and human rights, to physical education and awareness of self (p. 8). Trulife designs their own material which is given to teachers, as an optional teaching tool to supplement the topics already covered by the National curriculum, as all their productions are aligned with the goals and subject matter covered in this subject.

Trulife select their topics after careful consideration of the Life Orientation syllabus, and through research amongst the schools they serve. When I approached their director about working with them for this dissertation, he immediately asked if the topic could be on drugs and alcohol abuse as this had been recognised as a pressing issue amongst their target audience.

ii. **The need for a drug and alcohol TIE programme - Setting the scene of the drug problem in South Africa**

The title of the creative project is *DNA: Drugs 'n Alcohol*⁴. The decision to create a TIE programme that tackles the abuse of drugs and alcohol by teens was one taken by the Trulife team as a whole. Their choice of subject matter was heavily influenced by conversations with teachers and school principals at the schools they already visit. These educational specialists frequently requested a programme that would educate their learners about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse at a young age, and prompt them to make better decisions in this area.

The reality of the drugs and alcohol situation amongst South African youth is dire. A quick search of local online news agencies reveals headlines such as:

“Drug Abuse is Growing in SA” (Williams, D in *The Citizen Online*, 26 June, 2016)

“Drug abuse costs SA billions each year” (Fin24, 21 March, 2012)

“There’s another city with a drug problem” (News24, 23 February, 2017)

“How to tell if your teen is an underage drinker” (Parent24, 8 November, 2016)

“Drug abuse is damaging South Africa’s youth” (FA News, 25 June, 2013)

⁴ The original title of this work was *Hooked*. However, this was changed by the participants, as per the explanation in the preface on Page vii.

“Poverty fuelling drug and alcohol abuse” (Times Live, 16 March, 2011)

Added to this, a survey of drug and alcohol use among primary school children in the Cape Town metropolitan area in 2002, found that one-fifth of primary school children have tried drugs. The average age for children first using drugs was 12.1 years old. In high schools, 45% of learners had tried a drug, and 32% were still using drugs (UN Office of Drugs and Crime, 2004). More recent statistics show approximately 70.7% of learners confirming that drugs are easily accessible. Almost half the learners (45.3%) were aware of friends who use drugs, and by high school, one in every three learners uses drugs (UNISA Bureau of Market Research, 2012).

It is clear from the evidence above, as well as the anecdotal evidence provided by teachers and school principals alike, that there is a real need for increased education for school learners about the damaging effects of drugs and alcohol abuse. While the creative project created by myself and the Trulife team is not the total solution, it is hoped that it represents a step in the right direction, and will have a positive influence on the behaviour of those learners who attend one of its performances.

Having established an understanding of Trulife, who form the participants of this research, and having unpacked the reasons for the topic chosen; this discussion can turn its focus towards understanding the medium used to address the topic in schools: namely Theatre in Education.

PART ONE: THE ACT OF SEEING

1. SETTING THE SCENE: THEATRE IN EDUCATION

As the creative component for this research is a Theatre in Education (TIE) project, it is important that the genre of TIE be understood in relation to broader theatre performance categories, as well as within a unique South African context.

TIE has a long and varied history, both globally and locally, and has come to be generally accepted as a form of theatre which combines “the techniques and imaginative potency of theatre in the service of education” (Jackson and Vine, 2013: viii). TIE has its roots in the 1960s in Coventry, England, where theatres began to ‘pilot’ a number of theatre projects which were deemed successful by theatre practitioners and educators alike in highlighting the potential of theatre not only to entertain children, but to educate them on key curriculum content, and other social matters (Jackson and Vine, 2013: viii). However, TIE did not and has not developed in isolation from other genres and theatre movements and it is therefore vital to outline clearly what is meant, and what is *not* meant, when referring to a theatre project as TIE. Many other categories – for example, community theatre, children’s theatre and Drama in Education – share similar features to TIE which can result in TIE being mislabelled or ‘lumped in’ with these other genres under the broad umbrella of Applied Theatre. What follows is an attempt to clarify how TIE fits alongside these other genres while clearly defining it as separate, and in fact pre-dating, the now widespread Applied Theatre. Thereafter, key practitioners and their contribution to TIE will be discussed, followed by a brief the history of TIE’s development globally and in South Africa.

1.1. The Development of Theatre in Education

Dorothy Heathcote – one of the leading experts and theorists in the use of drama and theatre as a tool for education amongst children – speaks of the potential of drama to create reflective moments in which children can explore “deep, basic matters” of life, without the danger of actually experiencing those moments in reality (Heathcote, 1990: 8). She highlights two important differences between drama and real life, namely the freedom theatre affords to “experiment without the burden of future repercussions”, and “the absence of the ‘chance element’ of real life” (Heathcote, 1990: 8). This supports the potential of actors to use “drama and their different professional skills to enable learning” (Heathcote, 1990: 44). This idea of learning through theatre is not unique to TIE, indeed Heathcote herself was more prominently involved in using Drama in Education (DIE), but the concept is certainly the key idea underpinning TIE and many Applied Theatre genres.

Theatre in Education began, as mentioned above, in Britain in the mid-1960s (Jackson & Vine, 2013: iv; see also Wooster, 2016 and Prendergast & Saxton, 2009) and has since developed and widened in scope. In his comprehensive account with Chris Vine, *Learning Through Theatre: The Changing Face of Theatre in Education* (3rd Edition), Tony Jackson – a leading TIE critic and creator – describes the first phase of TIE’s development as a project created by Belgrade Theatre⁵ in 1965 (Jackson and Vine, 2013: 5). The original practitioners were a team of four ‘actor-teachers’ who described a philosophical shift from viewing children’s theatre as a means of growing future audiences to “theatre for social change” (Jackson and Vine, 2013: 5). This early phase of TIE development helped establish the basic model for successful TIE programmes, as well as setting precedent in England for local government funding to support these kinds of projects. The success of these early programmes led to the rapid growth of TIE, as well as the diversification of the type of work done by groups who identified themselves as TIE practitioners (Jackson and Vine, 2013: 8). These practitioners recognised the value of play, and “the ability of drama to encourage social and personal development and the use of ‘role’ and ‘reflection’” (Wooster, 2016: 6). The height of TIE, which could be considered its second phase, occurred from the 1970s to early 1990s. This period is characterised by increasing popularity or general acceptance in more schools of TIE programmes, and a great ‘boom’ in both the number of TIE programmes created, and the number of groups working in this genre.⁶

The current phase Jackson describes (beginning in the 1990s and continuing to present day in the United Kingdom) is one defined most by its diversity. While these phases were really only experienced in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere TIE development had a different trajectory, it is useful to look at the origins of the form, to situate my study.

What is true of most TIE practices around the world is that they are constantly evolving and growing. Tony Jackson and Chris Vine describe how as the genre grew, and the use of theatre expanded, the boundaries between TIE and other genres have become blurred:

In various permutations, and not always under the same name, [TIE] continues to be a vital, innovative and inspiring practice for many concerned with the use of drama and theatre for educational purposes...as one of the main precursors of what is now more widely termed 'applied theatre'. (Jackson and Vine, 2013: i)

As Jackson and Vine imply, contemporary thinking classifies TIE as both a precursor that paved the way for Applied Theatre, as well as now existing as one of many sub-categories under the general umbrella of Applied Theatre. For the purpose of this research, I will be following the broad definitions and categorisation outlined by Prendergast and Saxton in *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice* (2009). This categorisation is supported by Taylor (2009: 93) who states, "the applied theatre label [is] a useful term ... for finding links and connections for all of us committed to the power of theatre in making a difference in the human life span" (see also Balfour, 2004).

Applied Theatre can be broadly described as theatre performances which take place in non-traditional spaces (not defined as theatres), usually for marginalised communities or

⁵ The Belgrade Theatre is situated in Coventry, England and was built in 1958. It is credited as the founder of Theatre in Education, and still continues with this work today. Belgrade's first TIE Company began as a pilot programme, in partnership with the local council, consisting of four actor-teachers, Gordon Vallins, Jessica Hill, Ann Lister and Dickon Reed, which focused on the theme responsibility. (www.belgrade.co.uk).

⁶ For example, see *Can Theatre Teach* (Redington, C., 1983), *Theatre in Education in Britain* (Wooster, R., 2016) and *Much More than drama appreciation* (Themen, J., 2015).

communities not usually the subject of theatre works, with “participants who may or may not be skilled in theatre arts and to audiences who have a vested interest in the issue taken up by the performance or are members of the community addressed by the performance” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009: 6).

Whilst TIE clearly pre-dates the term Applied Theatre and many of the other related genres, it fits comfortably into this definition of Applied Theatre practices. Prendergast and Saxton (2009: 8) discuss the quite subversive or revolutionary thinking behind the Applied Theatre movement, commenting that “theatre can tackle a range of topical provocations and provide an aesthetic site for their considered examination,” and again that “theatre in education, theatre for health education and theatre for development are most often focused on undermining the status quo in order to promote positive social change” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009: 7). In the same vein, these authors also assert that TIE “provides a safe way for citizens to express criticisms and frustrations to each other and society at large” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009: 7). Thus, it is the intention with which TIE programmes are created, as well as the topics they deal with, that become central to a definition. Even TIE programmes which deal with the performance of shortened works (such as abridged and simplified Shakespeare texts for performance to learners studying these texts as works of literature) have as their core intention the education of learners where previous methods are perceived as having fallen short. It becomes clear that TIE is more than entertainment for children, or a tool for developing new audiences, but has a vital role to play in the education of young minds about important social issues or relevant academic material, helping produce engaged and actively thinking citizens. This research, because it deals with a social health topic, namely drugs and alcohol abuse, would lean more towards Applied Theatre than other forms of TIE which focus on teaching literature or other areas of the curriculum. However, TIE is often a hybridised form which may have more than one goal and is always seeking to challenge the thinking of its young audience in relation to the subject matter.

I highlight the socially transformative agenda of Applied Theatre – and TIE – because it underlines the intention behind much of the work done in this field. While some TIE programmes are often misjudged as overly simple, or childish, and of little consequence because of their child-centred topics and methods, this thinking misses the underlying impact such TIE programmes might have. It is vital to recognise that what might appear immature to

an adult, might not be so for children and that the material and method/s of presentation chosen are carefully considered with the target audience in mind. Even the most straightforward TIE programme, about topics such as literacy or pollution, can challenge the way young people view their role in learning or even within society. Theatre of this type teaches young people that they are allowed to question and participate in what is otherwise often presented to them as ‘adults’ work’, a liberating and transformative lesson for a child. This theatre allows them to “re-examine the world to discover how it works and our place in it” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009: 8).

If Applied Theatre is described as a broad term for any theatre which has a participatory element, engages the audience around social issues, and has a politically inspired non-traditional agenda (Jackson & Vine, 2013: 9), then TIE takes this a step further, being focused on theatre works which have all the elements described above, but also take place within the education sector – in other words at schools, or for a school-aged audience, with the intention to educate these learners on topics pertinent to their challenges and growth. In its most simply stated form, therefore, we can define TIE as learning through theatre (Jackson & Vine, 2013: 31).

1.2. The features of Theatre in Education

Finding a simple description of the features of a TIE programme is quite challenging, as each programme has a different social context and the team creating it shape the content and style of the production depending on their particular skills (Balfour, 2009: 3). At their core, however, nearly all TIE programmes aim to “bring about a change, a widening of perspective, in the life of the real person, as well as to offer systems of learning and knowing” (Heathcote, 1990: 10). Within this frame, a few key features can be identified:

- a) TIE programmes are most typically created by a company and therefore seldom use pre-existing outside scripts, or if they do, alter and shorten these to suit the purposes of the company. The creation of a TIE project can therefore either be the work of a single writer, employed by the TIE company to research and create a script that will work for the company’s existing resources; or (as is more common) the group of

actors, director and other members of the company work together to create the piece on a topic chosen by the group. This requires the actors to “think for themselves and to make decisions about his own work...and to consciously assess, criticize and evaluate” (Gaskill, 1980: 53; see also Joyce, 1980). As will be discussed later in this dissertation, this form of creation links closely to the concept of Action Research.

- b) TIE programmes are most typically created for a very specific target audience, traditionally school-aged children (ages 4 – 18). John O’Toole – a leading expert on TIE – goes so far as to state that often TIE programmes were “tailor made for their particular schools, for a closely defined age-group, and most importantly, for a particular and often challenging educational aim” (O’Toole, 2009: 479). This specificity is an important feature as the ability to communicate to the correct audience, with a message that is relevant and portrayed in a manner that is appropriate to their level of understanding, means the greatest impact will be had.

- c) The topics TIE projects for school children deal with can be divided into two broad categories:
 - i. programmes used to educate about content taught as part of a national curriculum (for example, there is a history of TIE programmes dealing with various plays by Shakespeare, which are intended to help learners understand these texts, O’Toole, 2009: 480).
 - ii. Programmes used to educate learners about cultural and life skills as well as social and health issues, which might be considered by schools as essential life skills (for example, a host of TIE programmes exist about environmental issues). This requires the presentation of relevant, sometimes controversial material drawn from the real world, which does not patronise the learners, but challenges them to consider the complex issues presented (Joyce, 1980: 25-26). TIE programmes of this type have also been shown to improve the empathy skills of the learners involved (Joronen *et al.*, 2012: 73). These programmes are often left open-ended with “opportunities for problem-solving and decision making” on the part of the audience as they are challenged to find their own solutions or answer the questions posed during the course of the performance (O’Toole, 2009: 484).

- d) Because most often TIE programmes are performed at different school venues, ranging from halls and school theatres to classrooms, libraries or outdoor quadrangles, TIE programmes are designed with simple and flexible sets. However, it is noted by numerous practitioners that even though entertainment and theatrical innovation are not the focus of TIE programmes, the quality of performance, as well as the aesthetic elements, are still vital. As O’Toole observes, “The better the artistry, the better the learning” (O’Toole, 2009: 484). This position is echoed by Joyce, who insists that “entertainment is not enough – that is a prerequisite not an objective. The piece should be quality theatre, well presented; with clear educational objectives and material to which the performers are committed” (Joyce, 1980: 25).
- e) It should be noted that for many years the involvement of the audience actively in the TIE performance was a staple of the genre. This participation is focused on the ability to stop, comment on, discuss and question the performance, with performers guiding the children through this process (Wooster, 2016: 13). However, in more recent years this has become an optional addition, with an evolution away from “the strict participation of the audience” in favour of an audience that responds from their seat, through laughter and engagement, but without becoming involved physically in the performance. The practice of holding a discussion after the performance, or conducting a workshop with smaller groups, is offered as an alternative by O’Toole (2009: 480), both of which techniques are used by Trulife currently.

In summation, a working definition for TIE could be:

a unique hybrid which combines the skills and techniques of traditional theatre with modern educational philosophy and practice to create a medium for learning with direct emotional and intellectual impact on the audience. (Joyce, 1980: 25)

As will be discussed in the next section, TIE has a wide and varied canon – exploring a full range of issues and themes and often producing some of the “most innovative and dynamic experimental theatre” in the field (Wooster, 2016: 21&27).

1.3. Notable examples of Theatre in Education Projects

In order to understand the TIE project discussed in this research in context, notable examples of TIE programmes will be discussed as a way of grounding this project (and the more recent TIE projects developed by Trulife) in the larger context and as part of the body of such work.

1.3.1. Global examples

Internationally, a good place to begin is by examining the work done by the Belgrade Theatre in Education Company. As the originators of TIE, they provide useful examples of the genre, one of which is *Rare Earth: A Programme about Pollution*. First devised by the company in 1973 (Wyatt and Steed, 1976:7), this TIE programme has become a well-documented and frequently cited example of a TIE programme.

The Belgrade Theatre in Education team discuss their aim as being first and foremost the identification of a problem relevant to the child – in this case pollution – which led to the development of a programme that is ultimately simply a creative method of involving the child in “ideas, issues and concepts which arise from the worlds in which the child lives” (Wyatt and Steed, 1976: 7). *Rare Earth* is described as a “hotchpotch of styles” including storytelling, Noh and Kabuki-based mime, cartoon-like comedy and music (Wyatt and Steed, 1976: 13). *Rare Earth* is a three-part programme about environmental problems and the importance of conservation, including “an interactive simulation and a powerful play *Drink the Mercury*” which told the true story of the deadly mercury poisoning that occurred in Minamata Bay in the 1950s (Jackson and Vine, 2013: 27).

The TIE programme was created by the entire group of actors employed at the Company at the time and was performed in numerous schools across their city of Belgrade and the surrounding region. Stephen Wyatt and Maggie Steed write about their experiences as creators involved in the creation of *Rare Earth*, particularly recording interesting observations made by the actors that “on the road, we were always re-assessing the programmes and adjusting times” (Wyatt and Steed, 1976: 13). This comment has great relevance to my own research and the application of Action Research to the devising of a TIE programme.

The work of renowned TIE practitioner John O’Toole in Australia provides an interesting example of TIE in practice. While his work is extensive and projects many, spanning decades, his recent work with the Brisbane DRACON project from 1996 to 2004 bears particular relevance to Trulife’s work and therefore this research. During this time, O’Toole led a team to develop a TIE programme which aimed to educate learners about conflict and bullying (O’Toole and Burton, 2005: 273). This TIE programme incorporated, for the first time for this group of practitioners, some conventions of non-naturalistic theatre such as the use of disruptions to the narrative, the use of symbolic contemporary dance, and the actors changing role in front of the audience (O’Toole, 2009: 485). O’Toole comments that they hoped, in using this style, to “take whatever performance component we came up with directly out of the drearily predictable realm of issue-based naturalistic⁷ enactment” (O’Toole, 2009: 484). This description, particularly its recognition of previous work as in danger of becoming “drearily predictable” for the juvenile audience members, ties in closely with the work of Trulife as they too seek to use experimental or unpredictable styles of performance in an attempt to make the performance more engaging and appealing to their school-going audience. O’Toole reports that the results of the DRACON project’s work included a deeper emotional understanding, and increased empathy for the situation explored (O’Toole and Burton, 2005: 280).

The work of Gesser-Edelsburg, Guttman and Isrealashvili (2007) creating anti-drug TIE programmes in Israel is applicable as the topic of drug abuse bears close relation to the practical creative component of my research. These practitioners found that using theatre offered a hands-on and direct experience, which left “the strongest impression on adolescents” and was perceived by the audience to be a more appealing strategy “to prevent illicit drug use” (Gesser-Edelsburg *et al.*, 2007: 294) when compared to traditional teaching methods such as teacher-led classroom lessons. The researchers provide a balanced review of their working, identifying both the advantages of using theatre as well as some areas to consider for future improvement. The main benefits they describe are the credibility of the messengers – the learners watching this TIE show reported that they felt the performers were trustworthy, relevant and “genuinely cared” which made them far more inclined to believe and internalise the message being delivered (Gesser-Edelsburg *et al.*, 2007: 301).

⁷ Naturalistic in this context refers to realistic acting, portraying one linear storyline in a manner which mimics real life.

One of the chief flaws identified with this TIE programme was that the “plays did not go beyond the level of the personal, individual story of the main character in order to deal with norms and values surrounding the use of drugs” (Gesser-Edelsburg *et al.*, 2007: 294). What is meant by this, as explained in these researcher’s own descriptions, is that the TIE programme failed to ask *why* drugs were so intriguing to this age group and what social or political contexts and experiences might influence the behaviour of young people towards drug use. The story instead focused on showing one character’s very specific downfall through addiction, which could too easily be ignored by those in the audience whose circumstances did not match that of the character in question. The notion of socio-political context and an understanding of the role identity plays in shaping the behaviour of young people is important and has great bearing on this research in terms of both its postmodern context and the content of the creative project.

The influential role of social context is also acknowledged in ‘*Good choices, great future: An applied theatre prevention programme to reduce alcohol-related risky behaviours during Schoolies*’⁸, which discusses the format of an educational theatre programme aimed at High School leavers in Australia at risk of engaging in binge drinking, as well as trying to assess the impact of such a programme (Quek *et al.*, 2012). One of the goals of this TIE programme is described as follows:

Unlike the traditional drug education programs...applied theatre programs such as ‘Choices’ are designed to be evocative and stimulating learning experiences by eliciting emotional responses and act as a springboard for further discussion...The program focused on a harm minimisation approach in that it did not tell young people to abstain but emphasised ways to celebrate more safely. (Quek *et al.*, 2012: 22, 901)

The creators mention the intentional use of pop culture and an attempt to create a youth-oriented experience, including the use of young people as presenters, youth music, television

⁸ ‘Schoolies’ is a popular end of school celebration in Australia where young people gather in popular coastal holiday towns to celebrate the end of high school, usually with parties that include drinking and associated behavior (Quek *et al.*, 2012). This event is similar to the South African “Rage” parties in which teenagers celebrate the end of their own High School qualification (usually called matric).

shows, and other easily accessible pop culture elements (Quek *et al.*, 2012: 901). All of these elements can be seen in Trulife's existing work, employed much for the same reasons, and as such an attempt will be made to include them in the creative part of this project.

There are many other drug and alcohol TIE projects worthy of mention as part of this research. Richards and Bocarro write about using live theatre to explore teenagers' attitudes towards drugs and alcohol as part of the *Alternatives to Incarceration* programme run by Dalhousie University's Youth Research Unit in Nova Scotia, Canada (1995). They note a significant effect on behaviour amongst the target group as well as seeing the programme acting as a "springboard for meaningful dialogue" (Richards and Bocarro, 1995: 100).

Cameron *et al.* (2007) noted similar results in their study, *Drama-based education to motivate participation in substance abuse prevention*. Their follow up research, three months after the performance, revealed that all the respondents still remembered part or all of the play and acknowledged discussing the play and the information they had learned with friends of family (Cameron *et al.*, 2007: 9).

A final example worthy of mention is the work co-designed by the County Inspector for Personal and Social Education and the Teacher Advisor for Drama in Warwickshire, UK. This group designed a TIE programme on drugs education based on research provided by the Standing Conference of Drug Abuse (SCODA⁹), which highlights the importance of research in developing TIE programmes (Winston, 2001: 41). Their research found that the most successful methods with regards to effective drug education are those which:

- encourage active learning;
- portray not just facts about drugs but the social situations in which their use occurs and how to deal with these situations; and,
- implement drug education programmes early.

These three observations, along with the experiences of the various successful international TIE examples described above, provide helpful guidelines for me and the Trulife team in the creation of our own Drug and Alcohol TIE programme.

⁹ SCODA was an annual conference that gathered key role players and presented research on drug abuse in Whitehall and Westminster, including over 400 organizations, which was closed in 2000.

1.3.2. South African examples

Finally, some South Africa examples provide important local contextualisation. TIE has a rich history in South Africa, developing “critical thinking or conscientizing the participants” (Dalrymple, 2005:203) to the issues unique to this country.

Meskin and van der Walt (2007) provide an interesting access point into South African TIE. Their work with university learners developing a TIE programme to teach Shakespeare – specifically *Macbeth* – is in some ways a traditional approach to TIE, falling into the first category described above, namely teaching a part of the established school curriculum. However, what makes this programme unique is that it also recognises the importance of re-positioning Shakespeare – texts often associated with the colonial heritage of the apartheid regime – in a new light, appropriating these texts and making them local, postcolonial and contextually relevant to learners (Meskin and van der Walt, 2007: 76 – 77). This insight would suggest the TIE programmes developed also drew on the second category – those which do not teach the hard curriculum, but focus on moral or social issues and developing life skills such as empathy and critical thinking. The researchers also comment on the ability of TIE to create “multi-layered and multidirectional” learning processes, ultimately making the subject matter come alive on stage, and providing greater context, complexity and nuance than might be possible in a typical classroom lesson (Meskin and van der Walt, 2007: 79). Finally, it is interesting to note that the student groups who created the TIE programmes all chose to make use of stock television genres – one group parodying a *CSI* crime show, one imitating a talk-show exposé, and the other referencing the typical courtroom drama (Meskin and van der Walt, 2007: 79). This use of stylistic features derived from television, juxtaposed with a classic form like Shakespeare, shows the ability of TIE to make material relevant to the experiences of young people and the pop culture staples with which they are most comfortable.

Donald Skinner and his colleagues (1991: 317) write in detail about their use of puppets and street theatre as part of an educational programme to inform local communities about HIV infection and related risks.

The African Research and Educational Puppetry Programme (AREPP¹⁰) created ‘Puppets against AIDS’ in 1988 in an attempt to spread the message about HIV/AIDS and related risks to local communities in Cape Town. One of the key observations driving the use of theatre (as opposed to more traditional methods of distributing information) was that “acquiring knowledge is not sufficient for behaviour change to take place” but that rather “attitudes and basic social norms also have to be adjusted” (Skinner *et al.*, 1991: 317). The use of live theatre (with puppets) allowed the participants to see the issues related to AIDS in context as the stories and situations were shown in real time on stage, including the actors voicing the thoughts and questions the puppet characters experienced as they experienced various situations. This helped avoid the tendency to deny personal risk – the all too common “it won’t happen to me” thinking that was particularly evident in other campaigns at the time. The researchers also discuss the limited effectiveness of campaigns based on the use of fear (Skinner *et al.*, 1991: 318).

Also using *AREPP: Theatre for Life* as the subject of his research into the effectiveness of theatre as an educational tool is Gordon Bilbrough, who presented his findings at the IDEA2007 International Congress of Drama, Theatre and Education in Hong Kong. Bilbrough (2007: 2) discusses a three-year long study of the effectiveness of the work of AREPP, which included 3000 learners at 60 schools across South Africa. This study found that those who had participated in watching the live performance of AREPP’s play, as well as the facilitated peer discussion which followed each performance, showed an increased sense of self-efficacy (Bilbrough, 2007: 2). Audience members reported that seeing the issues portrayed through drama made it feel as though ‘their stories’, ‘their issues’ were being represented which led to greater personal insight. Discussed at great length are also the characteristics needed in the TIE performance to enable audience identification with what was portrayed on stage. One of the key findings of the study was that characters needed to share “perceived points of commonality like age, gender or personality” with the audience, thus providing the opportunity for audience members to observe ‘themselves’ navigating difficult situations (Bilbrough, 2007: 4).

¹⁰ Arepp: *Theatre for Life* is a South African non-profit organisation that creates Applied Theatre productions to provide social life-skills education to school-going learners, with the goal of “enabling informed choice and developing self-efficacy and resilience” (Theatre for Youth, 2016).

Despite the positive response, however, Bilbrough notes:

“In the diverse, multi-cultural South African society this requires continuous research, awareness and familiarity with the audiences, and deliberate and conscious control over the content, construction and context of every element of the production.” (Bilbrough, 2007:5).

