
‘From our frames’: exploring with teachers the pedagogic possibilities of a visual arts-based approach to HIV and AIDS

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Abstract

This article profiles the visual arts-based methodology used for a short project set up to explore the uses of a visual arts-based approach for addressing HIV and AIDS through teacher development. It also attempts to explain how visual arts-based approaches to addressing HIV and AIDS may contribute to more creative and culturally contextualised research and pedagogy to address HIV and AIDS within the education sector. The project was undertaken at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in response to the suggestions that teachers need to explore their own understanding, attitudes and perceptions of the disease if they are to deal confidently with the demands HIV and AIDS places on them as educators in schools. Methods for the approach were adapted from the work of Ewald and Lightfoot (2001) and from Wang’s (1999) photo-voice.

Introduction

In an article entitled ‘HIV/AIDS in South Africa: Can the visual arts make a difference?’ Marilyn Martin (2004) asserts that the visual arts can affect the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. She believes that art has the potential to be a transformative power in society and to offer solutions. Her claim is born out by the work of many who have effected social change by working with visual arts-based approaches to addressing health. Jo Spence (1995) used photography effectively to capture the cancer patient’s perspective of hospitalisation and treatment. Troeller (1995) created and exhibited photo collages that linked stigma associated with AIDS to the stigma suffered by TB sufferers. Collins (1991) used drawings to bring out school children’s knowledge and perceptions of drugs and Emily Martin (1998) researched how drawings can lead people to reflect on and reconstruct their perceptions of the immune system. Their work struck me as creative, interesting and productive and led me to speculate on how visual art-based approaches to address HIV and AIDS could be incorporated into the university courses where I work in

the Faculty of Education as a media lecturer in the School of Language, Literacies, Media and Drama education to equip educators for their profession.

Education has a significant role to play in the struggle with HIV and AIDS (Kelly, 2002), but teachers find themselves in new territory trying to respond appropriately to the effects of the disease and its challenges. For instance, HIV/AIDS stigma issues and the need for learner counselling are two of the areas that need to be addressed in educational institutions (Education Labour Relations Council, 2005) yet there is little literature to reflect that teachers are being adequately prepared to address these complex issues. Working with ways to address the pandemic with teachers is complex for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is becoming increasingly apparent that providing simple factual knowledge on the disease does little to halt its transmission. I say this because the same study shows that the HIV positive rate of teachers does not differ significantly from that of the general population although almost 50 per cent of teachers canvassed have received HIV and AIDS education. Secondly, in examining the gaps and challenges in HIV/AIDS research and education, Baxen and Breidlid (2004, p.21) suggest that many intervention and