This insight was echoed by the Trulife team in my discussions with them. South African schools are a meeting point for the many diverse cultures of our country, and so any play aiming to be relevant and enjoyed by this broad audience, needs to be carefully researched and continually updated as trends and popular culture change.

AREPP’s performance style was informed by the use of popular music, colloquial language delivered in a relaxed and realistic manner, and television features, thus recognising the influence of pop culture. One of the ways this is seen is in “an open set, with clear changes visible to the audience” which allowed the storyline to follow the quick changes in time and place common in television sitcoms. A secondary positive outcome of this style was that the audience perceived the performers as honest and open, not trying to hide anything from them and felt they could relate to what was portrayed (Bilbrough, 2007: 6).

Lynn Dalrymple is recognised as a leading practitioner and researcher within TIE in South Africa, writing extensively on the subject. Her work with DramAidE¹¹ documents the use of their *Act Alive* TIE programme about HIV/AIDS across Kwa-Zulu Natal which ran from 2001 – 2003. Dalrymple describes the programme as “a mixture of performance theatre-in-education, forum theatre¹² and arts workshop¹³” which took place in three stages:

- a) A comic performance to school children in which the topic was introduced;

¹¹ DramAidE (Drama AIDS Education) is an independently funded organization at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, founded in 1992.

¹² Forum theatre is a specific technique developed by theatre practitioner Augusto Boal in which spectators are involved and influence the direction and outcome of the performance, with the goal to explore solutions to the social problems displayed (Boal, A., 1985).

¹³ An arts workshop can be broadly described as a group-based workshop that uses creative arts forms (such as drama or theatre) to explore an issue through experiential learning in a social setting (Community Arts Workshop Inc., 2018).

- b) Workshops held with the children, encouraging them to find their own way of educating others in the community about HIV/AIDS through various artistic mediums; and
- c) A performance for community members by the children (Dalrymple, 1996: 33).

Dalrymple (1996:36) observes that for DramAidE, the use of humour was important in ensuring the high school audience (typically aged between 13 and 19) did not feel threatened by what is very serious content. She notes that this allowed the performers to capture their attention “without raising people’s defences” (1996: 36). Useful guidance is given with regards to the theoretical underpinnings of the work DRAMAIDE do, with emphasis placed on Bandura’s (1997) ideas of self-efficacy (see also Dalrymple, 2005). These ideas will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three and re-inforce my own theories about why TIE is effective.

While these examples of local TIE programmes are but a small cross-section of the large amount of work that exists (see, for example, Blumberg and Walder, 1999), they are useful in building a more comprehensive understanding of TIE practices, as well as providing some practical insights with regards to the creation of a successful TIE programme within a uniquely South African context. It is evident that there are a number of key principals involved in making successful TIE works. These include:

- The ability of TIE to challenge political and social hegemony;
- The opportunity provided by TIE to present curriculum taught in the classroom in a new way, with fresh insight;
- The use of elements from popular culture, which was present in all the examples described;
- The need to address not just knowledge, but attitudes and social norms, and the advantage TIE has in doing this;
- The recognition that fear tactics do not work;
- The use of workshops or follow up discussions to concretise learning;
- The need for characters to share commonalities with the audience to facilitate identification;
- The use of humour as a successful technique; and

- The need for those creating TIE programmes to examine the theoretical underpinnings of such work.

Applying many of these principals, and vital to my understanding, are the TIE works previously created by Trulife.

1.3.3. Trulife's recent Theatre in Education projects

Since their inception in 2011, Trulife have developed five TIE productions to date, with the creative project for this dissertation forming their sixth programme. Each production consists of 4 or 5 performers, of mixed gender, made up of white and isiZulu¹⁴ black South Africans, aged between 18 and 25. The productions are grade specific, created with a specific age group and the content of that year's Life Orientation curriculum in mind, and are accompanied by basic stage lighting and a sound system to enable a more theatrical experience. The inclusion of lights and sound is an important aesthetic consideration for Trulife, as their aim to create a theatrical, entertaining performance forms a large part of their strategy (as is discussed in detail below).

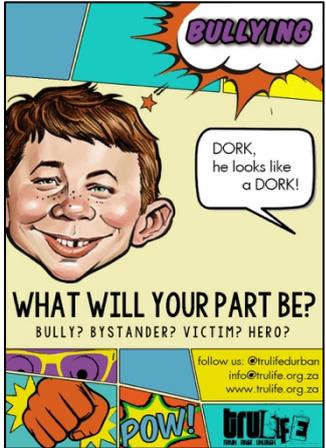
Trulife describe their productions as follows:

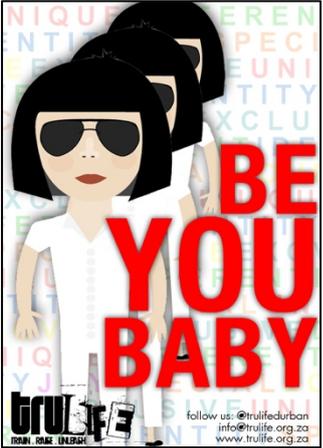
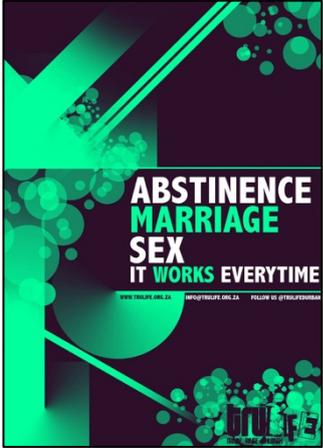
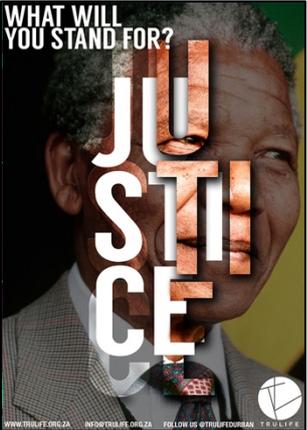
Our live productions are the focus of our work and the primary vehicle for delivering our messages to schools. Each production takes over 6 months to develop. In this development stage the topic is carefully chosen based on schools' requests, close study of the Life Orientation Curriculum, and a knowledge of what social or health problems most need addressing in that specific age group. The topic is then researched in great detail to ensure the information presented is accurate and relevant. The performers are very involved in the creation process, often devising material together and collaborating on different pieces. As a result, there is no single playwright or creator of any production, but rather a team effort. A completed production is between 35 and 45 minutes in length. This is a carefully considered timeframe that allows enough depth in the material, without becoming so long that

¹⁴ isiZulu people make up the majority of the population in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

the learners watching lose interest. It also allows the production to fit into a single school lesson with ease (most schools run 55 minute lessons). The productions are also intentionally not like “typical plays”. There is no single story or single performance mode presented. Rather, the performance jumps from onstage acting, to filmed scenes, to dance, to spoken word poetry, to media pieces, all created with the latest trends and styles in mind. This ensures that what is being presented is immediately appealing to the audience, and perceived as fresh, relevant, exciting and ultimately encourages a stronger “buy in” to the message presented. At the end of each production a short talk is given by one of the senior team members to summarise what was presented and drive home the key lessons learnt in that production (Trulife, 2016: 8).

A more detailed description of each existing programme can be found below (Trulife, 2016:10):

<p>Bullying (Grade 6) (11 - 12 years old)</p>	<p>Challenging young people to value the differences in others. We confront the absurdity of cyber, physical and emotional bullying; encouraging learners to stop bringing others down and instead build them up.</p>	
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<p>Copyright (Grade 7) (12 – 13 years old)</p>	<p>Peer pressure and self-identity are the focus on this production. A comical look at the idea of conformity that plagues this generation, challenging individuals to embrace their own identity and to use their unique talents and abilities to add to the bigger picture.</p>	
<p>I Heart Sex (Grade 9) (14 – 15 years old)</p>	<p>This cheekily named production looks at the flippancy of the current sex culture, the dangers of treating sex too casually, and how often young people confuse sex with love. Individuals are encouraged to set a higher standard.</p>	
<p>Justice (Grade 10) (15 – 16 years old)</p>	<p>Confronting injustice in our nation, particularly around social, racial and economic inequality and the apathy that is often expressed towards those wrongs. Individuals are encouraged that “they are the solution”.</p>	

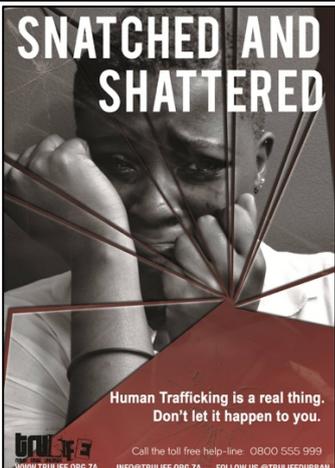
<p>Human Trafficking (Grade 10 – 12) (16 – 18 years old)</p>	<p>A production bringing awareness to the reality of Human Trafficking, educating learners in order to prevent them from being trafficked and informing them what they can do to help prevent the increase of this horrific practice of modern day slavery.</p>	
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Table 1. Trulife production descriptions

Each of the above productions is followed by a workshop. These workshops are optional, as sometimes schools do not have the time or resources to have both the production and workshop. However, for schools at which both can be delivered, the workshops have proved a meaningful addition, and “allow for a more personal application of what was learnt in the production and give learners the chance to voice their opinions and have any questions answered” (Trulife, 2016: 9). In my view, workshops form a significant component of the TIE learning experience used to solidify what has been taught in the performance. The ideal would be that every programme contains a workshop for maximum impact.

A final aspect to consider when developing a foundational background of TIE is the way such a history intersects with postmodernism.

1.4. The “postmodern TIE” programme

As has been mentioned above, Trulife – from my personal observations of their work – departs from traditional TIE programme styles and implements what I have chosen to term a **postmodern style with pop culture influences**. It must be acknowledged that the term ‘postmodern’ is in itself a difficult label, with an almost bottomless complexity of meanings and connotations, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. However, Trulife’s use of this style is an intentional, albeit intuitive, attempt to distance themselves from traditional theatre practices and present for their audience something “fresh”, “not a typical play” and “relevant

to the experiences of young people” (Trulife, 2016: 8). The exact postmodern and pop culture elements I believe are used by Trulife, which we attempted to replicate in this project, are outlined in detail in the script in Part Two, Chapter Four.

As has been outlined, TIE has a rich history, with examples found all over the world. However, recent developments have evolved with the audiences, incorporating more postmodern and pop culture elements. In terms of my own study, it is therefore necessary to establish how this literary understanding of TIE intersects with the broader framework of postmodernism.

2. DEVELOPING COMMON GROUND BETWEEN TIE AND ACTION RESEARCH

As a foundation for this research, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework within which my ideas are positioned. The framework I have chosen, which I believe best suits both the work undertaken by Trulife and the application of Action Research is postmodernism. My understanding of postmodernism and its relevance to contemporary life are discussed here in further detail.

2.1. Postmodernism: underpinnings of theory and practice

Postmodernism, in broad terms, is a philosophy or theory which aims to describe the human condition in a contemporary context as a reaction to the modernist movement of the late-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century. Linda Hutcheon, who writes extensively on the subject, in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (2004) offers the following in an attempt to define what is a very broad and contested notion:

Postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges—be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography. (Hutcheon, 2004: 3)

Hutcheon goes on to refine what she means by contradictory, stating:

As a cultural activity that can be discerned in most art forms and many currents of thought today, what I want to call postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political. Its contradictions may well be those of late capitalist society, but whatever the cause, these contradictions are certainly manifest in the important postmodern concept of “the presence of the past”. (Hutcheon, 2004:4)

However, postmodernism can also be referred to as an artistic style (with some of its common features outlined below). It is precisely because of this duplicity, as described by Hutcheon (2004), that postmodernism functions as both the broad framework for this study as well as describing the stylistic features which will be included in the final creative product. The framework creates the broad picture or philosophy upon which my thought-processes, methods and creation process are built, whereas my understanding of postmodernism as an artistic style, can be seen in relation to its influence on the creative project created.

I recognise that the philosophies and theories I am referencing are complex and the writings extensive; however, in my study, I am not examining these ideas in an attempt to offer a detailed analysis of any of them. I am, rather, appropriating a few key concepts from the broader discourses that frame my approach to creating and understanding TIE programmes.

Technically, postmodernism refers to the period following modernity, which originated in the mid- to late twentieth century. It encompasses movements in art, music, architecture, literature, and philosophy primarily in reaction to “the results of late capitalist dissolution of bourgeois hegemony and the development of mass culture” (Hutcheon, 2004:6). The term ‘postmodern’ was first used in 1880 by J.W. Chapman as a way of describing a painting style that he felt departed from the dominant Impressionist style (Hassan, 1987: 12). Decades later, in 1914, J. M. Thompson used it to describe changes in attitudes and beliefs in the critique of religion, writing: “the *raison d'être* of Post-Modernism is to escape from the double-mindedness of Modernism by being thorough in its criticism by extending it to religion as well as theology” (Thompson, 1914: 733). The term *postmodern* came into greater prominence in the 1950s where it began being used more and more frequently by philosophers, writers and critics.

In his book *Theory/Theatre* (2002), Mark Fortier provides an in-depth discussion of some of the key theorists whose writing and ideas – while subjective to their own interpretation – help form one interpretation of postmodernism by which I will be guided. I have chosen to highlight and provide a brief overview of only the concepts related to postmodernism that I feel are most relevant to this work.

One of key features of this research is the acceptance of multiple perspectives. Jean-François Lyotard writes extensively about this in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), identifying one of the key features of postmodernism as a scepticism towards previously trusted metanarratives, which governed the way people lived and made choices about their lives. A metanarrative refers to an ideological belief or value held in general by society, such as those which support religion, monarchy, or even capitalism as the correct and accepted systems of Western society. This belief is often capitalised upon by those in power and used to maintain the status quo. Lyotard argues that these metanarratives or grand truths must be deconstructed and challenged in favour of more subjective, personal and diverse micro-narratives. In this project my own voice as researcher is not viewed as either the only valid opinion, or as one which should be ignored in the attempt to remain objective. Rather, there is space for many opinions and beliefs to co-exist as myself and the participants reflect on this work. Furthermore, in the creative script for the TIE production, a rejection of metanarratives in favour of micro-narratives voiced by different characters or elements of the performance, is a key feature.

Working alongside the challenging and breakdown of metanarratives, is the concept of deconstruction. Deconstruction is an important concept in postmodernism and its related theatre practices. Coined by philosopher Jacques Derrida, deconstruction refers to the intentional breaking down of a text or idea in an attempt to re-evaluate its associated values (Caputo, 1997: 37). Each text, image, or concept is re-examined from multiple perspectives, allowing for the possibility of new meanings and interpretations, challenging Western dominant values. Linked to this notion, is the idea that any text created, once communicated, can no longer have its meaning controlled or fixed by the creator. This is closely linked to “Death-of-the-Author”, a phrase used by Roland Barthes to capture the idea that the meaning of a text “depends on the impressions of the reader, rather than the passions or tastes of the writer”; or “a text’s unity lies not in its origins, but in its destination” (Barthes, 1967: 147). Once again, this idea was intentionally applied in the creation of this TIE programme, and in my analysis of the process. Even the way the story is told, as described later, is fragmented and not a complete whole, with many different parts that all ultimately relate to one idea of substance abuse and addiction. However, through deconstruction, these issues are examined from different perspectives.

Michael Foucault's (1982) exploration of the relationship between power, social behaviour and how meaning is constructed within social structures has great relevance to my own ideas about play-making and ultimately meaning-making. He was particularly interested in the way in which language is used to control and oppress certain behaviours through its connotative power (see, for example, Foucault, 1982). Foucault highlights the idea that our identity is constructed and constantly evolving, through the learning, selection and appropriation of ideas, values and ideologies, as opposed to being formed through genetics and upbringing and then fixed. Foucault's ideas about identity and social behaviour have important implications in that they recognise the freedom individuals have within a postmodern society to pick and choose which elements of their identity they present to others, and that our identities can be changed at will. His emphasis on choice was an important underpinning idea in the creation of this TIE programme – even the catch phrase that became a motif for the performance, *"What will your story be?"*, captures the essence of the choice posed to the audience. The Trulife team did not set out to dictate a behaviour and message to the audience, but rather to expose them to multiple viewpoints on drugs and alcohol, and encourage them to make a choice based on their newfound knowledge.

Postmodernism generally celebrates a self-reflexive, ironic and sceptical approach to life which plays with culture and contests the status quo, as described by Hutcheon (2004). Artists and individuals are encouraged to experiment with style, challenge societal norms, and comment on the processes they engage in and their experiences of the postmodern condition. This is clearly seen in Trulife's work, where no one style is kept to, and the creative team are free to play and explore. The use of parody and poetry which directly question the audiences' beliefs and attitudes is also apparent in every production, highlighting the self-reflective, questioning nature of the work. Along with this, the impact of modern technology, particularly media, and how it forms contemporary culture is explored by many postmodern artists (for example, by McLuhan, 1964). Jean Baudrillard, in his seminal work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), questions our notion of reality and how this has been drastically shaped by electronic media and digital technology. He argues that the increased use of and reliance on digital technology (like television, smart phones, computers) have led to a detachment from events as the context and impact of these events is diluted through the technology through which they are received. Furthermore, he notes that increasingly people are living their lives through 'machines' which could lead to the breakdown of human relationships in the physical

as people live more and more vicariously in a virtual reality (Fortier, 2002: 118). Trulife embraces technology and especially social media, in an attempt to remain relevant with its young *digitally native*¹⁵ audience, attempting to use media familiar to them, but to break through the disconnect Baudrillard speaks of by including live actors on stage.

While not all of the above philosophies are immediately relevant to the creation of a new TIE project, they form the lenses through which the thinking of the Trulife team and the type of work they do can be analysed, and underpin the methods chosen for this research.

2.2. Postmodern ideas about theoretical research

Research in a postmodern world occupies a contested and debated position. The nature of research historically seems to contradict the intentions of much postmodern thought. For example, how can one state a single conclusion based on research findings, when postmodernism encourages the recognition of multiple truths while rejecting binary thinking and metanarratives? However, Jameson (1991: 91) defends the role of research in the postmodern world, arguing that it is “a pedagogical one: to provide ‘cognitive maps’ which will help us to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle.” Nevertheless, there is a clear shift in the types of research favoured as well as the role of the researcher within the postmodern paradigm. This shift is one which moves from accepting primarily empirical quantitative research as the most reliable method to one in which qualitative methods are brought into greater prominence.

Jameson’s observation highlights three important aspects that need to be considered in postmodern research:

- i. *The role of the individual (or ‘researcher’) in research.*

The leading philosophy underpinning much research before postmodernism is positivism – the belief that “knowledge is derived using scientific method and based on sensory

¹⁵ The term “digital native’ is a catch-all category for children who have grown up using technology like the Internet, computers and mobile devices. This exposure to technology in the early years is believed to give digital natives a greater familiarity with and understanding of technology than people who were born before it was widespread. (Techopedia, 2019)

experience gained through experiments or comparative analysis” (Walliman, 2011: 36). This requires the researcher to remain objective, operating as an outside observer who does not influence the research subjects or environment. Research within a postmodern frame rejects this notion, recognising that true objectivity is not only impossible but unnecessary.

Postmodern research, rather, celebrates the reflexive opportunities the research offers, allowing the researcher to “become aware of her own prejudices and assumptions” and use this awareness to “reflect and correct one’s own thoughts, values and actions” (Postholm and Skrøvset, 2013: 503). In addition, such research avoids – or subverts – the temptation to draw reductive conclusions that claim to be universally applicable, or to deny the link between “knowledge and power” (Walliman, 2011: 39).

ii. The role of the collective subjects (or ‘researched’).

Postmodern research acknowledges that truth can be socially constructed by a particular group coming to know and understand natural human experiences in context (Stringer, 1996: 62). Furthermore, postmodern thinking “allows action researchers to critically inspect and explore social dimensions of their practices and then to reflect on possible transformations” (Stringer, 1996: 63) without claiming to be the authority on their subjects’ experiences. In other words, the researcher acknowledges the influence the very act of researching and observing has on the subjects, and that the results generated by any group of people will reflect the personal beliefs and identities of the people within that group. While a positivist approach might position human behaviour as classifiable and reducible, a researcher with an understanding of postmodernism recognises that it is “fluid, dynamic, and changing” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:35) and should not attempt to be too reductive in their observations.

iii. The purpose of conducting research (‘regain[ing] a capacity to act’)¹⁶

While historically the aim of much research was the research itself, and collecting a set of data that could be studied and upon which conclusions could be based, research which recognises a postmodern frame is interested in the constant changes and specificity found within the research. In such research, researchers replace the need to look for a grand theory – a metanarrative – with “local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations” recognising that their research is simply one representation of reality, “multi-

¹⁶ These three headings are derived from the original Jameson quote (Jameson, 1991: 91)

faceted, and emergent construction, a never-finished project” (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991: 161).

Indeed, Jennings and Graham (1996: 276) suggest that a static or single interpretation of results, as defined by positivist thinking, is not possible in a postmodern world, and that the role of individual perspective, as highlighted by postmodern philosophy, should be emphasised. This idea is influenced strongly by the philosophies expressed in postmodern thought – particularly the deconstruction of metanarratives by Lyotard (1984); the acceptance of subjectivity in understanding truth (Vattimo, 1983); and the idea that identity is constructed and constantly changing (Foucault, 1982).

Leading writer and teacher on the method of Action Research as used for this project, Jack Whitehead (2012), argues that the positivist approach to research, in which the only means to discover reliable and true knowledge is through scientific enquiry and methods, is no longer the only way of approaching research and indeed thinking about truth. Rather, researchers¹⁷ may adopt a post-positivist approach, and form their own living theories, and use their personal observations and practices to test these theories (Whitehead, 2009: 87). These living theories are closely linked with the method of Action Research as will be discussed below. While I am not specifically engaging with the concept of living theories, I am using my own personal experience and those of the Trulife team to theorise/conceptualise about AR in a new context, namely devising of TIE programmes.

2.3. Education in a postmodern era

Postmodern philosophy reaches every aspect of society, and as such has had an influence not only on research, but also on education.

¹⁷ It must be noted that in Whitehead’s experience and research, AR and Living Theories refers most commonly to the experience of teachers or other education professionals in the classroom and their observation of their learners’ responses to their practice.

One of the revolutionaries of educational theory is Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, who published his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970. In it, Freire argues that the previous model of education no longer serves its learners. He complains that in this system:

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the learners. His task is to 'fill' the learners with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance...This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to learners extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing deposits. (Freire, 1970: 45-46)

Freire, therefore, argues for a rejection of this banking model, in favour of what he calls 'problem-posing' education. In this model, teachers and learners work together to identify problems, and learn through the challenge of finding solutions to these problems (Freire, 1970). This model prioritises creative critical thinking and liberates the student and teacher as they become "jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow" (Freire, 1970: 52).

The underpinning thoughts and beliefs of Freire's pedagogy and those thoughts and beliefs relating to postmodern philosophy share some clear similarities. It is the questioning nature, coupled with a new understanding of truth (and therefore knowledge) as fluid and subjective, of postmodern thinking that paved the way for a philosophy such as Freire's. The gradual impact of his pedagogic philosophy has been seen across the world, and there is a marked shift in the approach to teaching and learning.

Notable examples include Jones Irwin's in-depth analysis of Freire's impact in universities across South America, and the growth of this movement through North America and beyond, in *Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Education: Origins, Developments, Impacts and Legacies* (2012)¹⁸. Closer to home, Lynn Dalrymple credits Freire as a major influence in the development of her work with DramAidE (2006). In South Africa, the focus on a holistic

¹⁸ See also: Rugut and Osman (2013) in Kenya; Benseman (1998) in New Zealand; and Thomas (2009) in South Africa.

education, with human rights and equality as a cornerstone¹⁹, ties in well with Freire's concepts of democratising education. Indeed, in my own experiences in the classroom, the most meaningful lessons were those in which the learners were engaged in their own discovery/ies, with a focus on the messages and ideologies being explored, and not the simple facts. Trulife's aims and intentions, as will be discussed below, are to engage with learners in a way described in a group interview by one of the participants as a "very eye-to-eye" (Participant 2, 2016)²⁰ approach, rather than filling learners with facts and forcing one viewpoint; instead, they prompt questions and focus on the choices available to the learners, and the consequences those choices carry. These ideas about education in a new era underpin the work Trulife is doing and provide a framework for understanding the choices made in the creation of this project.

¹⁹ This approach is clearly outlined at the beginning of each *National Curriculum Statement*, published and implemented by the South African Education Department in 2012:

"Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa." (p.3)

As well as in the Life Orientation syllabus specifically:

"Life Orientation is one of the four fundamental subjects required for the National Senior Certificate, which means that it is compulsory for all learners in Grades 10, 11 and 12. It is a unique subject in that it applies a holistic approach to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners. This encourages the development of a balanced and confident learner who can contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all." (p.7)

²⁰ All references to comment made during the group discussions by participants appear in the reference list collectively under Interview Participants (2016) as their input was shared in group discussions and group interviews.

2.4. Postmodernism as a theatre style

As has been previously noted, postmodernism is a very broad and contested notion - both as a philosophy and a theatre style. It is often described as 'un-definable' (Hassan, 2001) as in its very nature it resists labels and celebrates multiplicity. It is therefore important to create a working set of characteristics for how the term 'postmodernism' applies to this research. The philosophy of postmodernism as a way of thinking about research and truth has been discussed above; however, postmodernism has also come to be used as a term to describe a theatrical style, or a collection of features which make a specific theatre style, as will be discussed here.

As a theatre style, postmodernism is strongly influenced by the concepts and ideologies of its related philosophical movement. It is important to recognise that an attempt narrowly to define and label the specific stylistic features found in a work termed as 'postmodern' is problematic. Rather, broad features can be recognised. The work of Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) and Fortier in *Theory/Theatre* (2002) provide an interesting discussion of some of these characteristics.

One of the observations made is that postmodern theatre rejects traditional Aristotelian dramatic theory and narrative structure (Lehmann, 2006: 48,69). Aristotle, in his *Poetics* (2008), described the idea that a play should be a contained whole and singular action with a clear beginning, middle and end. Gustav Freytag later developed this idea to include the dramatic arc. He describes the ideal structure as having exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement (2004: 192)

This structure later became known by drama theorists and educators as 'dramatic structure' and was used for centuries as the staple structure around which plays were written. Postmodern playwrights deliberately question this structure, deconstructing its assumptions and experimenting with new ways to deliver their ideas or stories. This rejection of dramatic structure manifests in the non-linear structure of postmodern plays, with jumps back or forward in time, as well as in different and unrelated stories being told, often simultaneously. The audience must work to make meaning for themselves out of what is presented.

Deconstruction is a concept that became pivotal to most postmodern artists. Philosopher Jacques Derrida describes deconstruction as the intentional questioning and breaking down of texts, examining our assumptions, values and connotations attached to that text because of our own ideology and context (Derrida, 1989: 54). He argues that all text (and ultimately ideas) should be closely scrutinised and taken apart in order to allow for the recognition of multiple possible meanings and new, nuanced and subjective interpretations.

Very closely linked to the idea of deconstruction, and the rejection of traditional structure, is the fragmentation of narratives and of the unities of time, place and action (Lehmann, 2006: 19,79; Fortier, 2002: 184). The unities of time, place and action are the foundation of traditional theatre, ensuring a play is received by the audience as believable, relatable and an interpreted as representing real life. The treatment of these three unities can be summarised in the following table:

	TRADITIONAL THEATRE	POSTMODERN THEATRE
UNITY OF TIME	The story unfolds in a logical, linear way. Events occur chronologically, over a short time-frame with no jumps forward or backward in time.	Linear structure is rejected. The play can unfold non-linearly, non-chronologically, with jumps in time or no established time frame at all. Time is bent and played with at the playwright's will.
UNITY OF PLACE	The story occurs in a single, believable place. To maintain the illusion of reality, a realistic setting is created on stage and this is not changed. At no point does the play move to another location.	Unity of place is no longer upheld. Scenes can jump from place to place, across cities, continents or worlds. Location can be left intentionally vague, with little or no sense of actual place. Set takes on a symbolic or contradictory

		role, not used to establish place.
UNITY OF ACTION	This unity is the result of a culmination of the first two. The action portrayed on stage is entirely believable, natural and shows the cause and effect of the characters' actions. There are few (if any) subplots or implausible events in the action shown.	There is little unity of action. Because scenes cut from one time and place to another without any justification given to the audience, the action can feel intentionally disrupted. Micro-narrative and multiple perspectives are shown, with no single story being the focus.

Table 2. Comparing style in traditional and postmodern theatre (Adapted from Britannica Online, Luebering, JE. (2016))

Another feature of postmodern theatre is the use of signs, symbols and cross-referencing, often in contradictory and playful ways or through the use of parody (Lehmann, 2006: 119; Fortier, 2002: 176). Postmodern plays might feature well-known symbols, but the meaning of these is deconstructed and explored in new ways. Cross-referencing sees the borrowing of known material – such as lines from other plays, advertising jingles, famous quotes, song lyrics, images from pop culture or other art forms – and reworking these into the performance.

Borrowing goes hand in hand with the use of 'pastiche' - a collage-like appropriating and reworking of various texts, images, ideas, styles and more (Lehmann, 2006: 111; Fortier, 2002: 177, 182; Silverman *et al.*, 1990: 149), as well as a tendency of postmodern theatre to combine different genres (such as physical theatre, comedy, musical theatre) and disciplines (art, dance, multimedia, more traditional theatre forms) (Lehmann, 2006: 87, 94, 111). This challenges people's perceptions around what is art and what is permissible according to traditional creative practices. The breakdown of clear divisions between genres and styles is closely linked to the postmodern approach to truth and its focus on subjectivity, and a

scepticism towards previously accepted metanarratives, preferring instead multiplicity as an approach to narrative, character, dramatic action (Fortier, 2002: 184)

A last trend of postmodernism worth noting is a leaning towards what can be described as a more 'cinematographic' theatre (Lehmann 2006: 114-118, 189; Fortier, 2002: 189). This acknowledges the impact film, television and pop culture have had on theatre in relation to both content and performance style (Lehmann, 2006: 94, 118; Hutcheon, 2004: 176-178). Postmodern theatre employs techniques appropriate from popular media such as film, television, radio, popular music and advertising. Some performances, for example, experiment with simulating the ease at which film can 'cut' from scene to scene with apparent effortlessness (from the perspective of the audience) and how special effects can be added. Postmodern works also make great use of multimedia directly, incorporating film and projection into the work. This works in combination with set design and live performance, creating a layered experience for the audience which is able to flow seamlessly (as the media fills the 'gap' of a costume or set change). Added to this, it allows for juxtaposition of ideas, symbols and styles as what is shown on screen may interact with what is performed on stage, altering the meaning of both elements. Trulife's work incorporates multimedia and pop culture in many ways – from popular music, to the use of film and graphic design, in order to guide the audience's reception of their performance as relevant and on-trend. As they perform for a young audience, the need to engage with popular forms that are most desirable by this very audience, is paramount.

Postmodernism, whilst a very broad, imposing area to include in any research, is relevant to my study in two ways:

- a) The ideas of postmodernism as a theatre style directly link to the type of work Trulife are creating as can be seen in their existing TIE programmes. These programmes contain many of the stylistic features mentioned above and the TIE programme I will be developing with Trulife as part of this research needs to reflect similar stylistic features to fit into the body of their work. Much of the Trulife team's thinking about theatre, society and the link between the two, also reflects a postmodern view of the world.
- b) In this piece of work, my thinking and actions have been framed and moulded by the Action Research model. This is outlined in more detail below, but its roots - in some ways -

are found in postmodern thought. The insertion of the self into research, and the acceptance of personal, subjective observations as valid data, are features of Action Research which would not have been accepted as valid were it not for the *making room* alongside modernist, positivist notions, for more postmodern approaches.

2.5. Bringing the Two Frameworks Together – Postmodernism and Theatre in Education.

To those familiar with postmodern theatre as well as TIE, there may appear to be a direct contradiction in drawing on both of these genres for the creation of one work. On the one hand, it could be argued, TIE's entire premise is to educate about a particular topic, essentially communicating a single view through didactic methods. The most common impression, therefore, of TIE programmes is that they adhere to a more modernist way of thinking, and stand in direct contrast to postmodernism, especially with regards to their approach to knowledge, truth, and metanarratives. However, in the case of Trulife's work, and indeed the work created with them for this project, I do believe the two opposing styles are *simpatico*²¹ and prove that TIE can embrace elements of postmodernism. If the work of key Drama in Education (DIE) theorist Dorothy Heathcote is examined with a postmodern outlook in mind, one starts to notice the focus on letting the learners find their own truth, come to their own realisations, and ultimately make their own choices and face the consequences of these (Heathcote, 1990). Similarly, in my study of Trulife's style, it became very clear that the focus of their productions was not simply the delivery of a very black and white message, but rather exploring a topic of relevance from many angles (thus exploring micro-narratives) and presenting a variety of choices to the audience. Added to this, the style of these performances is markedly different from more traditional TIE programmes and carries clear postmodern influences.

²¹ Having or characterized by shared attributes or interests; compatible. (Oxford Dictionary)

This shift from the modernist programmes with single narratives and clear-cut messages such as “don’t do drugs” or “pollution is bad” may be a subtle one, but it represents an important shift in the role and style of TIE programmes in South Africa²².

Just how these two seemingly opposite philosophies come together is largely related to the methods used to both create the TIE programme, as well as those used to examine this process and my own practice within it. In Part Two, the practical methods, and their product in the form of the finished script, are presented.

²² For example, as mentioned earlier, abstinence is one of the early messages Trulife developed. This topic is interpreted through their stance as Christian organization, and could rightfully be argued as only one approach to the topic of sexual health. However, the message presented in the production is open to the audience’s interpretation – the abstinence message is mentioned, but not over-stressed or taught through fear. Rather, multiple experiences of sex and relationships are presented and the audience are left to choose for themselves.

PART TWO: THE ACT OF ACTING, THE ACT OF FEELING

3. THE CREATIVE PROJECT METHODS

As one of the major components of this research is a creative project, it was helpful to split this research into three parts. This allows for clarity regarding the specific methods and tools used in the creation of the performed Theatre in Education (TIE) programme, as well as those used in analysing my role in this dissertation.

With this in mind, the script describing the TIE programme, *DNA: Drugs & Alcohol*, created in collaboration with Trulife for this project is found in Part Two, Chapter Four; while the written analysis of that creative process is outlined in Part Three.

However, it is important for my research, as well as in reading this work, that the three parts be understood as very closely related and in communication with each other. The script in Chapter Four forms more than a case study or example to illustrate my discussion, but should rather be viewed as an integral product of this research, complete in its own right, but also providing data for discussion in Part Three. The methods used in the development of the practical TIE programme are discussed here, while the methods used to direct my theoretical research are discussed in Part Three.

The devising and research took place primarily in Kloof, Durban, at the offices of Trulife - a subsidiary of Non-profit Organisation, Restoration of Hope – and at my home in Glenwood, Durban. While Trulife do visit schools all over KwaZulu-Natal, this research focused specifically on the development of the TIE script and not on its reception by the target audience. Thus, little of my time was spent outside of the board room and rehearsal rooms at their offices where the creation of the TIE programme took place.

The data for this research was generated through the process of working with the Trulife creators and actors and can be summarised as the script, recorded group interviews, and my own journalled reflections of the process. The time period for this study covered 18 months. From January 2016 until June of the same year, I spent time on my own reading, researching and planning for the creative process that was about to be undertaken. From June until the end of the year, I worked closely with the Trulife team, in a series of sessions implementing the practical methods. The members of Trulife's creative team worked with me to devise the TIE programme. They are a group of six core practitioners, aged between 21 and 30, who take on the many roles needed for their productions - actors, devisers, musicians, marketers, designers and technicians – as well as additional interns who volunteer with the organisation. Their experience and training varies greatly, as many are in their first year post-High School. The final six months was spent reflecting on the process, refining the TIE programme and writing up the results. Also acting as participants were two outside experts, both familiar to Trulife but only involved in this work as visitors who attended one session only and offered their outside perspective on the TIE performance we had created.

In the six months during which I worked with the Trulife team to devise the work the following process was followed:

1. An initial meeting to establish working parameters and gain permission to engage in this work
2. Four discussion-based focus groups were held, spread over two months. These were led by myself, but had a very loosely structured format or agenda as the devising methods we were using required a high level of flexibility and freedom.
3. Three interviews were conducted. These were not focused on developing the creative TIE programme but in checking on with the participants how they were finding the process and recording their observations.
4. A number of rehearsal/on-stage sessions. I had initially hoped to attend all rehearsals and guide the on-stage process carefully. However, the time I had available was insufficient and the Trulife team – who meet daily and are all engaged full-time in their work – ultimately ended up rehearsing on their own in between our scheduled rehearsals. In total we had eight formal rehearsals together. These were led by the Trulife actors, with myself giving input as prompted, while recording the progress made and any observations I felt were relevant.

5. An initial performance for two outside experts who were invited to share their thoughts and provide valuable feedback on whether our aims were being achieved.
6. Final dress rehearsal. The finished work was performed in full for Trulife staff not involved in the project, and for the purposes of recording.

The socio-political-economic context within which Trulife work is varied. Trulife is a well-funded organization, based in a higher-income middle class area (Kloof, Durban); however, their target audience is all high school learners within KwaZulu-Natal. Their programmes go to a wide range schools, from wealthy private schools, with ample resources, to under-resourced rural/township schools. Therefore, the programme we developed, and the scope of this study, needed to remain broad and accessible within most socio-economic contexts. The team I worked with reflects this diversity – with some members well-educated, with drama training, while others come from a nearby low income peri-urban area, and have had little or no drama training before joining the team. The team is made up of white and black people, with a range in age from 18 to 27, all of whom speak English capably.

It was in working with this group of diverse young people that we explored collaborative devising as a method of TIE programme creation.

3.1. Collaborative Devising

When creating a new piece of theatre there are many methods available - from an individual writing a script, to more collaborative group methods. For the creative part of this project I used collaborative devising to create a TIE programme for Grade 8 learners²³ about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Collaborative devising is a very broad method but was limited to the following understanding for this project.

The project was a collaborative one because while I guided the development of the TIE script, and was responsible for recording all creative decisions made, the creating itself took the form of a democratic process, where every member of the group had equal say and contributed ideas and material as they felt prompted to do. In *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*, devising is described by Alison Oddey (1997: 1) as “determined and defined by a group of people who set up an initial framework or structure to explore and experiment with ideas, images, concepts, themes, or specific stimuli that might include music, text, objects, paintings or movement”. Furthermore, it is work that is created ‘from scratch’ entirely by the group themselves, and not by starting with a play script that someone else has written (Oddey, 1997: 1).

Devising has no one strict method or sequence (Oddey, 1997: 11) but certain techniques can be identified that form part of a devising process. These techniques, or methods, can be divided into two sections in relation to my research. The first section contains methods which helped to generate research material, ideas and knowledge about both the topic of drug and alcohol abuse as well as establishing goals for the style of production we would be creating. The second section describes methods which were used to translate these ideas onto the stage. These methods are all practical and theatrical in nature, and help the actor-devisers to move their ideas from intangible discussion, to creative action on stage as the content of the TIE programme.

²³ In South Africa, Grade 8 learners typically are between 13 and 15 years old. This is also the start of High School, and so a transitional year for learners.

Section One – Generating ideas

The following techniques were employed in generating ideas for the production.

a. Recalling lived experiences

This technique requires participants to draw upon their own past memories of experiences as a way of generating material or stories. Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), writes extensively about the use of lived experiences as a major impetus for a creative process. Vygotsky (in Haagensen 2014: 13) argues that “creative activity is always rooted in the creator’s past experiences”. In this creative process, “past experiences that are influenced by the environment go through a transition that takes the form of a circular path” (Haagensen 2014: 25) leading to the creation of a new artistic product, a new story told theatrically, in the case of Trulife’s work. In an early discussion group, members of the creative team were asked to share their own experiences of drugs and alcohol from their past and reflect on how these shaped their current behaviour and perceptions. These experiences varied greatly, and so provided an important nuanced insight into the topic.

b. Brainstorming and group discussion.

These two techniques are very closely linked and went hand in hand in the creation of this project. Discussion groups, also referred to as focus groups (MacDonald and Headlam, 2008: 43) invite a “number of individuals to discuss their views on a particular topic” (MacDonald and Headlam, 2008: 43 - 44). These groups are usually small in size (4 - 12 people) and allow for a more in-depth understanding of the topic, gathered from more than one individual simultaneously, which helps to broaden the range of data collected and generates multiple ideas (MacDonald and Headlam, 2008: 43 - 44). For this project, there were two groups engaged in group discussion at various times in the process. The first was a core group of more experienced Trulife staff, consisting of five people who had created previous TIE programmes for Trulife and were instrumental in revealing Trulife’s usual processes and methods to me.²⁴ The second group were the actors and interns currently working and volunteering with Trulife. This group consisted of seven people who shared creative ideas as we worked together. Brainstorming was used within these discussion times as a way of

²⁴ Exactly what their usual processes and methods are is described in the next chapter.

generating new ideas and exploring possibilities. By using this method, group discussion members were required to respond to stimulus I provided such as a question or a topic and were encouraged to “express their suggestions or ideas quickly and spontaneously, without much processed thought or reflection” (Arivanathan, 2015: 1). For example, I asked the question, “why are teens drinking?” and asked for rapid fire answers to generate multiple possible reasons. At another point we used brainstorming to determine what the core stylistic features of Trulife’s work were. The flexibility and informal nature of brainstorming meant this discussion didn’t need to be grounded in academic jargon but could reveal the range of understanding and interpretations of the various team members. At this stage of the devising process criticism of ideas was discouraged by the discussion leader (in this case me), with the focus being on sharing as many ideas as possible, which could later be tested and refined. My role was to initiate the discussion, and to record the ideas that were shared on a whiteboard so that all could see them.

c. Mind mapping.

This involves “visually representing information in an interesting format without the limits or formality of standard written text” (Meier, 2007: 1). It generally places the central topic for discussion in the centre of the page, and allows for creative, non-linear thinking to evolve as ideas are placed around the central topic. Tony Buzan, who is credited with inventing mind mapping highlights its benefits, stating, “Normal linear note taking and writing will put you into a semi-hypnotic trance, while mind mapping will greatly enhance your left and right brain cognitive skills” (Buzan, 1996: 126). I used mind-mapping as a way of recording discussions that took place in the early sessions working with the Trulife participants. I found this method was both familiar to the Trulife team, and so put them at ease, but also that the open flowing nature of mind-mapping allowed for greater flexibility in how the ideas were linked and represented. This encouraged nonlinear, creative thinking (MacDonald and Headlam, 2009: 54). My role was to record the discussion on the mind map, and I attempted to limit my own input and rather just act as scribe.

d. Direct Observation.

This is a method of research whereby a particular social group are observed and notes, journals or transcripts are kept about these observations, generating written material which become part of the data and can then be used as a source of ideas and detailed information

(MacDonald and Headlam, 2009:50). It is helpful in uncovering observable details about a group's daily life, in this case teenagers either engaging in drug and alcohol use, or managing their choices within an environment in which drugs and alcohol are prominent or an aspect of their daily lives. For ethical reasons, the group did not directly observe teenagers in the process of drinking or using drugs; however, they did observe conversations about parties, nightclubs, and the culture of substance abuse facing young teens in Durban (Trulife, 2016). Also included under direct observations is analyses of "personal documents produced by a group, self-analysis, and life histories, notes, diaries and transcripts" (MacDonald and Headlam, 2009: 50). Observing the blog posts, vlogs, social media stories and YouTube accounts of teens that either glorify underage drinking and drug use, or share their stories of addiction and recovery, provided valuable insight into this behaviour. This observation allows the researcher to identify not only behaviour, but also the influence of social context, relationships, conflicts and beliefs, while remaining outside the phenomenon (as opposed to a direct interview). Direct observation also helps in uncovering the underlying reality of certain situations – "researchers can discover discrepancies between what participants say – and often believe – should happen (the formal system) and what actually does happen" (De Walt, De Walt and Wayland, 1998: 72).

Section Two – Devising for Performance

The following practical techniques were employed in generating creative content for the production.

e. Improvisation.

This is one of the staple tools of the devising process. Viola Spolin writes extensively on this subject, describes it as a method whereby the actors, who she terms players, "created scenes themselves without the benefit of an outside playwright or examples...while they were being freed to receive the stage conventions...they were able to put the full range of spontaneity to work as they created scene after scene of fresh material" (Spolin, 1999: 12). This description highlights the invention and creation of content on the spot, with little or no prior planning or direction from a director or playwright. Actors are required to perform without a script, making ideas up in the moment. This is very beneficial in generating new content or exploring ideas for a script, as it generates a large quantity of material in a very short space of time,

while also allowing for spontaneity as the ideas or responses generated are not censored. The most successful material can then be “refined, rehearsed and included” in the final performance (BBC, 2017). Spolin highlights the ability of improvisation to solve problems and generate material in new ways whilst at the same time developing actors’ confidence and ability (Spolin, 1999: 12).

My work with the Trulife team relied on myself as researcher guiding the participants through improvisation exercises. I would suggest a scene, and ask for volunteers to improvise possible scenarios, based on what had emerged in earlier discussion times. There were three elements (adapted from Spolin, 1999: 15) that I encouraged the group to keep in mind to ensure the success of these exercises:

- i. To be mindful that they are part of a group, working together as one body, and therefore need to trust and support each other (for example, by not laughing or criticising) in order to encourage freedom to offer anything without fear of judgement;
- ii. To set aside any perceived hierarchy or need to impress. While there were varying levels of skill and experience in the group, in the act of improvising all ideas are valid and equal. The focus should be on committing wholeheartedly to the improvisation, and not on one’s own pride, experience or need for approval;
- iii. To “get out of their heads and into the space, free of the restricted response of established behaviour” (Spolin, 1999: 15). In other words, becoming more aware of one’s body and reactions, while at the same time focusing on being in the moment and not thinking ahead. This leads to a more natural response, but also allows original ideas that might usually be rejected as illogical to see the light of day.

Keith Johnstone, considered a leading expert in improvisation, adds that improvisation eliminates “aimless discussion” which so often slows down the creative group devising process, and instead places the focus on action (Johnstone, 1992: 9). This is a helpful way of generating material, and was extremely useful in my work with Trulife as it moved them from endlessly discussing the goals and outcomes of the project, to actually experimenting with what content might work on stage. Improvisation teaches actors, in this case the Trulife team with their varied experience and confidence levels, that anyone can be part of the creation

process, that it can be fun, and that it focuses on making quick decisions and testing them on the stage (Johnstone, 1992: 32). There is a nice synergy between this approach and the problem-solving nature of Action Research, as became more apparent in my reflections on this research.

f. Freeze frames.

Freeze frames, also known as tableaux, are a technique used widely across many theatre genres such as Grotowski's Poor Theatre (Grotowski, 1968), Brecht's Epic Theatre (Mumford, 2018), and Boal's Forum Theatre (Boal, 1992). Oddey describes freeze frames as "still images" which are effective in capturing the essence of a moment that can then be discussed as they evoke an "emotional reaction" (Oddey, 1994: 116). These frozen moments can be used by actors to capture a significant moment, explore stages in a story, or provide insight into character relationships as the focus is on the "use of space, levels, body language and facial expression" (BBC, 2017). By reducing the need for planned movement or speech, actors can focus on distilling the essence of a scene or idea into one clear image. In my work with Trulife I used freeze frames to simplify some of the stories we wanted to work with into their most basic plot points, as well as highlighting the relationships between characters. Oddey's use of freeze frames as a springboard into further discussion was also successfully used.

g. Cross-cutting.

Cross-cutting is a film technique, adapted to drama, where "two or more scenes are performed on stage at the same time" (Farmer, 2019). This allows the action on stage to cut (or jump) between two scenes, staged on the same stage and the same time. It mimics the ability of television or film to 'cut' to another perspective, time or place in an instant. This directs the focus of the audience, and allows for contrasts or similarities to be drawn between the two or more scenes shown on stage, without interrupting the overall flow of the performance (BBC, 2017). Cross-cutting is used by Trulife not only because it mimics the popularity and familiarity of television – a drawcard with their teenage audiences – but because it allows two scenes to be juxtaposed. This highlights either the similarities of the two situations shown, or the contrast between them, allowing for thematic development and comparing ideas (Farmer, 2019).

h. Marking the moment.

This is “a way of highlighting the most important moment in a scene in order to draw the audience’s attention to its significance” (BBC, 2017). The actors can make use of a variety of creative ways to draw attention to this moment, such as use of lighting and sound, slow motion, inserting a dance piece, voice over or monologue, and more. It allows a specific moment to be highlighted, giving deeper insight into the thoughts, feelings, or contributing factors, as well as allowing the audience a pause to think about what they have seen (Farmer, 2019). This was used in rehearsal when I thought a particular moment needed to be explored further – I would call out for the actors to freeze, and only one to continue the performance or to comment on their character’s thoughts and emotions at this point of the scene. As a group we then discussed how this moment could be depicted in other creative ways. Two successful examples emerged, namely characters freezing while a filmed *thought bubble* appeared on screen to show their imagined internal thoughts. The other was a dance introduced to provide a moment of insight into one character’s experience – it showed the concept of addiction as a personified villain, caught in a manipulative fight with a young girl (the addict). Marking the moment was a useful technique as it allowed for student reflection, linking the narrative with the intended lesson (Kelin, 2007: 110). At the same time this technique provided an entertaining break in the action and the opportunity to introduce a new stylistic feature.

i. Storyboarding.

Borrowed from film practices, storyboarding makes use of a sequence of visual and textual representations of the onstage material, to represent the order of scenes and information about the way in which those scenes will be performed (Tumminello, 2005). This is beneficial in planning the final order of devised scenes, and noticing where there might be missing elements or gaps in the story. Storyboards often have a visual graphic, either in the form of a sketch or picture, to represent that scene. This is accompanied by a text description or dialogue tied to the script (van Langeveld, 2010: 2). Trulife were already using storyboarding as a technique, and so they introduced it to me, and requested we use it as a way of recording and planning this devising process. They omitted the visual representation, but had blocks containing each scene, in linear order resembling the order of performance, which contained descriptive elements about that scene including style, topic and performers. The

storyboarding process helped identify problems ahead of time, and acted as a helpful structuring tool for creative development that took the project “from abstract ideas to concrete products” (van Langeveld, 2010: 3).

Devising, as described above, is a broad term with many diverse techniques, flexible and spontaneous, and responsive to circumstance rather than a pre-planned set of principles and ideas. Therefore, the above listed techniques are those I chose to work with, but by no means represent an exhaustive or prescriptive list. These collaborative devising methods used to create the TIE script for this project are strongly founded in postmodern thinking, as outlined by Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington in *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices* (2007). The benefits of this postmodern approach are that it allows for greater input from all involved in the production, as well as creating a space in which multiple truths and differing perspectives might be explored. The collaborative devising method is also one which has been used by Trulife in all their previous works. The advantages of using such a method, as perceived by the Trulife team, are that their team comprises individuals who have talent and/or training in different fields.²⁵ One may be a dancer, another a film maker, another an actress. Collaborative devising allows the input from all these different voices, and ensures that each of their strengths is given a platform. I observed during the sessions I spent with them, that the team also draw on their own past experiences and ideas about the subject matter, which they believe brings more depth and deeper perspective to the project, allowing it to impact a wider range of audiences. The democratic nature of this work is also important to the Trulife group, as it relates strongly to the group’s values, identity and the goals underpinning their work.

²⁵ This emerged in group discussions, described in the next chapter.

3.2. Practical Application of Action Research

As one of the key objectives of this research was to investigate the application of Action Research as a method of developing a TIE programme, I applied the process of Action Research (described in more detail below in Chapter Five) to the devising methods outlined above. In the creative discussions with the Trulife team a 'problem' might be identified (stage one of the Action Research cycle). This problem could take the form of an obstacle, which in this case was needing a drugs and alcohol TIE programme where they previously had none, but with no clear idea of the exact content needed. For example, the Trulife team and myself might agree we would like a comedic scene parodying a game show, but would have no script or material beyond that idea. By applying Action Research, a possible 'solution' could be imagined (stage two) through one or more of the devising methods described above. This solution could then be applied (stage three) which could be in the form of writing a script based on material created through the improvisation; and evaluated (stage four) by performing this script for the group in the context of the rest of the TIE programme and discussing its effectiveness as a team. The final stage – modifying (stage five) – could take the form of editing the script, or repeating the process with new material until a solution deemed successful by the group was found. This Action Research cycle has the potential to be repeated continuously throughout the devising process and therefore engaged my research imperative through the practice of making the work – highlighting once again the strong connection to Practice-as-Research, as will be discussed.

As the creative component – in other words the TIE programme – is a crucial part of this research, the script is now included here in full. The performance also relies heavily on media, including filmed scenes, animation and graphic word art sequences, all of which are projected onto a screen placed on stage. In an attempt to capture this effect, a filmed recording of an early performance has been included in Appendix One. Notes about some of the stylistic features of the TIE performance are included as an introduction to the script.

4. THE SCRIPT – *DNA: DRUGS AND ALCOHOL*

DNA: Drugs 'n Alcohol

A Theatre in Education programme for Grade 8 pupils on the dangers on Drug and Alcohol abuse.

Developed and devised by Nancy Strauss and the Trulife team.

2016.

What type of play is this?

This script was developed as a partnership between Nancy Strauss – who undertook the project as part of her master’s research into Theatre in Education (TIE) and devising methods – and non-profit organisation, Trulife – who had previously created five TIE productions and sought to add one addressing the topic of substance abuse to their repertoire. With this in mind, capturing the same look and feel of Trulife’s previous works was important to the group of creators and actors. They sought to explore new processes and theories about the work (guided by Strauss) while at the same time holding on to those features they felt were most successful in communicating their creative product.

In exploring what these features are, a stylistic profile of Trulife’s work emerges which can be summarised as containing the following attributes:

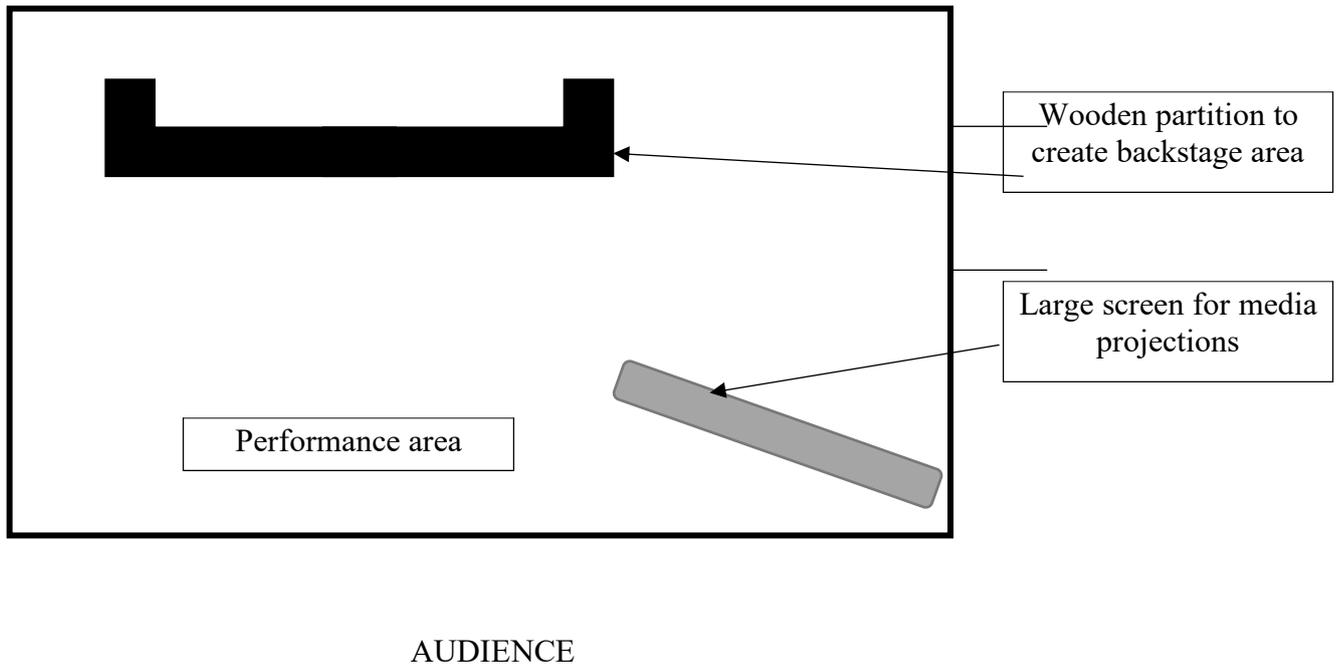
- At their core, all of Trulife’s work are aimed at educating their teenage audience on a particular social topic. The goal, therefore, is not only entertainment, but also to impart accessible and relevant facts, and guide the viewers to choices that apply what has been learnt to their own lives.
- The structure of this script is that of short, episodic scenes that are connected by theme or topic, and not necessarily follow the same plot. This allows for multiple perspectives to be introduced, as well as ensuring the audience is kept engaged and focused by the changing moments depicted.
- Different theatrical styles are used in the performance. Trulife incorporates acted satirical comedy, dramatic scenes, dance (both contemporary and hip-hop), filmed projections, graphic word-art and animation media projections, spoken poetry and direct address in the style of a motivational talk.
- The scenes which would appear projected onto screen (filmed, animated or text) are captured in this script as photographs with text to help the reader picture the live experience.
- Trulife makes use of popular culture elements such as pop music, hip-hop dancing, slang language, reference to social media and more. This is to keep the content relevant and engaging for the teen audience.
- The messages presented do not say “No, don’t do this” but instead focus on “this choice is a better life for you”, thereby letting the consequences speak for themselves.
- The script makes use of different fonts to capture the styles used in each scene. Those scenes which appear as film replicate the standard format of a screenplay script, while those scenes that would be live acting on stage replicate the standard format of a stage play.

A note on language:

The language used in this production originates from improvised scenes and as much as possible intentionally replicates the natural speech of South African teenagers. As such there may be grammatical errors or slang used. This has been kept ‘as is’ in this script in order to capture the performance as accurately as possible. Much of the script is also not spoken dialogue, but ‘dialogue’ in the form of texts/SMS messages between characters. Once again, this is written in the informal style used by most teenagers, in order to make these media clips as relatable as possible.

A note on staging:

Trulife's work takes them to every kind of school. As a result, their performances need to be flexible to the many different 'stages' they have to perform on – from traditional proscenium arch, to modern well-equipped thrust stages, to community halls or even empty classrooms. This production was therefore designed with maximum flexibility in terms of staging. The basic layout or needs are represented below:



Scenes

1. Party invite	p.5
2. Mission impossible	p.8
3. Getting ready	p.10
4. What's the worst that could happen	p.14
5. Spin it to Win it	p.17
6. Expectation versus Reality	p.22
7. Morning After	p.25
8. Choices	p.27
9. Addiction dance	p.30
10. "What will your story be" spoken word poem	p.31
11. Personal Testimonies	p.34
12. EPILOGUE: End talk	p.36

SCENE 1

PARTY INVITE

INT. – LOCATION UNKNOWN, TIME UNKNOWN

Loud, contemporary dance music plays. The conversation appears on the screen in the form of a cell phone WhatsApp text message between two brothers – LUKE and MIKE.



LUKE

(Sends the party invite picture which reads:)
Start with a bang.
Feat. DJ Verb and Mason Mouse.
2 Feb, 11 Mkoko Road.
7pm till late.
Bring your own everything.

Sup little bro, did you get the invite? So you ready for your first high school house party mikey??! (emoticons with drinks, smoking etc.)

MIKE

YES! (muscle emoji) So awesome, can I bring my mate Ant?

LUKE

Sure! Make sure you guys bring some "party essentials" (emoticons of drinks and drugs)

MIKE
Sweet!! (thumbs up emoticon)

The message clears and a new message is sent from MIKE to his friend ANT.

MIKE
(sends the same party invite picture)



Sup bru, Oh snap look we made the cut, check what my brother just sent me.

ANT
U joking? (excited emoticon) That's awesome, but what the heck are we gonna bring? I've never been to one of these! (worried emoticon)

MIKE
Even me! (rolling eyes emoticon) OBVIOUS! Its chilled, my bro just says we need to grab some "Party Essentials"

MIKE (CONT. IN NEW MESSAGE)
AKA "booze and weed" (emoticons)

ANT

U serious? WEED? ah k cool no stress, we got lots lying around.

MIKE

What, at your house? Do your parents know?

ANT

yah, don't yours? They always complaining that there is too much around. They'll actually be stoked if I take some.

MIKE

Damn, your parents are cool. I wish mine were like that. House party at your place next. Cool you got that sorted, Ill grab the booze.

ANT

Kiff, so I'll just meet you at our spot later?

MIKE

(peace and muscles emoticon)

DISSOLVE TO B.O.

SCENE 2

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Theme music from “Mission Impossible” playing. Red flashing lights set the scene of the classic “spy mission”.

Ant and Mike enter back of the hall doing exaggerated evasion spy moves. They get on stage (both wearing balaclavas). The tone is comical.

ANT *(Starts talking but in muffled voice.)*

MIKE What?!

ANT *(Louder muffled noises.)*

MIKE Ant! I can’t hear you, take off the mask!

ANT *(Takes off mask)* I was asking if you got the... *(looks around)* STUFF.

MIKE Of course I got the STUFF, this isn’t amateur hour.

ANT Ok good, cause... WAIT! *(pauses to listen)* What was that?

MIKE Ugh, Ant, man! Stop worrying so much, no one saw us! It’ll be fine, ok? We are gonna be the life of the party when show up with all of these goodies!

ANT Ok, you’re right, but it’s just that...

MIKE If I have to hear you tell me about the penalties of underage drinking and drug abuse again I’m gonna lose my mind!

ANT Ok, ok, I’m just nervous.

MIKE Yeah, I know, but don’t be; this party is gonna set us up for the rest of our high school career. Our lives are gonna change after tonight. Ok, let’s see what we managed to get.

(Both pull out their drugs and alcohol supplies.)

ANT Ah no!

MIKE What? What happened?

ANT I was so sure I grabbed the vodka and rum bottles...but...

MIKE But what? What did you get?

ANT I got something called Strawberry Lips...

MIKE You idiot! We can't rock up at our first high school party with pink drinks!
That's so lame.

ANT It'll be fine. I see my mom drinking this stuff all the time. It still works!

MIKE: Ok, let me think. Um...ok, we don't have time to get anything else so we can
just take this but keep it in the brown bags, no one will know! At least tell me
you managed to get the weed?

(ANT hands him a packet.)

MIKE Ok good, maybe this will redeem us... *(he looks in the packet and pulls out a
bunch of greenery.)* Ant, what is this?!

ANT What do you mean? Its... *(whispers loudly)* Weeds!

MIKE This is garden weeds not dagga!

ANT Well what's the difference? I've never done this before Mike! Maybe we
should just call this whole thing off. I think I'm developing a twitch from
being so nervous, I don't think I can go through with this!

MIKE No, NO! It's fine, don't worry about the weed. I know a place we can get
some before the party. Let's just go get ready, otherwise we're gonna be late.
Come on let's go.

ANT Alright...

(Both walk off stage)

SCENE 3

GETTING READY

This filmed scene is a humorous take on the difference between boys and girls. In it we see our lead boys – Mike and Ant – and two girl friends of theirs – Ashley and Cindy – getting ready for the party that has already been introduced.

NOTE: All 'dialogue' shown is not spoken conversation, but rather the typed conversation sent between the characters on their cell phones.

INT. – MIKE'S HOUSE

Wide shot of Mike's bedroom. The boys enter. All scenes occur in fast motion. Upbeat contemporary music plays.

Mike and Ant unpack a bottle of alcohol, perform a special handshake, before jumping on the bed to relax and play video games.

Mike stands and takes out his cell phone.



Cut to CLOSE UP of cell phone screen.

ASHLEY

Hey! What time is the party tonight?

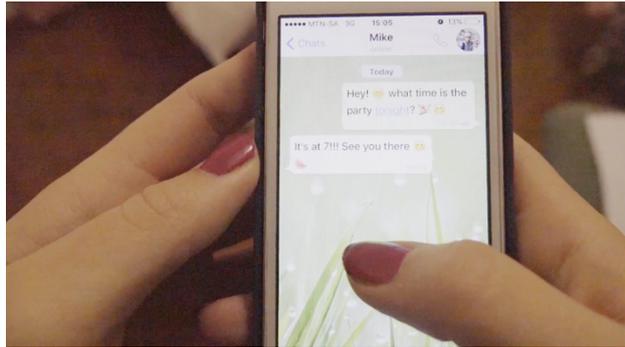
MIKE

It's at 7!! See you later (*with emoticons*)

GRAPHIC MATCH CUT:

INT. – ASHLEY'S BEDROOM

CLOSE UP of Ashley's cell phone in her hand, viewing the same messages.



Camera zooms out to show two girls in bedroom. They begin trying on clothes, tossing them out of the cupboard, holding them up etc. clearly getting ready for the party.



Ashley tries on a jacket, then picks up her cell phone.

Cut to CLOSE UP of the cell phone screen in her hand.

ASHLEY
Should I bring a jacket? (*emoticons of cold weather*)

GRAPHIC MATCH CUT:

INT. — MIKE'S HOUSE

CLOSE UP of Mike's cell phone in his hand, viewing the same messages.

MIKE
Haha I can keep you warm (*cheeky face emoticon*)

Camera cuts to wide shot of the room to show the two boys still sitting on the bed, playing video games, drinking soda, eating chips etc.



In the foreground Mike's cell phone lights up with an incoming message. CLOSE UP on the screen as he picks it up.



ASHLEY
Hehe if you're offering (*smiling emoticon*)

MIKE
Haha of course!

GRAPHIC MATCH CUT:

INT. — ASHLEY'S BEDROOM

CLOSE UP of Ashley's cell phone as she opens the same message. Cut to eye level shot of the girls doing their hair in the mirror, then back to the cell phone in her hand.

ASHLEY
Should we bring anything with us? (*wine glass and beer glass emoticon*)

GRAPHIC MATCH CUT:

INT. — MIKE'S HOUSE

CLOSE UP of Mike's cell phone in his hand, viewing the same messages.

MIKE
Haha no don't worry! We've hooked you up.

Cut to boys still playing video games and relaxing as before. Then back to the CLOSE UP of the cell phone.

ASHLEY

Ah that's so sweet! (*excited emoticon*) You're awesome! (*heart emoticon*)

MIKE

No you're awesome! We are going to have so much fun tonight!! (*excited emoticon*)

GRAPHIC MATCH CUT:

INT. — ASHLEY'S BEDROOM

CLOSE UP of Ashley's cell phone in her hand, viewing the same messages.

ASHLEY

Yay! Can't wait! (*friendly emoticons*)

The scene shows the girls putting on make up, seen from over Ashley's shoulder into the mirror. Ashley picks up her cell phone to check the time and we see in CLOSE UP the time is 18:48.



GRAPHIC MATCH CUT:

INT. — MIKE'S HOUSE

Mike's cell phone reveals the same time. Cut to a wide shot of the room, with Mike and Ant finally deciding to get ready. They pick up hoodies, smell them and decide they are good enough to wear. As they spray deodorant, the camera circles them.



DISSOLVE TO B.O.

SCENE 4

WHAT'S THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN

Mike and Ant appear onstage. They are dressed as seen at the end of Scene 2. The setting is presumed to be Mike's house, although no attempt need be made to create this setting on stage.

MIKE Ok, so before we leave let's do a check, to see if we have everything. Booze?

ANT Check.

MIKE Remember to keep it in the brown packets.

MIKE Check.

MIKE Ok good. Weed? NOT weedsss...

ANT Ha Ha, very funny, yes got it.

MIKE Ok, cool, now the only problem is, how are we gonna leave the house without my mom seeing all this stuff?

ANT These pants are pretty big; we can try hiding it in here?

(They try stuff it in the back of their pants and try walking around with it, to humorous effect.)

MIKE No, this isn't working, we look ridiculous. Let's try put it in my hood.

(They try and stuff everything in his hoodie.)

ANT No, that looks way to suspicious.

MIKE Yeah, ok why don't you go and distract my mom while I sneak out with everything?

ANT I don't know, Mike, you know I'm not good under pressure. *(Starts twitching again.)*

MIKE *(looks at him funny)* Yeah, you're right, scratch that. You just sort that twitch out. People are gonna think you're a freak.

(Both stare into the distance deep in thought. Ant twitches every now and then.)

MIKE I've got it! I have this backpack from primary school. *(Fetches a small Thomas the Train or Spiderman backpack.)* We could just put it in here!

ANT That's a great idea, except when your mom asks you why you're taking your Thomas the Train backpack to a party!

MIKE Ah, don't worry about that, I'll just make something up. Like...It's for my towel because it's a pool party, or something like that.

(They start packing the backpack, Ant gets a message on his cell phone and moves over to the side to read it.)

MIKE Hey! Get off your phone and help me pack! Who are you talking to anyway?

ANT It's Rachel.

MIKE Agh, I can't believe you've had the SAME girlfriend for so long now! You're missing out on so much!

ANT Whatever Mike, I really love Rachel. She's just a little worried about the party and that she can't be there tonight.

MIKE Well, all I know is that you won't have to worry about being lonely or missing your *girlfriend* tonight, 'cause I've invited Cindy and Ashley and they'll be great company. They're both so hot!

ANT I'm not interested in either of them, Mike! I'm just interested in tonight going smoothly and not getting ourselves in trouble!

MIKE Ugh, you're such a buzzkill, besides what's the worst that could happen?!

ANT Well, we could get super drunk and end up doing something we regret for the rest of our lives!

(The two boys freeze in exaggerated "deep in thought" postures, while a media clip of Ant getting a tattoo on his lower back plays – this motif will be repeated with each of their thoughts as an expression of their imaginations regarding the trouble they could get into.)

MIKE Geez, I hope that doesn't happen! I heard about a guy who got so high once that he drowned in a small blow up pool.

(Media clip of guy tripping into baby pool.)

ANT Yeah or we could end up living on the streets like that guy on Point Road.

(Media clip of Ant begging on a street corner.)

MIKE What if I get some hot girl pregnant!?

(Media clip of him as a dad, completely overwhelmed.)

MIKE My parents would kill me!

ANT Or we could even get arrested!

(Media clip of them being handcuffed and shoved into a police van.)

ANT I've even heard many stories of young people getting killed in a car crash after going to a wild party

(Media clip of a car crash, this is the most serious of all their imagined scenarios and should grab the audience's attention.)

(The both are silent for a long time then turn and look at each other)

ANT & MIKE Naaaahhhh!

MIKE Come on, let's get going. Tonight is gonna be wild!!!

(They both walk off stage.)

SCENE 5

SPIN IT TO WIN IT

As the previous scene fades to black out, this one should begin with all the stylistic features of a cheesy game show - a logo appears on screen, with clichéd music. The name of show – “Spin it to Win it” - spins in as the voice over (VO) starts.

A button with wire running to it from media desk/back stage is placed centre stage.

VO: *(Corny American presenter’s voice)* Ladies and gentlemen, you're watching Spin it to Win it, with your host Felicity Jones.

(Canned applause. Felicity enters. She is in a gaudy ball-gown, hair and make up over-done. The whole look and persona should be reminiscent of a 1970s-era TV personality.)

FELICITY Hello hello! Welcome to Spin it to Win it. The game that's completely up to chance and has nothing to do with your intelligence. *(Picking on someone in the audience)* Yes, sir/madam, I see you nodding. Even you could play! Let's take a look at how it works...

(She moves to the button, screen changes to first wheel.)

FELICITY As you can see we have various prizes to be won. A contestant will be chosen from our audience and asked to press this button to stop the wheel. Where the wheel stops at the red arrow, that is your prize!
But I'm going to need some help...to get the wheel spinning I need all of you in our special audience to shout "spin that wheel". Can we give it a try? On the count of 3, ok? 1-2-3...Spin that wheel!! *(If they need to try again ad lib as necessary...For example: "last week we did a show at the Kloof Rest Home and they were louder than that!" Etc.)*

Good! Now once the wheel is spinning nice and fast, the contestant presses this button to stop it! Like...this: *(She presses it, the wheel gradually stops, lands on jackpot of R1000).*

Oh, look. I won again. *(Giggle)*. No that was just the tester. Are you ready to play for real? Who would like to be our first contestant?

(She searches in audience and finds someone.)

You, sir/madam. You look like you could play a game that requires no skills or brains. Come on up. *(Pause while contestant joins her on stage.)*

So tell us. What is your name?

STUDENT 1 *(answers.)*

(NOTE: as this involves participation from an audience member their answers cannot be scripted. The actor playing Felicity needs to be ready to react and direct the conversation in the direction she needs to keep the scene on track.)

FELICITY And would you like to win R1000 today?

STUDENT 1 *(answers)*

FELICITY Excellent. Audience please don't let me down now. Let's all shout "spin that wheel" on the count of three. Ready? 1-2-3...spin that wheel!

(The wheel starts to spin)

Ok, whenever you are ready...

(Contestant hits the button, wheel slows and shows a winning of R10.)

FELICITY Ah, not so great. *(Holds out cheque for R10 but doesn't give it)*. But luckily for you we believe in second chances here on Spin it to Win it. If you want to, you can forfeit you R10 winnings, I'll tear this cheque up, and you can instead take a chance and spin again. What do you say? Audience what do you think?

STUDENT 1 *(Hopefully asked to spin again.)*

FELICITY Great choice. Let's do this. Audience you know what to say. 1-2-3...spin that wheel.

(Wheel spins lands on R50.)

FELICITY Hey, R50. Not bad. Here's that cheque. But you're still far away from the jackpot. You have one final chance - will you chose to take just R50, or will you be brave and go for one last spin?

STUDENT 1 *(Hopefully chooses to spin.)*

FELICITY Great. I knew I had a good feeling about you. Audience, one last time. 1-2-3...spin that wheel!

(Wheel spins lands on R200.)

FELICITY Amazing. Your gamble paid off and you leave with this cheque for R200, redeemable with our producer - say hi Alex - after the show. Give him/her a round of applause.

(Canned applause, contestant goes to sit.)

FELICITY We move now to Round 2 (the wheel on the screen changes). As you can see we've upped the stakes - with even greater prizes, but even greater risks too. Who wants to play? I need someone really brave?

(Chooses someone etc.)

FELICITY Ladies and gentlemen, watch out for this guy/girl. He/she looks like a big spender! Hi what's your name? (waits for answer) And are you going to be daring and go for the big prize of R2000 today?

*(To audience) Ok, you know the drill. 1-2-3...spin that wheel.
(Wheel spins. Lands on chocolate.)*

FELICITY Chocolate! Come on. That's pretty lame right? I think you have to try again? What do you think? Come on audience, 3-2-1...spin that wheel!

(Wheel spins, lands on R25.)

FELICITY Not bad. But not great either. I still think you can do better than that. I have a good feeling about that next spin. What do you say? Audience?

STUDENT 2 *(Hopefully says yes.)*

FELICITY Right let's do this. 1-2-3...spin that wheel.

(Wheel spins. Lands on R500.)

FELICITY Awesome! You have won R500! Congratulations. Gonna have plenty of friends at the tuck shop today am I right!? Let's give him/her a hand...

(Canned applause, contestant moves down.)

FELICITY Alright, ladies and gents. We now move to our third and final round where the prizes are even more outrageous but the risk even greater. (Screen changes to third wheel). Do I have one more volunteer to play Spin it to Win it?

(Mike – who has planted himself in the audience - jumps up, ad lib "pick me, me, please. This is my moment etc." Felicity chooses him as he runs to the front of the stage.)

FELICITY Hi. Welcome to the show. Gosh you were pretty keen, hey? What's your name?

MIKE Mike. And I'm so amped for this.

FELICITY Great. And do you think you have what it takes to win the jackpot? For this round our jackpot is an all inclusive weekend stay at a stunning 5-star beach house for you and 5 friends - incredible. Is luck on your side?

MIKE Definitely, I'm feeling super lucky.

FELICITY Ok. That's all we need to know. Audience are you ready? 1-2-3...spin that wheel!

(Wheel spins lands on bottle of tequila.)

FELICITY Wow. You have won a bottle of tequila. Congratulations. A pretty fun prize. Will you keep it or spin again and hope things go your way?

MIKE Hey, I came here to win big. Let's spin again!

FELICITY Alright, I like that. Producer are you ready? Audience help me out, 1-2-3...spin that wheel.

(Wheel spins. Lands on "Big Night Out.")

FELICITY Woah. You've won a "big night out". This prize entitles you and one friend to a night out in one of Durban's hottest clubs, with VIP access, unlimited bar tab and a few special goodies to get you buzzing as well as a limousine chauffeur service. This is sure to be one crazy party. So, tough decision...will you keep that prize or spin again?

MIKE I don't know...what do you guys think? You know what, what have I got to lose. I might as well take a chance and go for the big prize. It sounds awesome. Let's spin again.

FELICITY Taking a big gamble. Pretty risky but I love it. Ok audience. For the final time, give it everything you've got. 1-2-3...spin that wheel!

(Wheel spins, lands on "Party Pooper". Bloopers "wah-wah" sound effect is heard.)

FELICITY Oh, no. I'm sorry, Mike. You landed on "party pooper". This means not only do you leave with nothing, you become a "party pooper" and drag our other previous contestants down to nothing too! No prizes for anyone today!

MIKE What? But...

FELICITY Wow, I've never actually seen anyone land on that before. What are the chances. Bad luck I'm afraid.

MIKE But that's not fair. When the other guys did it their prizes got better and better and nothing bad happened to them! How is this possible!

FELICITY Well, that's the risk you take when you gamble, Mike. You never know what could happen...in just seconds your whole world can change. Maybe you should have spent a little more time thinking your choices though before taking such a big risk.

Well, folks, that's all we have time for today. Sorry to all our disappointed contestants but maybe next time you'll get lucky on SPIN IT TO WIN IT!

MIKE *(ad lib)* Wait! It's not fair. I didn't think I'd lose it all...hang on, I want to go back to the other prizes...

(Fade to Black Out)

SCENE 6

EXPECTATION VERSUS REALITY

This filmed scene shows Ashley, the teenage girl we were introduced to earlier, arriving at the House Party. However, as indicated, the reality she experiences is very different from her expectations of how the night will go. The majority of this scene takes place in split screen – with two narratives unfolding simultaneously side by side. This is indicated below by the split in the page, with each column labelled as it would be on screen.

EXT. – OUTSIDE A SUBURBAN HOUSE, NIGHT

DISSOLVE out of B.O to a MEDIUM SHOT of ASHLEY getting out of a car, and walking into the gate of a house. Music and laughter in the background set the scene of a party in full swing.

None of the dialogue is heard – only dance music.

As she arrives at the door to the house, the screen splits, with the words “expectation” on the left, and “reality” on the right:

EXPECTATION

REALITY

Medium Close Up of ASHLEY from behind as she enters through the doorway.



A young man greets her warmly with a big hug. He offers her a beer and walks her in.

No one greets her. She walks in on her own. The same guy greets her casually, and immediately offers her a shot. She takes it, looking unsure, drinks it and grimaces.

Camera follows ASHLEY as she makes her way through a crowd and down a corridor to the party dance floor.



Her friends all greet her and they dance together. She takes a shot, smoothly and without flinching.

An OVERHEAD SHOT shows the group smiling and dancing together.

One or two friends greet her but not many. She takes another shot – grimaces and chokes on the taste.

An OVERHEAD SHOT shows ASHLEY dancing on her own, unsteady and confused, with her friends backs turned to her.

Cut to view over ASHLEY'S shoulder. A girl grabs her hand and pulls her towards another part of the house. She is stopped by an older, bearded guy. CLOSE UP on their faces as they talk.



The man talks and flirts, but keeps his distance. The two chat and laugh and take a selfie together using his cell phone.

The man leans in, invading ASHLEY'S personal space. She is clearly nervous but flattered. He offers her an unlabelled pill, which, after some persuasion, they both take.

At this stage "REALITY" takes over the full screen, and the split screen effect is over.

The camera movement becomes increasingly unsteady, with a hand-held shaking and the pictures blurs out of focus from time to time. The music begins to slow and distort.



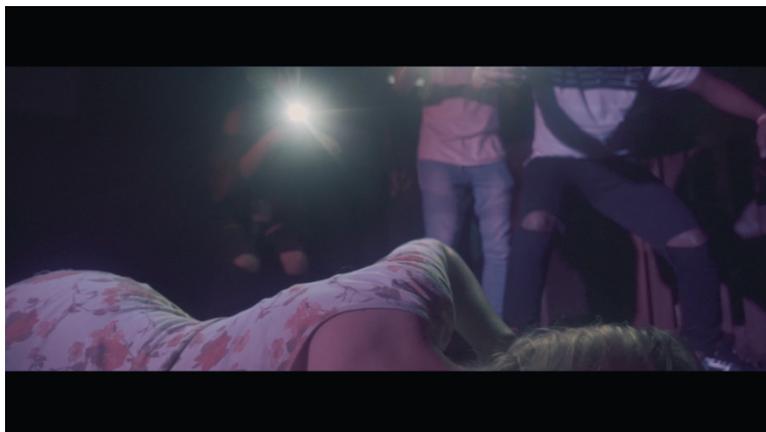
The camera follows ASHLEY as she staggers away.

A MEDIUM CLOSE UP as ASHLEY collapses on a couch. ANT is seen sitting there and the shot DISSOLVES as the two kiss.

Cut to a MID SHOT of ASHLEY drinking from a bottle, stumbling outside and vomiting.

She falls to the ground, on the lawn.

A LOW ANGLE shot shows ASHLEY in the foreground, as people exit from inside the house laughing, pointing and taking photos of her. The bright lights of the camera flashes flare.



DISSOLVE TO B.O.

fun together, but I have a girlfriend and last night actually was a big mistake...

ASHLEY You have a girlfriend? Then why did you kiss me?! If she finds out...

ANT I know, I know and that's why no one can find out about what happened! Please Ashley, I don't know why I did that, I honestly was just there to have some innocent fun and then one drink led to another and before I knew it, we...well you know. I wasn't myself. It would've never happened if I didn't get so drunk!

ASHLEY I can't believe this, if word gets out that I hooked up with another girl's boyfriend... I can only imagine what they'll say about me. What are we going to do?

ANT Well, as far as I know only Mike saw us and has pictures...

ASHLEY Pictures?!

ANT Yeah, but it's fine. I'll chat to him. I'm sure he won't put do anything with them.

ASHLEY You don't know that! And what if someone else also has pictures? How will we know? I'm sorry, I have to go. I should've never gone to that party! This is such a mess.

(ASHLEY runs off, clearly upset.)

ANT Ashley! *(His phone rings, appears on screen that Rachel is calling. ANT shakes his head and sighs.)* Great.

(ANT walks off. Fade to Black Out.)

SCENE 8

CHOICES

In this media scene, animated graphics and visual representations of the data being presented are displayed.

The scene starts with a cell phone showing messages between the lead characters and their friends. It is evident that they have engaged in heavy drinking the night before.



VOICE OVER

Addiction starts with a small choice, and that choice you make today...

Teens who start drinking before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after the legal age of 18.

50% of teens who start drinking alcohol before age 14 will become addicted. Only 9% of teens who wait until they turn 21 will be addicted at some point.

Every day, almost 3,900 teens under the age of 18 try their first cigarette. More than 950 of them will become new, regular daily smokers. Half of them will ultimately die from their habit.



VOICE OVER (continued)

To deal with different situations life throws at us we need something to relieve tension. Everyone needs to escape, relax, and reward themselves. Those are essential coping skills for a happy life. But addicts don't know how to do those things anymore without using.



VOICE OVER (continued)

The 3 leading causes of death for 15 to 24 year olds are automobile crashes, homicides and suicides – alcohol is a leading factor in all 3.

An experiment in 1970 by Bruce Alexander showed that a lonely rat with access to drugs will overdose itself.

But a rat in rat-park – a sort of heaven for rats – will not, even with the same access to it.



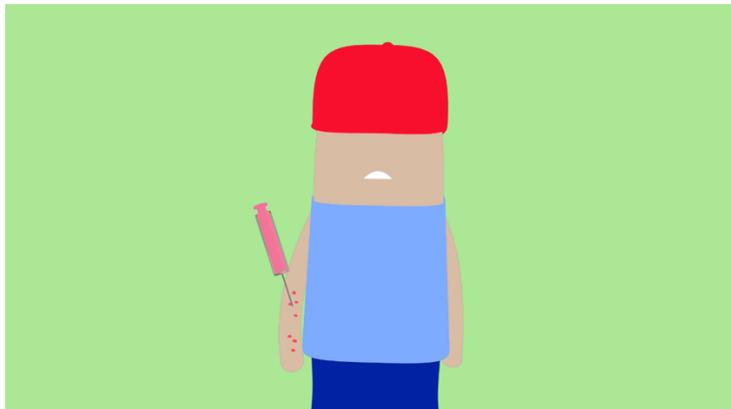
VOICE OVER (continued)

This experiment shows us that it is not the drugs, but the cage you are in that forms the problem. So what cage are you in?

We as human beings have a need to bond and connect.

When we are happy and healthy, we will bond with the people around us.

If we are not or cannot... We will bond with whatever gives us a sense of relief.



VOICE OVER (continued)

But we will bond with something because that is our nature.

What are you bonding with?

95% of people don't need drugs anymore when their environment changes,
9 out of 10 teens report that drinking is not worth the consequences it can cause.

So what will you choose to bond with?

Will you risk addiction and choose unhealthy bonds? Or will you choose to be something different?

What will your story be?

WHAT WILL YOUR STORY BE?

SCENE 9

ADDICTION DANCE

This is a moving contemporary dance set to Sara Bareille's Gravity.

It shows a young girl caught in the grip of addiction. Addiction is personified by the other dancer – a man, who wears a mask and black hoodie. This man offers the girl a syringe, and a beer can, at different points in the dance, as well as using controlling gestures. As the lyrics of the song say “something always brings me back to you,” so the movements show that as much as she tries, the girl cannot escape the clutches of this controlling force in her life. The end of the dance shows her finally throwing off the hands of Addiction and walking away. However, the audience are left wondering if this means a break for good, or if she will once again be reeled back in by the lure of her addictions...

SCENE 10

WHAT WILL YOUR STORY BE?

This is a spoken word poem, performed by two actors. The lines of the poem are shared and overlap, at times spoken in unison and other times alternated.

One drink, that's all it is, one drink...
Then the glasses brush and clink...
The time passes and one turns into two and three then four...
Then...

You lose track of time
As your world spins from person to person and drink to drink.
You can't think
And your eyes turn pink
As you take another puff of the latest stick.
From there on its blank.
Memory whipped as you wake up in your bed
With your head at the foot and feet on the floor
As you claw for the basin
To remove the raw sensation
Of dread in your stomach...

But maybe that's not you?
Maybe its not as bad.
Maybe its one
And then its done and you turn from the fad
To be seen with choice and dignity in hand.
Maybe it's to take the edge off
So you can be free and run off
And be the person you want to be.
The laughter you can't find,
The courage to talk to that guy,
To sell your conscience away for that night.
But is that really freedom
If to be free you sell your choice and take another voice
And sell a person that never really was you.

The pattern starts at one.
One is enough to start a series that will be part of your life
As you strive to get back to the time of before.
When Drugs and Alcohol take root
They form part of who we are.

It's no coincidence that Drugs and Alcohol become DNA
As they bind to our being
Leaving us feeling helpless without it.
Like a DNA strand that forms us,
They mould our decisions and cause a constant state of repetition.

But its starts at one.
Will you make a choice not to start it?
Not to hand over your choice
For a fake voice
And an upbeat personality
That quite frankly isn't you!
Will you make a stand and not fall for the lie that it won't happen to you?
Why risk it?
YOLO right?
We only live once
Yet we make decisions on a statement
And end up lying on the pavement.

Will you stop the cycle?
Stop the pattern.
Give back the batten.
Will you create a new DNA?
One where life doesn't make you pay.
One where you can remember the next day.
What will your story be?

Is it one of broken bottle and lost morals?
Or one of freedom and choice that allowed you to break through the noise
So that you could stand.
It starts with one.
One decision
One voice, one drink, one no, one life,
One strand of DNA that decides to be free.
So it's up to you to be what ever you can.
So our question for you is,
What will your story be!

SCENE 11

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

This final video scene shows two men who share their real personal stories. The camera focuses on their faces and medium close ups of them seated in a room, replicating an interview style. The scene cuts between the two stories as they develop thematically.

GRIEG:

Howzit. I'm Grieg McPherson. I'm 33 years old. I spent five years working as a bouncer in nightclubs around Durban.

DAVE:

My name is Dave Wise. I'm originally from Cape Town. I relocated to KwaZulu-Natal recently and I'm just enjoying my life.

GRIEG:

Um, I was about fourteen, so Grade Eight. I started getting involved in alcohol.

DAVE:

At a young age. Alcohol. I got involved, I think, at age fourteen. Obviously, I enjoyed the feeling of not having control. And that led to me trying new things – drugs.

GRIEG:

And then by Grade Twelve I was on alcohol and drugs fulltime. Well, I got involved because I was quite quiet and wasn't popular so I thought, to change life and become a rebel I'd get more friends and be more popular.

DAVE:

My parents got divorced when I was a very young age and obviously not living with both parents I found myself on the streets a lot and alcohol and drugs was freely available in the area.

GRIEG:

Well, now that I think back that whole lifestyle was probably one bad memory. They all just like blurred into each other because life while you're doing drugs and alcohol becomes a blur.

DAVE:

Well, at a young age one of my worst memories was getting expelled from my second high school.

GRIEG:

There are some nights that stand out. Me and my mates were drinking outside a nightclub and one of our friends – he just left. We didn't even know he'd left, but when we drove home we drove past a bad accident. And the next morning we found out that it was actually – he was in the accident and he was dead. Um, that's happened to two of my mates.

DAVE:

And then, obviously, my wife and my son decided to pack up and leave. They had enough and I lost my job. It was a time in my life where friends is few, days is dark.

GRIEG:

And then one of my friends who was very close to me, she was raped and I got the phone call and I was heavily intoxicated with drugs and alcohol and it just hurts that if I'd been any more intoxicated I wouldn't have been able to go to where she was to help her.

Well, I left it because it started going from fun to being my lifestyle and it's not a good lifestyle. Um, it's...you do strange things when you're under the influence of drugs and alcohol. As I said, I lost two of my good friends. Well, I've actually lost more, but those two I was with that night and they died on the way home. My friend got raped. There's just a lot of...ya it's just a mess, hey. And it's dark and you do things that is not what human beings should be doing. It hurts you, it hurts you deep. And you have to live with that every week. You do something new that's bad and then that guilt and that darkness just follows you.

Well, I'd tell myself, I'd say, Grieg...like don't think that because I'm sitting here and I've got through that that's okay. That you think that you'll just go through a stage of your life and experiment and have some fun and when it's time to grow up you'll do that. 'Cause it's not that easy to get out of it and with the wounds and the hurt and the emotional

scarring that comes with that lifestyle. It's definitely not worth it. Because now you've got to work on yourself and you've got to heal those wounds.

DAVE:

Don't follow the crowd. Take your studies seriously; apply yourself in your studies. Your education's really important. And drugs and alcohol just leads to destruction. Don't be a follower, be a leader. And stand up for what you believe in.

GRIEG:

And then I'd say, Grieg, stay where you are. Be who you are at this point – just young and play sport, have fun, don't try and be a man by being a man. Being a man is staying strong in who you are, staying focused on what you're doing and to actually stand against that stuff. Don't let people's idea of being tough and hard and that you gotta go out drinking and taking drugs because it takes more of a man to stand against that.

DAVE:

This is my story, what will your story be?

GRIEG:

This is my story, what will your story be?

END.

CLOSING TALK

While the performance aspect ends after Scene 11, every production Trulife does is followed by a short talk by one of the performers. This talk is not scripted, as it varies depending on which performer is speaking. However, its purpose is to summarise that main points of the production, and drive the message home. The DNA talk, while largely improvised, follows the basic structure below, with personal stories and time for questions from the audience added depending on each performer's unique past experience and style.

What to cover:

Intro

Link between DNA & DNA

Not another voice

Spin the wheel RISKS

Rat park & cages

Choice

Social media

Picture

Hey, *school/grade*

Did you guys enjoy the production? Don't you want to give a hand to the actors back stage and media guys? My name is *leader* and I'm from this organization called Trulife. We get to travel all around KZN doing productions like this. And today we're obviously here to chat about drugs and alcohol.

So, as we researched a whole lot about addiction while we created this production we discovered that just like how our DNA is what makes up who we are; our personalities, the kinds of decisions we make which ultimately affect our future, it's the same thing with drugs and alcohol. They affect and change our personalities which affects the kind of decisions we make and ultimately affect the future we can have. See how Drugs N Alcohol become DNA (slowly for reaction.)

See, we as Trulife are not here today to tell you what you can and cannot do. But we are here to tell you the cold hard truth, and then the decision is yours. We want to ask you ***what will your story be?*** Your future is in your hands but we want you to know some of the realities.

So, you guys remember the "spin that wheel" scene? And you saw how each round the risks and rewards were greater than the last. The reason we do this scene is to show you how we, as people, risk things all the time. We think the bad things can never happen to us and sometimes we don't think to weigh up the possibilities. It's like if you were to go and play soccer on the highway. You know its dangerous, right? What are the chances of you being hit by a car? They're high right? The reality guys, is that it's the same thing with drugs and alcohol and addiction. We know what some of the consequences are yet we are still so okay to mess around with these dangerous substances. Again, the choice is always yours. ***What will your story be?***

So we showed you guys this video called "choices video" and in there we speak about the rat park experiment. It's this crazy thing where a guy took a rat and put him in this cage. The cage was pretty boring, it was small and the rat was isolated. All he had was a little wheel to run on, food and water. There were two bottles of water, one was normal and the other laced

with drugs. What he found is that every time the rat would get addicted to the drug water, overdose and die. So he tried it again only this time he took a new rat (obviously, the other one was dead) and put him in a new cage. This cage was epic, it had tubes and houses and food and maybe cheese and girl/boy rats, whatever a rat could dream of. He put one bottle of normal water and a bottle of water laced with drugs. What they found was that this time, because of the different cage, the rats never got addicted to the drugged water, in fact, they only drank the normal water! This shows us that addiction has a lot to do with the kind of cages we are in! Are you in a cage where you feel isolated, depressed, bored, no friends or friends that are a bad influence on you? Or are you in a cage where you are stimulated, have fun, and have healthy, good friends? Ask yourself the question, ‘who are the people around me?’ And what are the environments I am putting myself in?

The choice is yours, guys. We want to challenge you to make a decision TODAY. Don’t think “ah, I’ll just see how I feel!” because that’s not making a decision and it means you will be easily influenced. Make a decision, be the leader of your own life! ***What is your story going to be?*** You’ve seen how Grieg and Dave had to walk a tough road because they either never made a decision or they made bad decisions. Your future is in your hands and the decisions you make TODAY are going to affect the person you become and the future you have. When you look back on your life in fifteen years do you want to be proud of the young person you were? Or do you want to feel regret because of the foolish decisions you made?

Awesome guys, so in closing we want to show you we are on all kinds of social media! So follow us on Instagram and Facebook and you can message us whenever you want. We also have this email address – help@trulife.org.za and that is for you guys to message whenever about anything you are struggling with. If you need help, we are here for you!

As mentioned, this script forms a record of the work done and it therefore both primary data, as well as a product of research and creative effort in its own right. Part Three now expounds on the methods used to analyse this data, and presents the lessons gained from my observations.

PART THREE: THE ACT OF THINKING

5. METHODS FOR THE THEORETICAL COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT

This research uses the interpretivist paradigm (also sometimes referred to as a constructivist paradigm), which seeks to understand the “subjective world of human experience”, in this case, how a team of drama practitioners understand the process of devising (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 33). The interpretivist paradigm assumes a subjective epistemology; this means that the data collected can be understood both through critical reflections on/from my own experiences and understanding of devising and engagement with the literature, as well as through interaction with the participants of the research to include their reflections in the analysis. This study uses a qualitative research methodology, and a case study approach to the investigation. Qualitative research focuses on an explorative investigation into a subject, and is “based on data expressed mostly in the form of words – descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings etc. – rather than on numbers” (Walliman, 2011: 128). Furthermore, this type of research emphasizes the reciprocal and cyclical process of data collection and data analysis (Walliman, 2011: 130). These features of qualitative research – exploration, data expressed as opinion and observation, and the concept of a cyclical process – are found in the primary method used, namely Action Research, which is a particularly well suited method under the interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 37). Working hand in hand with Action Research, my study is located within the context of Practice-as-Research (PaR). PaR takes the nature of practice as its central focus, which in this case applies to the use of the devising process as the basis for this research. Both PaR and Action Research are explained more fully below.

5.1. Practice-as-Research

The creative aspect of this research - namely the TIE programme that was developed - is more than a case study to be examined once completed. The research questions to be answered, or at least explored through this study, focus on the **process** of creating a TIE programme.

Therefore, the research I am undertaking relies directly on the creative practices used and my observations of these practices.

In *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009: 1) make a convincing argument for the acceptance of what they term “practice-led research” as a legitimate form of research in creative arts fields. They describe this research as an “iterative cyclic web of practice-led research and research-led practice” (2009: 20) where the research and practice constantly feed into each other. This highlights the link between this field of research and Action Research as both have a circular and continuously evolving process based upon the researcher’s observations.

Terms such as practice-led research, practice-based research or performance as research are described in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* (2006: 233) as related concepts, and can be summarized under the label of PaR. PaR is widely accepted as a form of research (particularly in the theatre and performance field), which “departs from traditional written methods of investigation, articulating and disseminating original ideas” (Allain and Harvie, 2006: 233). Furthermore, Baz Kershaw, a prolific writer on the subject, comments in his book *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* that PaR is characterised by

post-binary commitment to activity (rather than structure), process (rather than fixity), action (rather than representation), collectiveness (rather than individualism), reflexivity (rather than self-consciousness), and more. (Kershaw: 2011, 64).

The emphasis Kershaw places on non-binary approach to research was very helpful in formulating my own understanding. This approach allows for the blurring of previously established boundaries such as the distinction between actor and educator, performer and audience, researcher and subject. It also places the focus on the action, in this case the act of creating and performing, rather than on the finished product. Once again, my interest was in the creation of the TIE programme, not its final impact or text. That is not to suggest that the final product was of no value in this research – it carries huge weight in recording and reflecting the process of which it is a product – but the use of PaR meant the steps taken to reach the final script are equally significant, and in fact, generative. This links well with AR, a method in which the process is equally the focal point.

Ultimately, PaR makes use of practical creative practices as the primary form of research. Likewise, Kershaw's description quoted above, noting the many things PaR is (and is not) highlights its emphasis on activity and using the act of creating (or performing) as the research method. This is very fitting in this research as my main questions revolve around the *process* of creating a TIE programme, and do not focus as much on, for example, the end product or results, such as audience response or successful behaviour change. PaR also articulates well with my ideas about postmodernism as both a framework and influence on this research; Kershaw notes that PaR projects,

align with the *paradigm shift* (assuming it happened, c. 1950 – 1990) between modernism and postmodernism, between a world organised around the (apparent) stability of binaries and one in which multiplicity, complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity rule. (Kershaw, 2011: 84).

PaR was engaged as a method in this research as I attempted to analyse my practice as a TIE practitioner, and the practices of those working with me on this project, through a self-reflexive observation of the thoughts, creative decisions and reasoning that occurs as the creative project evolves.

5.2. Self Reflection

Self reflection is an important part of anyone's experiences, but in the research context it takes on the additional role of formalising and documenting the researcher's insights as they emerge, which informs decisions and enables improved research activities in the future. This type of academic self reflection can be defined as "a purposeful activity in which you analyse experiences, or your own practice/skills/responses, in order to learn and improve" (University of Birmingham's Academic Skills Centre, 2015: 2).

Leading writer on the subject, Gillie Bolton, states that self reflection "welcomes discussion of action, thoughts, feelings, without privileging the rational and cognitive, seeking to enquire into social processes without adherence to modernist individualism" (Bolton, 2007: 205). This fits well into the postmodern approach to research as it emphasizes individual perspective

and a non-binary approach to data analysis. Bolton highlights the advantage of using this type of process:

Exposing experiences to critical scrutiny in action learning sets can enable individuals to perceive and potentially alter previously taken-for-granted 'paradigms' or 'stories' which culturally frame aspects of their experience. They can then effect change. (Bolton, 2007: 205).

I feel that as someone who potentially has "taken-for-granted" assumptions about devising theatre, the use of intentional self reflection can help create better self-awareness of my practices.

In order to structure my academic reflection, I made use of Gibbs's Reflective Cycle (1988) to reflect on the events that occurred during my research.

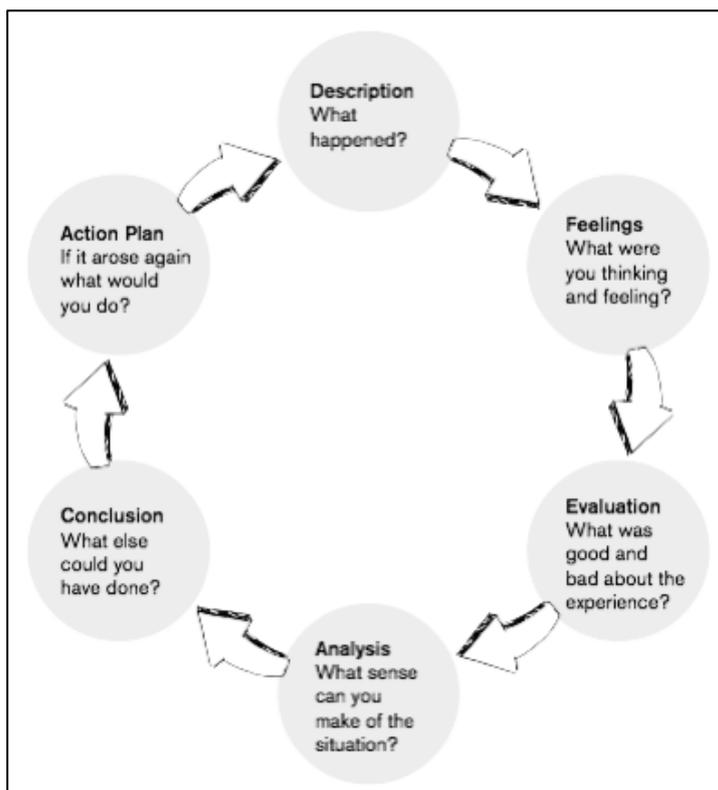


Figure 3. The Self Reflection Cycle (Gibbs, 1988).

This cycle allows the researcher to interrogate not only what happened, but also any feelings and reactions to those events. The process of interrogating one's feelings is important because it allows one more accurately to identify which parts of the collection, analysis and

interpretation of the data hold significant meaning for the researcher and participants (Johnson-Leslie, 2009: 248). The timing of reflection activities also plays a role. Reflection-in-action refers to reflection that occurs while the activity is taking place (i.e. without interruption), which I found tended to happen, prompted by the AR process, as I was recording group discussion and rehearsals; whereas reflection-on-action either interrupts the activity or occurs once the activity has concluded (Johnson-Leslie, 2009 245). In my experience both types of reflection were useful. In some instances, reflection-in-action allowed me to take the “pulse” of what was happening around me and respond immediately to achieve richer, more targeted data. By contrast, sometimes it was necessary to allow feelings and initial impressions to settle and reflecting-on-action allowed me more time to consider multiple perspectives and to link my experiences with relevant theory. This would generally take place after working with Trulife when I wrote in my journal about how the most recent session went, or when reading over my notes in preparation for the next session.

Finally, Bolton points out the similarities between self reflection and one of my main methods, Action Research (Bolton, 2007: 204) as both make use of a cyclical analysis of one’s own practices in order to affect positive change, as will be made clear in the following discussion of the AR process.

5.3. Action Research

Action Research (AR), as mentioned above, was applied both directly to the devising process, and to my analysis of this process in the theoretical discussion. While devising forms the practical method of creating the TIE programme with the Trulife actors, my own understanding of the devising process was filtered through the AR process in order to investigate the applicability of AR not only as a means of research and reflection on my practice, but also as a method of understanding the act of devising and the steps taken in the devising process.

Action Research has its origins with Kurt Lewin who “stressed the importance of democratic collaboration and participation” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002: 4). In their in-depth and insightful book, *Action Research: Principles and Practice*, McNiff and Whitehead - two of the leading writers on AR - give what they describe as a commonly accepted definition:

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, learners or principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understandings of these practices, and (c) the situations (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out. (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002: 2).

Jack Whitehead (1995) writes extensively about AR and identifies a five-stage cycle which makes up the Action Research process:

1. State the problem
2. Imagine/brainstorm a solution
3. Implement the solution
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
5. Modify the solution or your practice in light of the evaluation.

This cycle is then repeated as new or evolving problems are identified in ongoing practice. It is this cycle which forms the basis of my research, both in the creation of the TIE programme, and in the analysis of my practices as a TIE deviser.

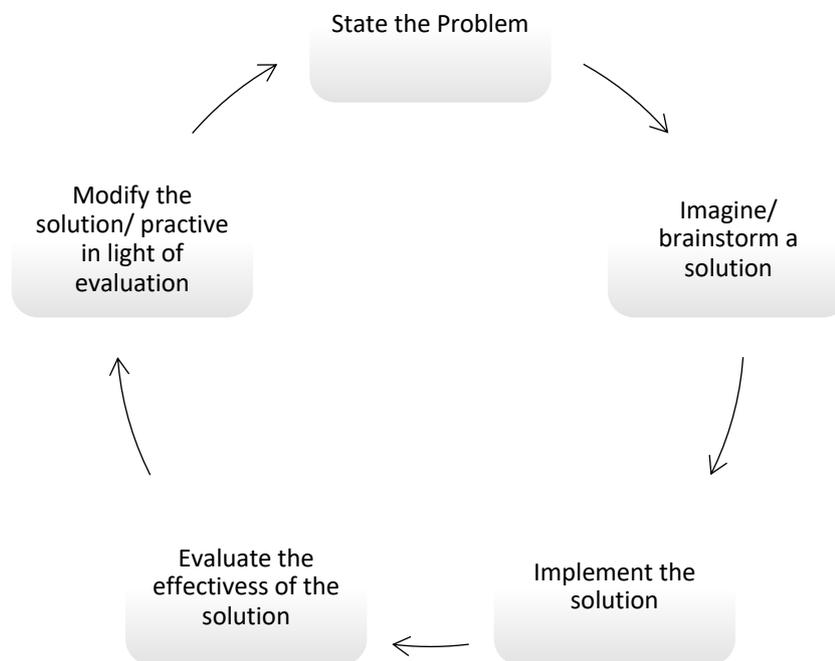


Figure 4. *The Action Research Cycle (adapted from Whitehead, 1995)*

The application of AR to this research can be further defined as **participatory action research**²⁶. This intentionally blurs the distinctions made between the academic/ researcher and the participant/ subject (McIntyre, 2008: xii). This type of AR is described by Alison McIntyre in her book *Participatory Action Research* as shifting the emphasis to “people’s lived experiences, individual and social change, the coconstruction of knowledge and the notion of action as a legitimate mode of knowing” (McIntyre, 2008: xii). In breaking down the conventional relationship between researcher and participant, a more equal collaborative relationship is established, and one which promotes critical self-reflection of both parties roles (McIntyre, 2008: iv). In *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research* Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon outline five benefits of using this type of participatory research:

²⁶ It should be noted that participatory action research is often abbreviated to PAR. However, I have chosen to use this abbreviation for my discussion on practice as research above and so will use no abbreviation here.

1. It allows the researcher to understand and develop practice “‘from within’ the practice”;
2. It creates “the conditions for practitioners to speak a shared language” which evolves as the action is observed and undertaken;
3. It fosters inclusive participation in which practitioners are as involved as participants;
4. It “creates the conditions for practitioners to participate in and develop the communities of practice”. This includes relationships between participants, and relationships between those responsible for such research;
5. It allows practitioners to “transform the conduct and consequences of their practice to meet the needs of changing times and circumstances by confronting and overcoming...untoward consequences of their practice”.

(Adapted from Kemmis et al., 2014: 5).

I have chosen to refer to action research, or AR, as the method used in this research for clarity of communication, but understand that for much of my work with Trulife it was AR with a participatory element.

Postmodernism as a world view or philosophy (as discussed in Chapter 3) has bearing on the development and understanding of this use of AR. It can be argued that the influence of postmodern ideas on the way we view research and deal with information has paved the way for ideas supporting AR, and as such provides a theoretical framework for the practice-led research undertaken using the AR method. The departure of AR from traditional positivist research methods is seen in its ability to encourage researchers not to remain apart in an attempt to maintain objectivity, but rather consciously to insert themselves into the research. This requires the use of qualitative methods such as observational journaling, self-reflection, interviews and group discussion, as well as the chance to develop what Whitehead (1995) calls ‘living theories’ - theories about the researcher’s practice and observations that are personal and open to change.

The concept of living theory is influenced strongly by the ideas expressed in postmodern thought, particularly the deconstruction of metanarratives by Lyotard (1984), and the idea that identity is constructed and constantly changing (Foucault, 1984). Indeed, Jennings and Graham (1996: 276) suggest that a static definition, as defined by positivist thinking is not possible in a postmodern world, and that the role of individual perspective, as highlighted by postmodern philosophy, should be emphasised. The concept of Living Theory has been largely pioneered by Whitehead (2012: 1) who explains a living theory as:

The original idea that an individual researching their own practice can create their own living educational theories as explanations for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.

Whitehead (2012) argues that the positivist approach to research, in which the only means to discover reliable and true knowledge is through scientific enquiry and methods, is no longer the only way of approaching research and indeed thinking about truth. Rather, the researcher - which in his case refers most commonly to teachers or other education professionals - may form their own living theory, and use their personal observations and practices to test these theories (Whitehead, 2009: 87). These living theories are closely linked with the method of Action Research and allowed me to create a theory unique and specific to this research, based on my experiences and observations. This allows for greater specificity and detail to be offered in the discussion of my and Trulife's practices.

As part of the Action Research method the following qualitative research were conducted:

- Text-based literary research (for example analysis of news articles, government reports, published personal stories) was conducted to enhance understanding of the broader social, cultural and political discourses at play. The creative team were advised to take care to read a wide variety of sources to avoid becoming stuck in a single narrow narrative. This aided the creative team in establishing ideas for the material, and could be adapted to form the basis for some scene/s. This also aimed to ensure the information communicated in the TIE programme was accurate and a true reflection of reality concerning drug and alcohol abuse, and teen culture.

- Archival research is an umbrella concept which involves the retrieval and interrogation of primary historic documentation that has significant information and evidentiary value of relevance to the topic at hand. While initially used primarily in relation to public record offices and government agencies, this term can now be applied to any analysis of source materials for purposes other than those for which they were originally collected (Walliman, 2011: 78). This research was conducted in the form of viewing Trulife's existing programmes, both through video recordings, and in live performance. The material was evaluated according to factors such as relevance, depth of knowledge and insight of the authors and performers, performance style and techniques employed, and the original purpose and outcome (success) of the performances. This enabled me to establish the features of Trulife's style and to gauge which aspects of the performance are most successful in achieving their purpose.
- In-person unstructured group interviews with Trulife company members were conducted to gain understanding about their view of the work, their devising process, and their knowledge about the theories underpinning their practices (for example, Action Research and postmodernism). An unstructured interview can be defined as an interview which relies on the social interaction between the researcher and informant to determine the contents (Walliman, 2011: 99). In contrast to a structured interview, an unstructured interview does not predetermine the questions or answer categories and is more spontaneous. This has the advantage of exposing the researcher to unanticipated themes and discoveries, as well as allowing for a better understanding of the members' realities in contrast to the researcher's preconceptions. Four group interviews were conducted: one at the initial meeting, two during the devising process, and one on completion of the project.
- I also wrote a detailed journal documenting my observations and the process as it unfolded. In doing this, the five-stage cycle outlined in Action Research literature could be more easily identified and the solutions more effectively evaluated. Electronic journal entries were made on my laptop both during and after each session with the Trulife team and I recorded the content/events of that session, as well as any observations I may have had. These take the form of bullet-pointed/ summarised

record of events, which enables quick typing ensuring accuracy and not falling behind the discussion.

It should be noted that AR has become a significant methodology, particularly in educational and medical fields, where it is used by teachers, administrators and nurses as a means of investigating their own practice and how to improve it. However, there is valuable application of this method in drama and performance, particularly for research taking place in African countries, as outlined by David Kerr, working in Botswana (2011: 135), in *Drama as a form of Action Research*. He argues that AR partners well with performing arts for the following reasons:

- a) Performing arts have a long pedigree as a favoured form of indigenous African knowledge-formation, especially in societies which are negotiating important changes.
- b) Performing arts (partly owing to functions derived from pre-capitalist social structures) can often provide a less threatening way of extracting information than a full-frontal questionnaire and tape-recorder investigation.
- c) The energy generated in creating a performance is a very valuable motivating force in order to engage communities in social development campaigns or neophyte researchers in the pursuit of knowledge.
- d) Performing arts, through their ability to create imaginary scenarios, can be used not only to understand the world as it exists, but to strategize ways of transforming it.

By applying the Action research method to the theoretical reflection on my practices within the creation of a TIE performance theatre, as well as to the method of devising in itself, it operates both as a method for understanding my practice, as well as a key factor in the devising process.

In attempting to understand my practice as a TIE practitioner, and the practices of those working with me on this project, I combined PaR as a method, with participatory action research. These two methods share many similarities as they both focus on a self-reflexive approach, allowing for personal observation and understanding to be included and valued, and can be described as having cyclical relationship. AR's cycle is one which allows for

problem identification and solving, and PaR allows for a constant ebb and flow between known theory and practice, each influencing and reshaping the other, informing the creation of Living Theories by the researcher (Garoian, 2006). In the next chapter I will outline how these methods were actually applied, and offer my insights into what findings emerged.

6. THEORETICAL DESCRIPTION OF MY PRACTICE

In Part Two, the practical methods used to create the TIE programme were outlined. However, running parallel to this was the more theoretical analysis of what we as a group were engaging in and my observations as researcher about this work. These observations are outlined here, and then reflected upon in more detail in Chapter Seven.

As Action Research (AR) comprised the main method used in this research, I have chosen to describe the project in terms of the five stages of AR, as identified by Whitehead (1995). As already discussed above, these are:

1. State the problem
2. Imagine/brainstorm a solution
3. Implement the solution
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
5. Modify the solution or your practice in light of the evaluation.

While these are very broad stages, each containing their own more detailed methods and specific requirements, approaching the stages of this project using this structure was helpful and provided a framework around which the team could work.

6.1. 'State the problem'

The 'problem' in AR is usually something identified by an individual about their own practice. However, in Trulife's case, the problem was not so much a difficulty or setback, but rather a goal they wanted to achieve. We chose to state our problem as: *We need a new TIE production that will tackle the drugs and alcohol problem in schools.*

The need for such a TIE programme was made apparent to me in my very first meeting with Trulife's director, Colin. I had set up the meeting to discuss the possibility of collaborating with Trulife for my Master's work, particularly as a means of exploring my own practice as a theatre practitioner. Because the focus of my research was on the process, and on the use of AR within that process, I did not have a particular topic in mind, as the content was

considered secondary to my main focus. Colin responded enthusiastically to my suggestion of collaboration, recognising it as an opportunity for Trulife to gain new insight, better their own practice and add a new product to what they already offer schools. However, Colin stressed their need as an organisation for a production that dealt with drugs and alcohol abuse in High Schools. This perceived need was realized through multiple conversations with teachers at the schools Trulife visited. While Trulife were at these schools to perform TIE programmes around other topics, there was a consistent cry from schools for intervention into drugs and alcohol abuse among learners. It was with this in mind that I agreed to this topic.

Session 1: Introductions and initial insights

The first group discussion was held to establish the 'problem' we wanted to tackle and refine its boundaries. This also served as an opportunity for me to introduce myself to those I had not met on the team, and to establish my role within the group. I spent some time explaining Action Research to the team, and how I hoped this could improve the devising process. The team seemed interested and eager for any information that would potentially help them to create work more efficiently and with more detail.

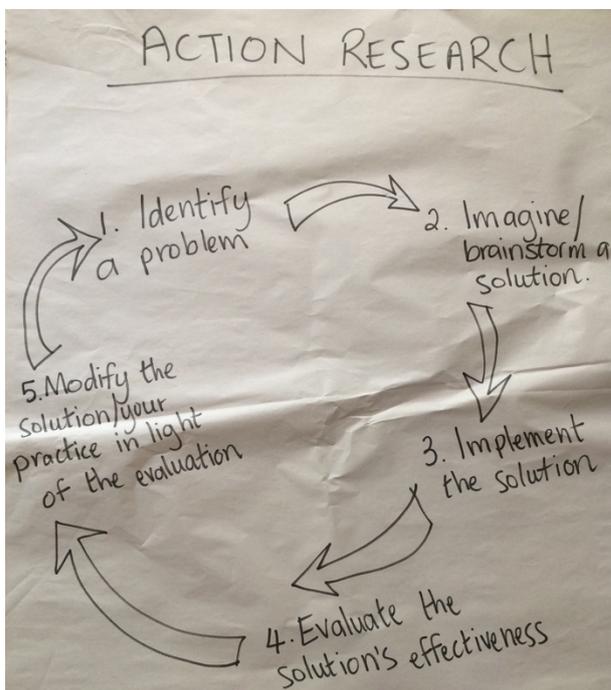


Figure 5. Diagram I used to explain Action Research to the Trulife team.

We then moved on to discussing the topic Colin had suggested to me – Drugs and Alcohol. The response from the team was extremely positive and indicated they too felt this was a topic in need of urgent addressing at the schools with which they worked. They went on to

describe many encounters with high school learners who approached them during visits to a school, wanting “help for a friend who is involved in drugs” (Participant 2, 2016) or “loads of girls make such stupid decisions because they are drunk. They do stuff they’ll really regret” (Participant 1, 2016).

I then moved the discussion in a different direction, asking the questions “Which parts of Trulife’s other productions do we want to keep the same in this production? What do we want to change?”; essentially, these questions were intended to stimulate a discussion of presentation style, but phrased in such a way that no one in the group felt alienated by what might be considered theatre jargon. What followed was an interesting and insightful discussion by the team about why their productions are structured the way they are. The team explained to me that one of their primary goals is to present the TIE programmes in a way that is relevant, entertaining and grabs the attention of young learners. The team had many memories of other theatre groups coming to their own schools in the past and the work being perceived as “boring”, “irrelevant”, “preachy” and having little or no impact (Participant 1, 2016). Being familiar with Trulife’s other work, I understood that what they were referring to was the short episodic scenes, use of a pastiche of styles, incorporation of media elements and the reference to many pop culture trends. These features, they felt, needed to continue into this production, and became a guiding feature in future discussions.

Trulife’s stylistic features were recorded in the order in which they were mentioned on a white board to record the discussion:

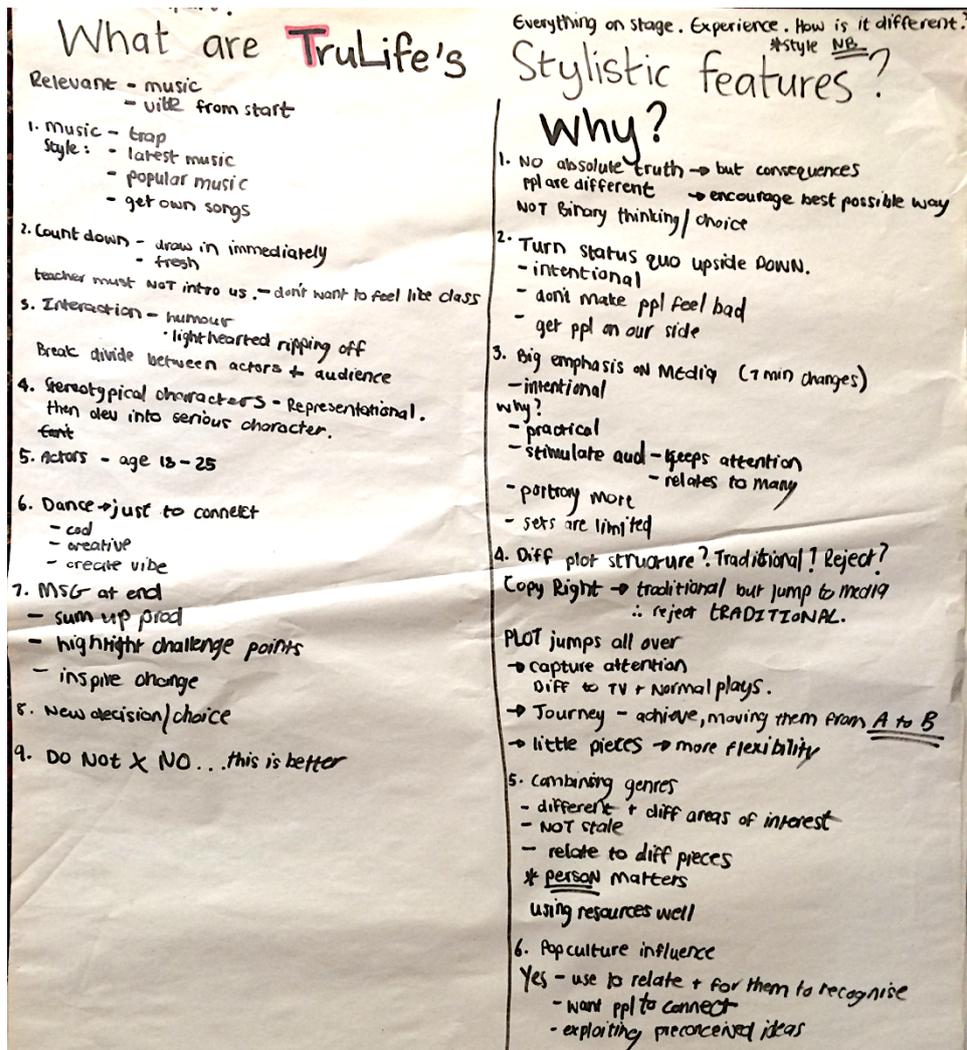


Figure 6. Brainstorming session on style

I then recorded these points in my own journal, adding more information based on both my understanding of their discussion, but also my academic understanding of these features as established theatre practices.

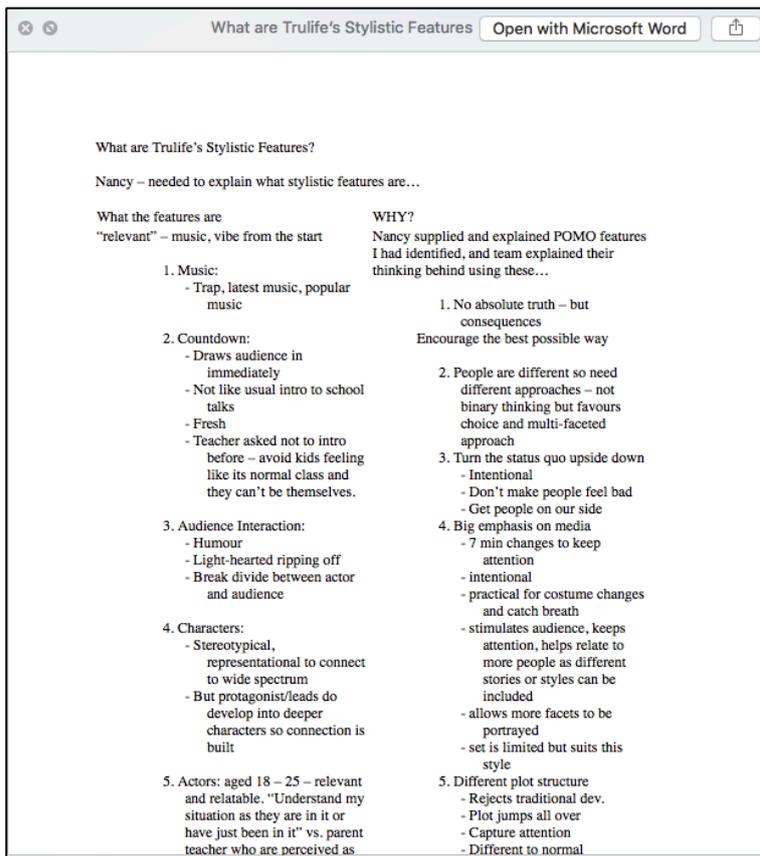


Figure 7. My journal record of the style discussion group.

The final part of this initial meeting was spent sharing our own stories of encounters with drugs and alcohol as teenagers. Each person had a chance to reflect on their own encounters, and the nature of these experiences, whether good or bad. This was done to remind ourselves what it was like to be in these situations, and to paint a realistic picture of the social context in which our soon to be target audience exists, ultimately immersing ourselves in their situation to better understand their perspective.

I closed the session by challenging everyone to do some research on the topic, and to look for stories or encounters from real life that could be shared at the next meeting.²⁷

²⁷ Common practice suggests the initial meeting in this type of process begin with a round of introductions, or even some "ice-breaker" games so that group members get to know each other and feel comfortable working together. I already knew most of the Trulife team, and they had already worked together for 6 months so I omitted this from my session planning. However, in hindsight, I think it still would have been beneficial as it would have set stronger working relationships from the beginning of the project.

6.2. 'Imagine/brainstorm a solution'

The next stage in the AR cycle called for the creation of a solution to our problem. While on the most basic level, the solution was already apparent – create a TIE programme addressing drug and alcohol use – there were many decisions that needed to be made regarding what this solution would look like, what specific content it would address, and more.

As mentioned, it was important to Trulife that their established style be replicated in this production. This style, described in the introduction to the script in Chapter Four, can be summarized as the following:

- A rejection of one absolute truth, but rather a focus on choices and their consequences in the way stories are told;
- An intentional challenging of status quo, allowing multiple perspectives to appeal to different types of people in the audience;
- A strong focus on the use of multi-media, allowing for practical breaks in the onstage action, as well as portraying more varied facets;
- A rejection of traditional plot structure in favour of micro-narratives, episodic scenes, where jumps in time, place and action occur frequently;
- A pastiche of genres and styles including different dance styles, comedy, drama, filmed media, animation, a wide variety of music styles, poetry and more;
- The deliberate incorporation of pop culture aspects, such as popular music, colloquial language, hip-hop culture references, reference to television tropes and a borrowing of trends from youth culture.

These stylistic features were not phrased with the academic or theatrical jargon used in this list, but rather in terms comfortable to the Trulife performers, as Figure Seven on the previous page shows.

Session 2: Brainstorming

These stylistic features found in Trulife's past work had been explained to me in our initial group discussion as part of Trulife's existing style. However, in the second group discussion it became apparent that the team wanted these stylistic features to be carried through into this new production. I proceeded to interrogate why these features were important to the team.

They explained that these stylistic features arose organically over years of working together and reflecting on the work created. The guiding principal was to ensure relevance to the young audience in whatever way possible. In the group discussion, it was explained that all of the above mentioned styles had evolved because they added something unique or “fresh” (Participant 5, 2016) to the production and that the team followed a specific process to include them. This led to greater connection with the audience, creating a deeper level of trust in the performers and ultimately in the message being delivered. As one actor said,

we [young people] are so sick of being told what or what not to do by old people that even if they're right, we stop hearing them and tune out. Our performance needs to break through that and get them really listening again. If we use stuff that's cool in the performance, or stuff that surprises them and keeps them interested, then hopefully the message will have more impact” (Participant 3, 2016).

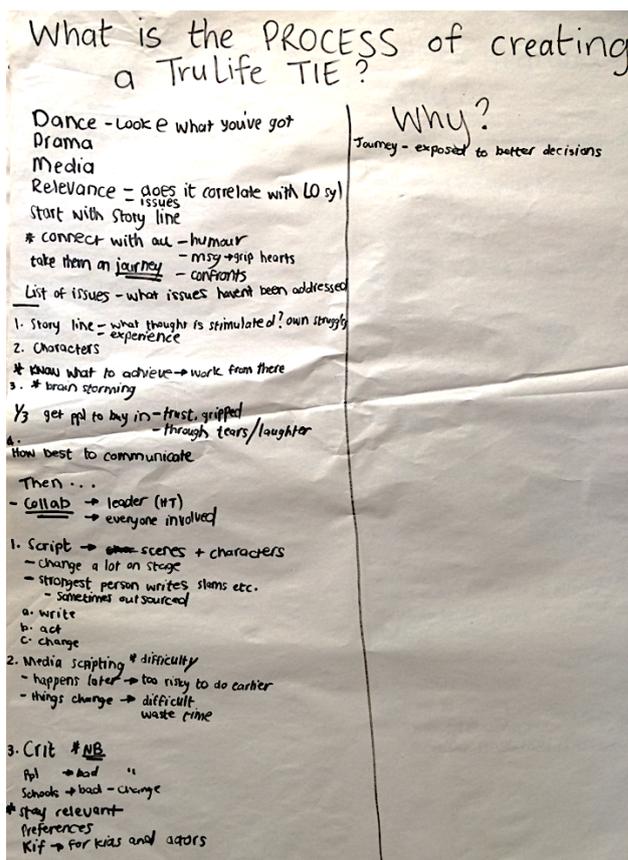


Figure 8. Trulife’s process of incorporating different stylistic elements.

I then moved the discussion onto what we wanted this TIE programme to contain specifically. For this development stage, I suggested we make use of some of the devising techniques I

had learnt to begin refining exactly what we wanted the production to contain, what possible scenes or themes we wanted to address, while merging these with Trulife's existing processes.

I recorded the ideas the group had, and reflected on them, in my electronic journal.

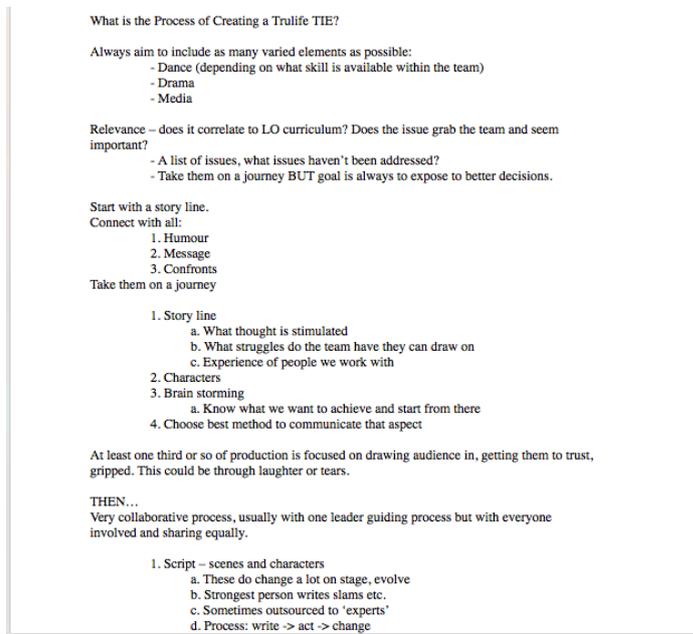


Figure 9. My journal record of Session 2.

I had ended the previous group meeting by asking the group to be on the look out for any encounters or information related to the use of drugs and alcohol, particularly by teens as this was our target audience. This method falls under “direct observation” as some participants had spent time engaging directly with teenagers, conversing with them about their attitudes towards drugs and alcohol, and observing their behaviour in discussing these topics. Others had engaged in more traditional research, myself included, and at this point in the discussion shared stories they had found in the course of online research as well as statistical information related to the abuse of drugs and alcohol in South Africa. The sources of these stories and facts were news articles, journals, personal testimonies that had been shared online, and websites dedicated to anti-drug or anti-alcohol campaigns.

While the participants shared their findings, I began summarising some key points or capturing the essence of each story on a large whiteboard. This allowed the group to segue quite naturally (with only a little prompting from me) into a discussion of which stories or themes we felt held the most potential for theatrical interpretation. At this stage I tried not to

contribute too much or to control the direction in which the discussion went. While this was not a decision I had planned in my preparation for this group discussion, in the moment, I felt there was a risk of my voice becoming overly influential in the process, and that if I were perceived as being too controlling or vocal, the less experienced theatre makers in the group would feel that their ideas were not worth sharing and their buy-in to the project might then be limited. I was also curious to see whether the way they had described their process in creating previous projects was accurate and if this would be repeated again.

This discussion led to some interesting creative observations, as the participants began to make the transition from sharing stories, to selecting what had theatrical potential and could therefore have value in this production. Using a different colour, I began either crossing out ideas the team felt they did not want to explore practically, or adding new ideas as they arose organically in discussion. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and had to close the session, but I felt pleased that at least there had been a good start to the devising process. I closed the session by reminding the participants of our “problem” as we had articulated it in the first session: to create a TIE programme on drugs and alcohol, adding a strong direction that had emerged: that the TIE programme should not focus on a message of “don’t do this” or “drugs are bad” but rather encouraged the teenagers in the audience to think about their choices and what kind of future they would like to have based on those choices. This was done to focus our ideas back to the primary goal, and leave our over-arching mission firmly defined in the participants’ minds. I encouraged the participants to go away and think about the ideas we had come up with so far, in preparation for the next meeting.

In the break between these two sessions, I focused on my own reflection, recording what had been achieved and conducting more research, particularly on existing TIE programmes that addressed Drug and Alcohol abuse in an effort to investigate which techniques they used. Some of these are recorded in Chapter 1.

Session 3: Storyboarding

This session continued the selection process we had begun in Session 2. However, at this session I was introduced to the storyboarding method Trulife makes frequent use of. Storyboarding is the graphic representation of the sequence of scenes to be included (van

Langeveld, 2010). Trulife's storyboard began with a simple series of blocks drawn by hand on the whiteboard, represented in Figure 10:

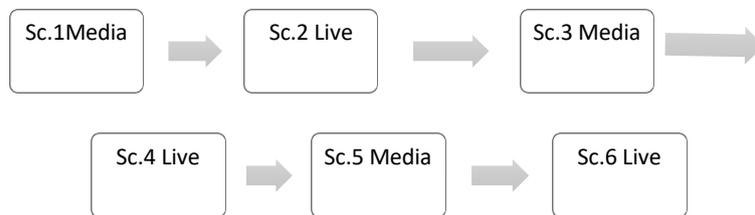


Figure 10. Initial storyboard design.

The blocks each represented the scenes they wanted to ultimately fill with content. What is interesting about this technique is that the very simple layout can be tentatively set in place before any content is even created, or any script written. It was explained that they start by assuming that the scenes will alternate between some sort of onstage performance (such as drama, dance, poetry) and a media component (which could be a filmed scene, animation, or graphic word art). The reason for this is to allow for different styles to be included, to ensure the actors have time to prepare for the next scene, as well as to keep the pace moving quickly. This mimics a television-style of narrative, with frequent changes, one which the team felt their teenage audience would relate to more than a single narrative.

At this stage, there was insufficient content to create a full storyboard, but knowing what types of scenes we were looking for helped focus our brainstorming. Added to this, we spent some time discussing what possible scenes could fill those blocks. Prompted by the lead dancer in the group, it was decided that a dance would be included, which somehow captured the problems of addiction in a more metaphorical way. Some of the group also felt a 'slam poem' (performance poetry) would make for a powerful climax to the performance. These ideas were captured in a mind map on the white board provided.

The final part of this session was to select which stories had the most theatrical potential, and which type of scenes we wanted to show to build up the over-arching theme of the production. These were listed on the whiteboard as follows:

- fun scene introducing the characters

- dance (contemporary, moving)
- slam poem that gives the challenge
- scene showing the dangers (everything that could go wrong)
- scene showing social pressure

Our storyboard now looked something like this:

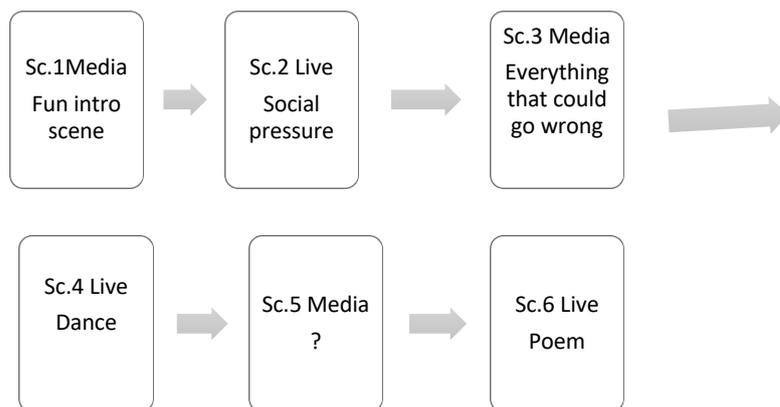


Figure 11. Storyboard Version 2.

We agreed that each person would go away and work on how these scenes could be developed – both in content and in style – as well as thinking about what other scenes still needed to be included. I closed the session by reminding the group that our goal was to find a solution to the problem we had identified in Session One, namely to create a TIE programme – in Trulife’s established style - that highlighted the dangers of drugs and alcohol but also prompted the audience to rethink their own attitudes and behaviours towards this topic. I reflected that the Action Research method was helpful in this instance of keeping everyone focused on our goal, allowing for work to happen independently from the group setting without the programme moving in too many different directions.

Session 4: Continuing the discussion

This session had a very different structure and feel to the previous sessions. I had planned to begin with refining the storyboard, but this had already begun happening in the previous session and it was clear the group were ready to work and select ideas at a pace much quicker than I had expected. We spent this session discussing any other scenes, and it was clear the Trulife team had been thinking and working on their own in between our previous session and this one. There were many more ideas for scenes, which we recorded. The

discussion around which scenes should be included was honest and openly debated, with some people disagreeing and discussing the impact certain scenes would have on the overall message of the production. One such example was pointed out by the lead choreographer who mentioned that many of the scenes focused on alcohol and we were not addressing drugs strongly enough (Participant 5, 2016). Our ever evolving storyboard had evolved to a spider web of ideas, with many possible scenes.

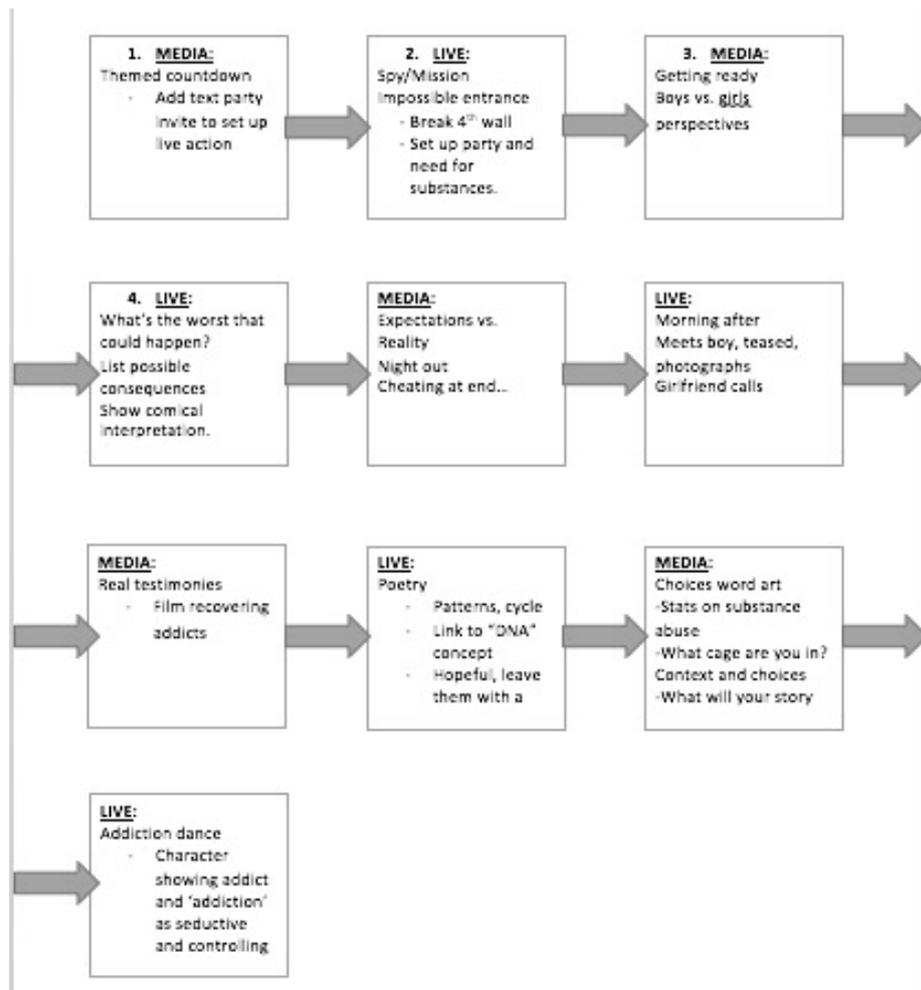


Figure 12. Storyboard Version 3.

Overall, my impression of this session was that there had been enough talking, and that the team were ready to begin creating before we ran the risk of “discussing the script to death” (Strauss, 2016). In essence, we had enough ideas to begin forming our TIE ‘solution’ and were thus ready for the next stage in the AR cycle.

6.3. ‘Implement the solution’

The next stage of the Action Research cycle requires the possible solutions to be tested as effective, thus moving into a more practical implementation of ideas. For this project, that meant trying out practically, onstage, some of the scenes to test their effectiveness as well as beginning to form the TIE programme in its entirety.

Session 5: First Rehearsal

This was our final “brainstorming” session before the rehearsal stage of the devising process was due to begin. My goal, therefore, was to generate as much material as possible that could be refined into scenes, script or other creative pieces.

I began by leading the team in some drama exercises and games, to warm up their bodies for the physical activity that would follow, but also to help them to focus, relax and become excited about the activities still to come. For the first warm up we stood in a circle and I led the group through some simple stretches, culminating in a series of spine rolls. I began by explaining verbally what to do, but intentionally moved to just showing them – without words – to ensure they focused on the moment and engaged all their senses.

The next activity was a drama game played in pairs. Each pair had a person A and B. Person A would count the number “one” out loud, followed by B who would count “two”, followed again by A who would count “three”. The cycle would then begin again but this time with B counting “one”; A following with “two” and so on. The result is the pair counts from one to three repeatedly, without pausing in between each cycle. I then had them replace saying the number “one” with any action that related to drugs or alcohol. The example I gave was puffing on a cigarette or drinking from a bottle. Numbers “two” and “three” would still be counted as normal after the action had been performed. Once the pairs had become accustomed to this new addition, I had them replace number “two” with a sound related to drugs and alcohol. The examples I gave were “sniffing cocaine” or “throwing up” (which caused much laughter). Again, number “three” would follow as normal after the action and sound. Finally, I instructed the pairs to replace saying the number “three” with a word encapsulating the message of this new TIE programme we were going to create. The examples I used were “stop” and “mistakes”. The pairs ended the exercise by showing each other the sequences they had created.

The goal of this exercise was twofold: on the one hand counting in pairs in this way is a well-known focus exercise I had picked up during my drama training at University of Cape Town, aimed at building teamwork. I had then adapted this exercise by adding the thematic elements (linked to a specific topic) in the hope that by using actions, sounds and words related to our programme some interesting material or ideas might emerge.

The final warm up exercise was a game played by the whole group known to me as “Object Improvisation”. This is played by the entire group sitting in a circle, around some randomly pre-selected props. I used a drum stick, a small plastic bowl, a fork and a square foam cushion. Each person then has a turn to enter the circle and choose one or more objects to create a short (5 – 10 seconds) scene using that object as anything other than its actual use. For example, the drumstick could become a fishing rod and the person could mime catching a fish. I chose this exercise as from my experience it works very well to build the groups confidence in their own ideas, and promotes creative “out-of-the-box” thinking. I also felt an improvisation exercise was a good final warm up as it would pave the way for the improvisation we would be doing to develop the scenes for the script.

The focus of this session was to “fill in the blocks” (Strauss, 2016) outlined in the storyboard in previous sessions. After warming up, I quickly revisited this board and went over the types of scenes we were hoping to develop. I then asked the group to split up into smaller groups – two or three people each – and pick a scene to work on. The groups chose scenes that they felt were a natural fit, for example the two lead males choosing a scene in which comedy and acting was required, and the lead dancer choosing to work on a something more expressive and movement related. The bulk of this session was spent working in these smaller groups, generating material through improvisation, brainstorming and research, as I moved from group to group. In the last fifteen minutes we gathered together and reported back, recording on the whiteboard in and around the existing storyboard anything that we felt had potential and might be included.

Session 6: Practical Devising

Session six was our final planning time together. The work thus far had been moving forward

well and I could tell the team were excited to start putting all the pieces they were working on together. I began the session by explaining that we had only two rehearsals left together and so that today would be the final chance to add new scenes. We then revised the work we had, revisiting our storyboard which now looked as follows:

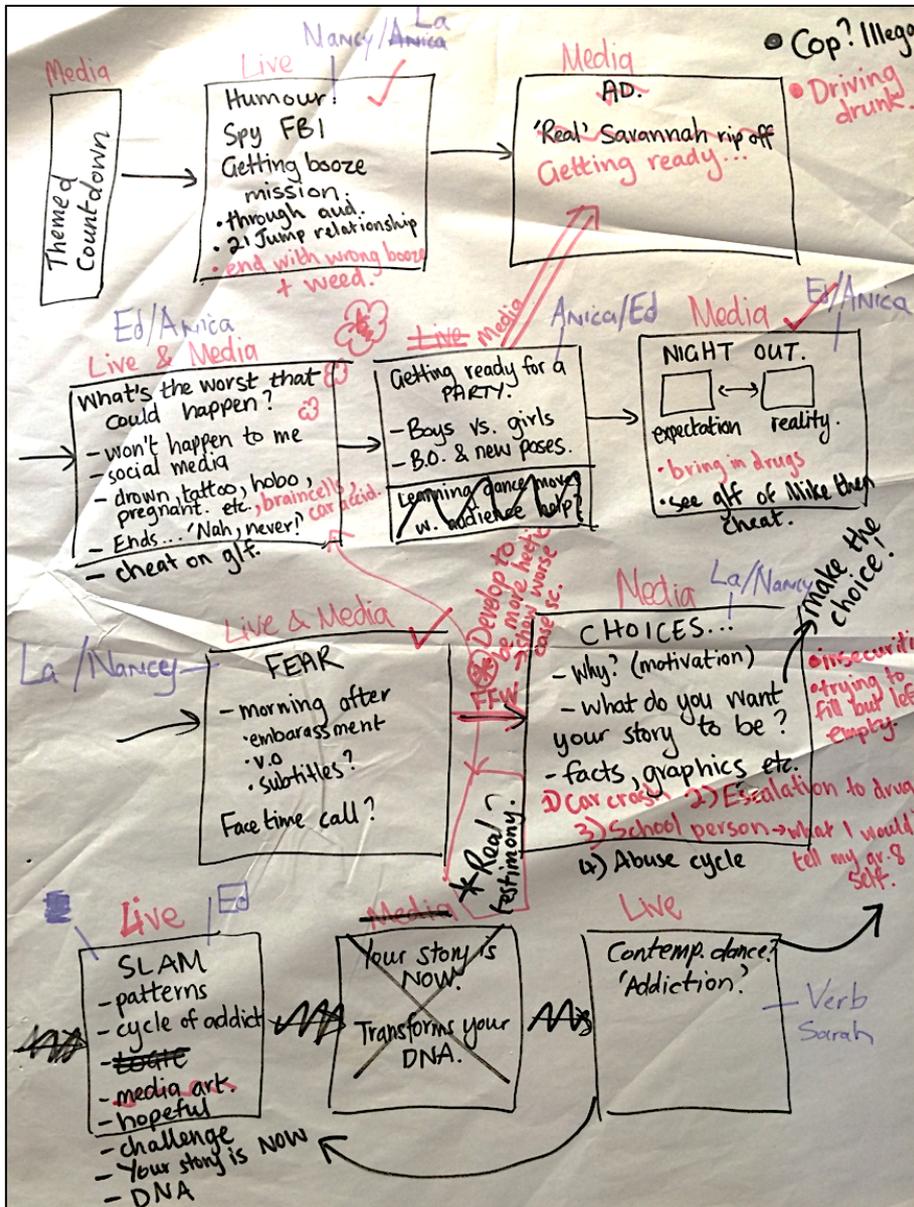


Figure 13. Full storyboard Photograph.

I have chosen intentionally to include a photograph of the final storyboard at this stage, to show that while this process of devising was planned, and followed a basic structure, the progression of this TIE programme was at times chaotic, with many changes and additions. As I will discuss in Chapter Seven, I noted at this stage that the evolving storyboard planning captured the very essence of Action Research – it reflected the constant testing of a solution

or idea, and revising that idea to improve the overall practice or impact of our work.

In this session I allowed the group to work on the individual items they had begun previously. However, I began with three exercises used in devising.

- a) *Thought tracking*. As mentioned this is quite literally a pause in the development of a scene to track the inner thoughts of a character (BBC, 2017). I asked the actors in various scenes to perform those scenes, but then paused them mid-performance. While paused they were asked to express what the character was really thinking and feeling. This exercise ensured that the actors didn't fall back into stereotypical or shallow portrayals of the experiences with drugs and alcohol; but also allowed the group to observe if there were any of these inner thoughts we wanted to include on stage. It was from this exercise that Scene 4 was refined as instead of discussing the possible bad things that could happen to them, it was decided that the characters would instead freeze and through media their 'daydreams' of the negative consequences would play. Thought tracking was also helpful in ensuring all the scenes ultimately related back to our primary goal and message with this TIE programme, and that they hadn't wandered too far off topic through the improvisation process. Essentially this exercise allowed the question, "Is this scene or moment necessary for the audience's emotional journey and connection to the story?"
- b) The second exercise is more of a technique that I had wanted to use: cross-cutting. Most commonly used in film, it allows two scenes to be staged concurrently, with the action jumping between them (BBC, 2017). I felt that this technique worked well with the style Trulife was wanting to replicate in this production as it allows for alternative narratives to be presented and to comment simultaneously on each other. The group were receptive to using this somewhere in the TIE performance and experimented with a few scenes. Ultimately, it was the group member in charge of media who claimed this technique, coming up with an idea that the whole team felt worked well: he would film a scene in which a girl attends a party, but would show her expectation of what it will be like (fun, welcoming, non-threatening, harmless) contrasted simultaneously with the reality that so often occurs (shy, uncomfortable, foolish decisions, out of control).
- c) Finally, I discussed the possibility of 'marking the moment' – this is a way of pausing the narrative in order to highlight the most important moment or message and mark it

as significant in the audience's minds (BBC, 2017). I described a few possibilities, with the intention of trying out one or two places where we could do this. However, the lead dancer had an interesting comment. She suggested that the dance she and a partner had been working on already fulfilled the function of marking the moment as it captured all the emotions of someone who has allowed drugs and/or alcohol to take control of their lives. Furthermore, they believed it would leave a significant impact on the audience's minds as it was a moving and dramatic contemporary dance. They performed what they had worked on for the group and we agreed that it did fulfil this function.

I ended this session by asking the group to refine the scenes they had been working on, and to begin recording their ideas so they would not forget them. I spent time with the person in charge of creating media to plan what needed to be filmed and edited before we could begin piecing together the TIE performance.

Session 7: Selection and rehearsal

The final two sessions require very little description as they were dedicated more to the group's needs and therefore not as structured or planned in advance as previous sessions. Session seven was a rehearsal where all final changes could be implemented. By this point the media elements had also been created and so the group could start to piece the entire production together. I tried to watch each scene and offered advice on its content – some of the comical acted scenes had become quite long and so I spent time helping the actors select only the funniest and most essential material to keep the story moving forward at a quick pace. We found ourselves returning to the initial problem we were trying to solve and testing the scenes against the solution we had articulated; namely, the creation of a TIE programme that educated and challenged learners on the use of drugs and alcohol and encouraged healthy choices. The question I asked the performers was, “does this scene add to that message?” This ensured each scene was pertinent and had a vital role to play in the development of the overall message of the TIE programme. Upon reflection after this session, I realised we had moved into the final two stages of the Action Research cycle – that through asking this question and testing the scenes against our intended solution, we had begun evaluating our solutions and adapting them accordingly.

6.4. 'Evaluate the effectiveness of the solution'

As just described, the next stage of the Action Research cycle calls for an evaluation of the efficiency or success of the proposed solution. This had been occurring in previous rehearsals on a small scale, but for the final session together I had planned a more formal evaluation.

Session 8: Final Dress Rehearsal and feedback

This session took the form of a dress rehearsal performance for a selected outside audience, made up of three 'experts': Colin, the director of Trulife, who had not been involved since our initial meeting; Phil, an experienced performer and drama teacher at a local school; and Lauren, a past Trulife staff member who now worked as a qualified counsellor in schools and local communities, with a vast experience in drug and alcohol abuse as well as insight into teenage behaviour. I felt the different expertise and backgrounds of these three guests would make for a balanced and insightful critique of the TIE programme.

It is worth noting that the ultimate test of the effectiveness of the TIE programme would be the response from the intended audience – in other words Grade 8 learners at local High Schools. However, the focus of my study was not the lasting impact of this TIE programme, but rather the creation process. I did feel that the experts we had invited to critique, as well as my own impression, would give enough of an indication as to whether this TIE programme could be considered 'successful'. With this in mind I asked the audience to comment on the following areas:

- the stage craft of the TIE performance – was this entertaining, slick, well-rehearsed, polished, professional?
- the overall style – we had intentionally aimed to create a style that came across as contemporary, with popular culture references, grabbing attention and would be perceived as new or 'on trend'. Was this achieved?
- the message and content – was this compelling; clear but not forceful; inspiring and thought-provoking?

After watching the performance each invited guest had the chance to give feedback which I recorded.

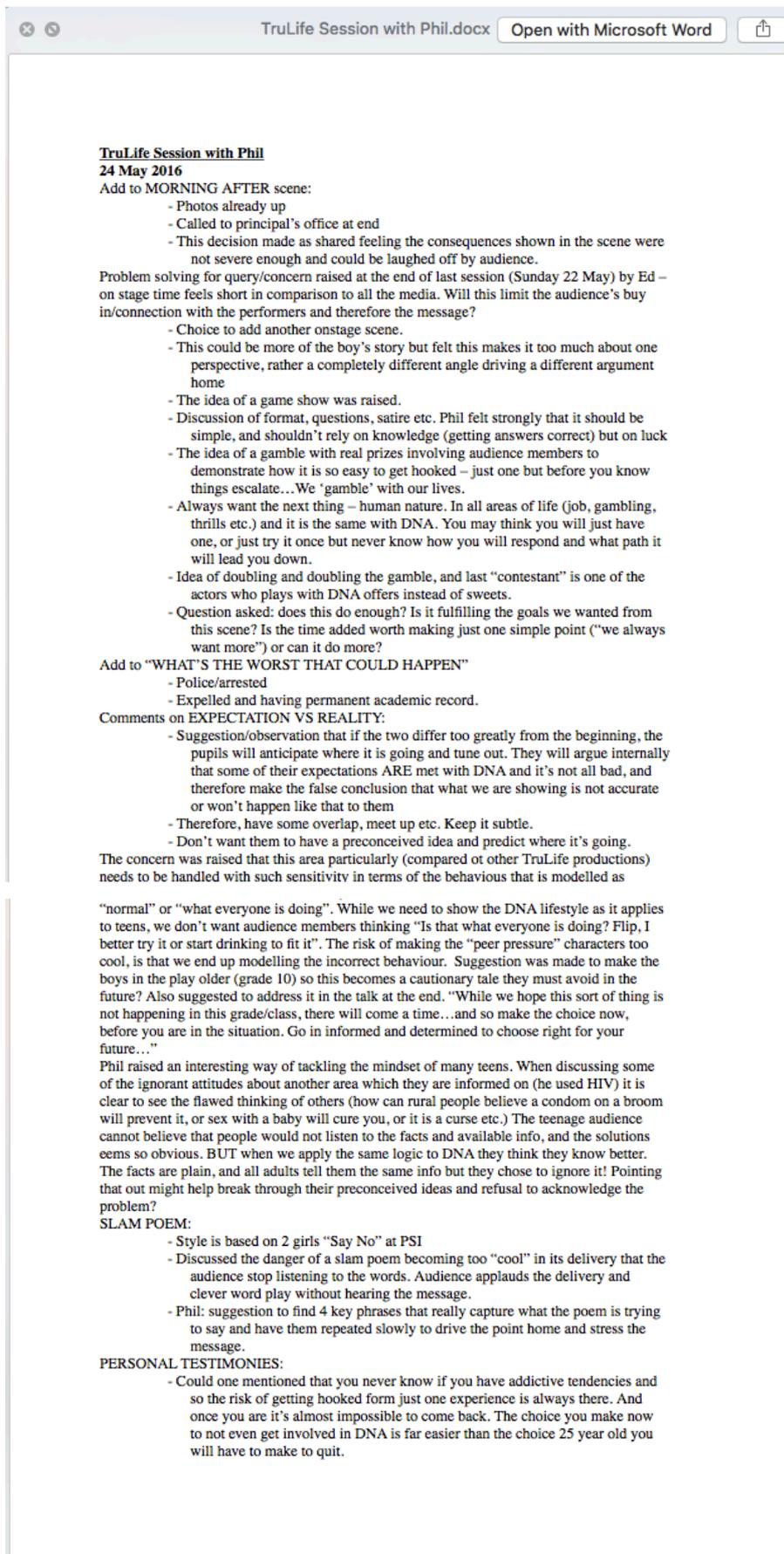


Figure 14. Journal entry of feedback session.

The feedback was largely positive, with a shared feeling among the audience members that we had achieved our objective and created an effective TIE programme. Most suggestions focused on things that were minor changes or performance related, such as an actor rushing their lines, or adding a costume item. However, the three comments that were most beneficial and required some significant change were the following:

- Some of the live scenes were too long and slowed the overall pace of the piece. It was felt this stalled the overall energy of the performance.
- It was suggested that we needed to add one more scene, unrelated to the main storyline, which focused on the issue of ‘risk taking’ and how experimenting is part of human nature but taken too far can lead to disastrous effects. This was a theme or idea we hadn’t really dealt with as the rest of the scenes focused more on peer pressure, consequences and expectations.
- It was suggested that the final media piece – which shows two men sharing their real life testimonies about drug use – needed to have a woman’s story added to it. This was to ensure it reflected diversity as the audience felt some girls in our target audiences might not relate to the men’s stories.

With this helpful feedback the team were now ready for the final stage of the AR process, and indeed the final step in completing our TIE programme.

6.5. ‘Modify the solution (or your practice) in light of the evaluation’

This stage requires changes to the designed solution in light of the insight gained in the previous stage. In our case, this meant modifying the TIE production in order to maximise its impact and ensure it came as close as possible to encompassing our desired goal.

Session 9: Implementing changes

As mentioned above there were three main areas the team had identified as needing improvement. The first modification – that of shortening the onstage scenes – I left to the actors in those scenes to adapt. Their instructions were to go away and reduce those scenes

to what really needed to be communicated. Essentially I challenged them to ask what the intention or objective of that scene was, and to cut out any dialogue which did not add to that intention in some way. In some cases, the humour of the scene was what caused the length as the actors enjoyed being funny on stage so much that they tended to embellish those moments. Once again, they were challenged to think of our primary goal – while comedy in those scenes was important to gaining audiences attention and trust, it was not the entire point of the scenes and could not compromise the overall impact of the production.

The second problem was the suggestion to add another scene. The drama teacher we had invited – Mr Edmonds – had been the one to raise this suggestion. His argument was that most of the learners he taught knew experimenting with underage drinking or drugs was dangerous, but the common misconception remained that “it won’t happen to us” (Edmonds, 2016). Furthermore, Edmonds argued that teenagers – whether they admitted it or not – are often drawn to take risks as they test their own limits and break new boundaries. His suggestion was to add a scene that parodied a game show where contestants gambled for greater and greater risk. The human need to always want more or “chase the next thrill or high” (Edmonds, 2016) would be exposed in the final round when the contestant loses everything and the hostess comments:

“Well, that’s the risk you take when you gamble, Mike. You never know what could happen...in just seconds your whole world can change. Maybe you should have spent a little more time thinking your choices though before taking such a big risk.”
(Quotation from the TIE script).

Due to Edmond’s contribution, this added section came together quite quickly. He was able to suggest the basic idea for the scene and so with that as a starting point one of the actresses quickly improvised a game show host character named ‘Felicity Jones’ and began fleshing out the details for this new scene through improvisation and brainstorming.

The final modification that had been suggested was the addition of a female voice to the closing video of the entire performance in which some real people share their stories of alcohol or drug abuse in their youth. This problem proved to be the hardest to modify as obviously not everyone has a story that can be shared. Finding the right woman who had such

a story and would be willing to share it on camera required research and time. At the time when the first filming of the TIE programme was done such a woman had not been found. However, in the months after I had concluded my work with the Trulife team they did manage to film such a story.

Session 10: Final Performance and Filming

After giving the team time to polish the final changes, and to create the media elements necessary for the game show scene, we met one final time to record the performance. This was done primarily so that a record of the work could be captured for my research. This performance did not have an audience other than myself and the camera operator, but I was very impressed and pleased with the performance and the work it reflected.

While this session did mark the end of my time with the Trulife team, and in a way the completion of the Action Research cycle we had implemented, what became very apparent was that the AR process is one designed to continue again and again. In other words, the team would continue to refine the performance, seeking modifications to improve their practice and the impact of this particular TIE programme. This concept of an ongoing, never-ending process is captured in the cyclical diagram used most commonly to depict the AR process:

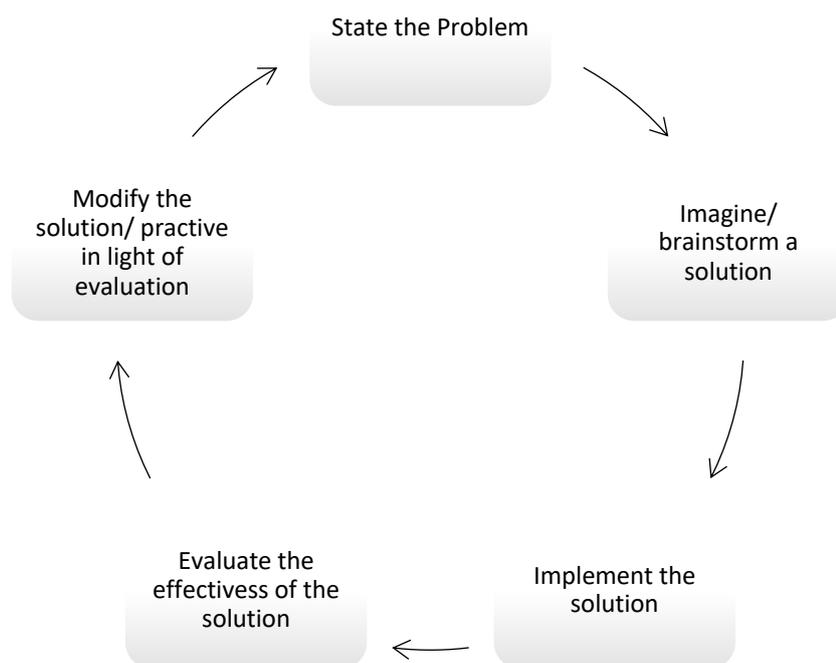


Figure 15: The Action Research Cycle.

The Trulife team were able to integrate this cyclical method into the way they think about creating new work. As the researcher and person guiding this project, the application of AR as a method provided a more structured approach to devising than I had previously experienced, as well as a channel through which I could reflect on my own practices. These reflections and the lessons gained are discussed in the next chapter.

7. REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS: THEORIES AND OBSERVATIONS

The aim of this dissertation is to ascertain whether Action Research can be used effectively as a method for devising a Theatre in Education programme. I will therefore evaluate the outcomes of the process described, using my initial research objectives and questions as a guideline to order my observations.

These were:

Objective One: To devise a TIE programme promoting the prevention of Drug and Alcohol abuse amongst Durban teenagers that engages Trulife's existing postmodernist performance model.

Objective Two: To investigate the application of Action Research in devising a TIE programme within a postmodern context, asking the following questions:

- i. How can the Action Research model contribute towards devising a TIE programme?
- ii. What are the benefits of using Action Research as a method of reflecting on the devising process?

These focus on the process of recognising and replicating Trulife's TIE programmes; using AR as a devising method to create a TIE programme; and the benefits of AR in understanding my own practise in the devising process. The aim of this reflection is to better understand the applicability of this process more generally in the TIE field, as well as expanding the understanding of possible applications of AR.

Finally, the limitations of the study, and potential areas for future research in this field, will be discussed.

7.1. Recognising and replicating Trulife's style

As has been discussed already, Trulife's style leans heavily on selected postmodern theatrical elements. My understanding of style is shaped by Eric Fernie's description referring to fine art, which defines style as "any distinctive, and therefore recognizable, way in which an act is performed or an artefact made or ought to be performed and made" (Fernie, 1995: 361). Style therefore refers to the choices made by the artist, in this case the devising team and performers, that give it its unique features. While Trulife's specific style is not necessarily the focus of this research, it emerged as a very important factor in the devising process due to the function of, or reasons behind, each stylistic choice. These reasons, which emerged during the interviews and brainstorming sessions, were centred around solving problems the Trulife team have encountered over their years of creating TIE programmes together. The team is made up of many different members, with varying levels of dramatic or theatre experience. This influenced our discussion about style in what I came to see as a very positive way – the lack of academic drama knowledge or theatre jargon, meant that my questions about style were answered with descriptions of what they do and why, rather than with a "text-book" answer. For example, when discussing the use of character, it became clear that the team made use of actors playing multiple characters, changing between scenes. However, the term "multiple characters" (Harris, Cliffe and Pickard, 2017: 24) was not known by the group, and the idea that this could form part of a meta-theatrical narrative by drawing attention to the fact that the characters were not real, but different and temporary representations (Driver, 2003:82), had not been considered by any of them.

While I had not begun this project really concentrating on style, it became clear very early on that the features of their work were quite intentional to the Trulife team, and that there were patterns that could be identified across all their TIE productions. These were outlined to me in an early discussion group, in which the question asked was "what sets Trulife apart?"

The answers received, as recorded on the white board at the time, were:

- a) Relevant, popular music to draw them in
- b) A catchy countdown video that draws the audience in immediately
- c) Interaction with the audience, especially through humour
- d) Stereotypical characters that can represent groups, but that later get more real and personalised, developing into a serious character

- e) Actors must be young, aged 18 – 25
 - f) Dance used – to add fun, connect, bring a “creative vibe”
 - g) A closing message at the end of each production which is direct address, no character, but sums up the production and presents an inspiring challenge/choice
 - h) The messages do not say “No, don’t do this” but instead focus on “this choice is a better life for you”, let the consequences speak for themselves
 - i) Big emphasis on media – both practically (allows smooth scene changes) and to keep their attention and remain relatable
 - j) Plot “jumps all over” to capture attention, highlights little moments rather than the whole story
 - k) Combining genres depending on what we can offer and to keep interest – different people relate to different ways of communicating the message
- (Participants 1 - 5, 2016)

An observation I made was that the list that emerged was a combination of artistic choices, but also deeper philosophical considerations (such as the focus on choices in point (h)). However, the way the Trulife participants explained the features of their productions was not using academic jargon associated with theatre and performance, but rather in response to what they wanted to achieve. For point (a), the intention was to break through the monotony of the school day and seem appealing and the team’s solution to this was including popular music. Similarly, for point (i) the use of media was not so much an aesthetic choice, but one made to solve the problem of scene changes and actors needing to change, as well as in answer to the desire to incorporate more popular culture elements. Other points raised by the team point to more philosophical problems to be solved, namely the choice to include a direct address message at the end (g) and the focus of the TIE programmes on choices and consequences as opposed to a direct “don’t do this” fear-based tactic (h). What AR helped me and the Trulife team to recognise is the problem-solving approach already embedded in their process. Many of their decisions are driven by a desired outcome and have been arrived at in past TIE programmes (before my interaction with them) and established over years of testing the best possible solution. Where the AR process was valuable, was in its ability to highlight these problems and their solutions in a more systematic way, so that they could be recognised and repeated for this project.

What I discovered, therefore, is Trulife's choice of style was based almost entirely on the impact each stylistic choice would have on the audience's response to the message. Even the term *postmodernism*, when I finally introduced it as a possible label for all the stylistic elements they described to me, was unfamiliar and not something they had intentionally adopted. This led to an important observation: that style in a postmodern era can be borrowed and used from many sources. This is particularly true of TIE programmes where the goal is not directly the creation of a theatre piece for theatre's sake (or even just for entertainment), but rather to communicate a specific message to a particular audience, while entertaining. Trulife's philosophies about their work are similar to many of the philosophies underpinning postmodern theatre where the needs justify the means.

Trulife's formation of their present style, and the group's stylistic choices for this TIE programme, happened in response to a desired outcome. They believed that certain choices about how the production was delivered would influence that outcome. For example, the reasons for using multimedia interspersed throughout the production were twofold: it allowed the actors a chance to change, catch their breath and be ready for the next scene; but it also mimicked a format that is popular and appealing to young people (namely television) as well as changing their focus to a different format and space on the stage, keeping them more engaged (Participant 1, 2016). Not once was there a mention from the team of using this format because it fit with a postmodern style, or because it represented the latest trend in theatre. This approach to choices around not only the content but also the form for creating the TIE programme led me to the observation that the AR process was already embedded in Trulife's process, albeit hidden; their approach had naturally evolved to follow a similar problem-solving cycle as they created new work. The intention was never deliberately to create in a postmodern style, but rather to find solutions to the problems, which ultimately led to the generation of the particular style engaged. This fluid and hybridized approach to style is helpful in that it gives freedom to the devisers to play, explore and ultimately test what works best for them, regardless of any preconceived ideas they might have about what a TIE programme should look like. AR supports this approach, promoting testing imagined solutions again and again until the subject feels they have found the best solution.

This leads to the possibility that AR could be used to replicate any style of theatre performance. It is a helpful tool for discovering and establishing style, as well as identifying working patterns within an existing group.

7.2. Using Action Research as a devising method

One of the predominant questions of this research was to investigate whether AR offers a methodological process for creating a TIE programme through a devising process and if so, in what way.

AR has been used most in the field of education, by academics wishing to study teacher practice, by heads of schools wishing to explore changes to school administration and the impact these have, and frequently by teachers wishing to better understand their own practice and address problems they perceive within their classes (for example, see Rearick and Feldman (1999), Whitehead (2009), Whitehead (2012)). AR has been used within the context of drama and performance by some practitioners to understand and reflect on their own practice as creators of various theatrical products (for example, see Mills (2011), Kerr (1997), Frost and Yarrow (2016)). However, using AR as a devising process for the creation of new work remains largely undocumented.

For my work with Trulife we found that the addition of AR as a framework within which we could discuss, brainstorm, improvise, storyboard and create was beneficial. As mentioned above, I observed that an approximation of the AR cycle occurred naturally within the devising process as the team creating were already in the habit of identifying problems and seeking practical solutions for these in the form of theatrical performance choices. However, using the specific AR cycle added a level of formality and structure to this process. Some of the team expressed a feeling of finally being able to put into words what they had been doing “based on instinct” previously (Participant 4, 2016). The use of AR, and my guiding the team through this method, drew attention to their praxis and gave them a structure in which it was possible to react to observations and adapt quickly to implement changes. This would be useful not only for the Trulife team’s future projects, but for any group looking for guidelines within which to create TIE programme.

Another interesting observation that emerged was that the AR cycle occurs on two different levels within the devising process. On a large, singular scale the problem identified as step one of the AR cycle was to create a TIE programme on Drugs and Alcohol replicating Trulife's existing style and form. The description of the project in Chapter 5 clearly shows how a possible solution to this problem was found and tested in the creation of the TIE programme and the final product. However, what I discovered in reflecting on each session with the team is that the AR problem-solving process could also be applied on a small-scale level multiple times. Each stylistic choice, content decision and scene structure was included or changed in response to a problem that needed to be solved. The examples of this are countless, but included choices such as:

- Moving the dance scene later in the production after a media piece so the dancers had time to change costume;
- Shortening a scene to make it more impactful;
- Changing a line that an actor found difficult to say and believed too complicated for the character;
- Changing the lead characters from a boy and girl to two boys based on which actors were available to improvise that scene.

These are largely pragmatic choices. However, the cycle was also applied on a more philosophical level in terms of what content to include in the first place. This aspect led to in-depth discussions about which content would produce the best impact, and how to present that content. The use of questions was therefore integral to Trulife's work, as the AR process led to questioning and intellectual reflection.

This more internal level of applying the AR cycle is one which continues repeatedly and feeds into the larger overarching intention of creating the TIE programme. My final interview with the Trulife team revealed that even after we felt the TIE programme development was complete and the creation process finished, they felt empowered to continue making adjustments based on problems they observed during performances out at schools.

AR therefore can allow for the blending of two disciplines – namely education and performance – offering a structure that might be less intimidating to teachers or those without any theatre devising experience or training. It could be used as a method by teachers

wanting to create a TIE programme as it provides helpful steps which aid in keeping the creation process on track. The cyclical nature of the method ensures those in the process of devising return again and again to the main goal, and that the vast amount of material generated by traditional devising methods (such as improvisation, brainstorming, thought-tracking and so on) can be judged against a constant standard and either included or not, accordingly.

The use of devising to create the TIE programme made possible the exchanging of ideas between the different people on the Trulife team, people with varied perspectives and backgrounds, as well as contrasting knowledge and experience in both performance and the topic of drugs and alcohol. I found that applying the AR process reinforced one of the main features of the type of devising I was trying to achieve: namely, the democratic, collaborative process. AR shifted the focus from who could or could not complete a task or fulfil a function, placing it instead on working together as a team to solve a problem. I found that by using the AR approach, the differing backgrounds of the participants became a strength, as opposed to a weakness. For example, some of the Trulife team are not trained actors at all, but social workers or counsellors. Their lack of experience in performing (a role they now have chosen to take on due to necessity) could have led to a lack of confidence in their ability to add value to the TIE programme creation process. However, by posing problems to be solved as a group, AR shifted the focus at the necessary times to an intellectual exercise rather than a practical, talent-based one.

This observation is echoed by Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington in *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices* (2007), where they acknowledge that the strength of devised theatre lies in its ability to pull from different artistic disciplines – “political and community theatres, physical theatre, performance and live art” – as well as other disciplines such as “psychology, sociology and anthropology as well as theatre and performance studies” (Govan *et al.*, 2007: 12). They argue that “devising has, therefore, the flexibility to enable theatre-makers to address matters of personal concern, to interrogate topical issues, and to extend the aesthetics and reception of performance” (Govan *et al.*, 2007:13). I would submit that by adding AR to the family of devising methods and processes, this claim is strengthened even further, through including an accessible structure that guides those less familiar with devising practices.

7.3. The Benefits of Action Research in Understanding my Own Practice

The second part of this research was the analysis of my work with Trulife – not just the creation of the TIE programme, but my own theoretical evaluation of that process. In order to develop some of my own theories and suppositions about the process, the AR cycle was used once again. However, this time in what might be called a more traditional way. What I mean by this is I found myself in the role of teacher and researcher (and not only co-deviser).

AR is underpinned by a post-positivist approach to research and as such allows for a breakdown between the barrier between researcher and subject (Whitehead, 2012). This is a helpful position as for much of this research I became the subject of my reflection, and my own reflections and narrative about the process of devising formed much of the data for evaluation.

I found AR to be a helpful method in identifying my own reactions and responses to the process I was leading. It drew my attention to my own praxis and provided guidelines around which I could test my theories about devising with a group such as Trulife. There were many instances where a session I had planned went a different way, either because I did not get the answers I expected, or time frames were different in reality to what I had anticipated, or even simply because the Trulife team had jumped ahead on their own in their enthusiasm to create. In moments like these, the AR process helped me react in the moment and adjust my practice to produce a positive outcome.

One of the difficulties that emerged in this research was the definition of postmodernism as a style to create the TIE programme. While I felt there was great synergy between AR as a method and postmodern philosophy, this was not as immediately clear when it came to the TIE programme itself, and the message of substance abuse. Kershaw writes about this problem stating that:

“postmodernism tends habitually to view the subject as detached from history and free-floating in a dematerialised (hyper-real) and indeterminate world, a fate which throws radical doubt on the subject’s potential for autonomy.” (Kershaw, 1998: 78).

This led me to question whether Trulife’s TIE programme – which is clear in its message against drug abuse, highlighting its causes, dangers and risks – can truly be described as postmodern? Does the very nature of postmodernism not work against such a clear message, which also assumes autonomy on the part of the audience member in their response to this educational effort? This then raised the broader question of can any TIE, which by definition has a clear educational aim, be created within a postmodern framework? In researching postmodernism, I came to the conclusion that it is possible to create such a TIE, and that indeed the work created by Trulife can *wear both hats*. Immanuel Kant – philosopher and prolific writer on morality and autonomy – argues that true moral autonomy is the “capacity to deliberate and to give oneself the moral law, rather than merely heeding the injunctions of others” (Dryden, 2019). I would argue that while some TIE programmes might simply want their target audience to “heed the injunctions of others,” the product created by myself and the Trulife team calls for a different, more complex thought process and response. Trulife’s strategy relies on posing questions and challenging learners to make a choice based on their own view of themselves or who they would like to be. While the ideal choice is presented (in this case to avoid underage drinking and drug use), this is not done in a way that denies the autonomy of the learner. Kershaw’s argument also supports this, as he argues resistance and transformation are the cornerstone of postmodern thought (Kershaw, 1998: 73) as postmodernism gives great attention to personal choice and the formation of a fluid identity. Trulife’s works are often counter-culture as they go against what for many young people is the popular norm – for example, the peer pressure to conform to underage drinking and accept the meta-narrative that everyone engages in this behaviour. Dalrymple, writing in a South African context was also helpful in understanding my own reflections as she argues postmodern thinking has paved the way for this kind of research to be done at all. In addition, postmodern trends led to a new acceptance of collaborative devising methods where new, previously marginalized voices can be heard (Dalrymple, 2005: 159). For me this was an important realization, that validated my initial impulses to do this work.

This project, as mentioned in the opening to this thesis, is one that was personal and meant a great deal. The desire to investigate my process in guiding the creation of a TIE programme was born out of a love of both teaching and theatre, and the desire therefore to see them work hand in hand. Using AR as a technique was a new challenge but one that I believe added structure to the process, guiding my planning and thinking about this project, while at the same time shaping the very practical work of devising a TIE. The context of creating this TIE programme within a South African setting also played heavily on my mind during my time with the Trulife team. The stories told, from both their own, multi-cultural backgrounds and from their interactions in South African schools, highlighted two observations:

1. Within a South African context there is a dire need for interventions like TIE programmes in schools. Much of the feedback from the Trulife team, and the research done, revealed an escalating drug problem. This is linked to many other social problems and by no means can be solved through one intervention strategy. However, I do believe that by identifying the problem facing so many young people, and then applying the AR cycle to come up with and test possible solutions, more helpful programmes might be implemented. Furthermore, these programmes will retain a relevance to their target audience as the AR process allows for constant reflection, assessment of impact, and flexibility in adjusting the content as needed.
2. Many practitioners wanting to engage in the work of addressing societal problems, whether they be educators, social workers, or theatre specialists, find themselves without the resources or governmental support to hire expert script-writers, TIE specialists, filmmakers and so on. While this project was limited to one TIE programme, with one specific organisation, its success points to the possibility that AR could provide a helpful tool to other organisation as a starting point for creating their own TIE programme. The demands of this process, using collaborative devising combined with an AR approach, were easily taken on by the participants. Furthermore, they required little in the way of resources and so would work in most socio-economic contexts. Finally, the AR process allowed for the varied skills of each participant to be used, and the end product could adapt to reflect what the team had to offer. This would be a potential asset to future groups wanting to work in this way but perhaps feeling they lack the resources, staff, or experience to begin.

The use of PaR to reflect on my own attitudes and practices, especially in relation to testing solutions as part of the AR process, ultimately led to what I believe is a worthwhile contribution to the field of both devised theatre and Theatre in Education.

CONCLUSION:

Coming full circle?

Having attempted to embody the words of Augusto Boal by engaging in the “human property which allows man to observe himself in ... the act of seeing, in the act of acting, in the act of feeling, the act of thinking” (Boal, 1985), I can now endeavour to answer the questions I initially asked at the onset of this research.

I began with a simple interest, formed in my youth, to create a Theatre in Education (TIE) production that would challenge me creatively and offer something relevant and meaningful for its teenage audience (for whom, as a teacher, I have particular compassion). This led to an investigation of TIE, its history and development, as well as an examination of Trulife’s existing projects. My interest in using Action Research (AR) as a method, as well as an examination of Trulife’s style, led me to adopt postmodernism as an overarching context in which my understanding of this work could be situated.

With this framework established, collaborative devising could begin and the script for the TIE programme created. Alongside this practical creative work, methods for reflecting on my role as practitioner and researcher were explored: namely, Practice-as-Research (PaR), self reflection and AR. It was particularly through the lens of AR that my own observations could be formed and my research questions explored.

The devising process of a TIE programme promoting the prevention of Drug and Alcohol abuse amongst teenagers is one which I would consider a success. The creator-actors from the Trulife team and I, were able successfully to engage Trulife's existing postmodernist performance model as it was described to me. However, my own role in identifying their style as postmodern is perhaps one that requires further exploration. Postmodernism is a complex and contested label to attach to any artwork, and a label which does not originate from within the Trulife participants themselves, but rather from my outside academic perspective.

My second objective was to explore AR as both a devising method and as a method to aid in theoretical reflection upon my practice. In the first instance, AR offered a welcome structure

which kept the devising focused and gave it a recipe to follow. There were many benefits that such a circular approach brought to devising process, but the key insight I gained was that this sort of problem solving approach was already inherently present in the techniques used by Trulife, and I would extrapolate, in all creative devising. This is a theory I would be interested in testing further, and something I will be looking out for in future creative projects of which I am a part. I believe this research expands on existing research by exploring new possibilities of AR, and creates a vocabulary and model that may assist other people in framing their own educational projects.

The application of AR as a method for reflecting on my own role in the research was also extremely beneficial. While it was not strictly used to identify and solve **problems**, this method prompted a practice of self reflection that was helpful in identifying questions about my role as both a researcher and deviser, and discovering answers to these questions. This self-reflection placed the focus of the research firmly on the practice being conducted. PaR allowed my experiences to become central in developing my own theories about how devising takes shape. Creating any artwork is a process that is extremely personal and subjective, and one which can be hampered when too strict a set of rules is applied. PaR allowed for the creative flexibility within which to create my own path and, combined with AR, to adapt my practices in real time with the added benefit of in-the-moment learning from what was observed, as is evident in the furious typing that took place during each session to record every part of the process. Ultimately, by acknowledging and embracing my role in the research, I was able to grow as a practitioner and am left at the end of the experience with more confidence and more excitement for TIE as a genre than before. I am eager to explore future possible applications of what I have learnt, and have been invited by the Trulife team to remain involved in future projects – an honour I take as a sign of their appreciation of these methods too.

The limitations to this type of research are linked closely with these benefits: the quality of the data observed rests primarily on my observations, thoughts and opinions and therefore must be understood to reflect the influence of my innate biases and gaps in knowledge. However, by including interviews and considering the opinions of the rest of the Trulife team, a wider, more reliable picture starts to present itself, pointing to the study's trustworthiness. Another concern is that the research was also limited to only one project – and quite a

specific one at that. As Trulife had their own requirements in terms of topic and with regards to style, our devising was influenced accordingly. It would be useful and interesting to expand the potential of the study and its applicability by exploring the efficacy of the methods and practices in different contexts and environments, including those less familiar with conventional devising techniques or theatre practices, for example, community groups or classroom teachers. This would bring this research further into the realm of contemporary applied theatre with an expanded applicability, one with a specific benefit in South Africa with its limited resources as a form of capacity development and working with nothing but people and their ideas.

I end with a final Boal quote, which ties in with the cyclical processes that have appeared throughout this research – both in Action Research and self reflection. Boal's words capture my own feelings at the end of this project, and point to a future where my practice can continue to develop and aid in educating a young audience in need:

When does a session ... end? Never – since the objective is not to close a cycle, to generate a catharsis, or to end a development. On the contrary, its objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity, to change spectators into protagonists.²⁸

²⁸ Boal, 2002: 245.

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APPENDIX ONE:

(The USB Portable Drive containing a recording of *DNA: Drugs and Alcohol* performance.)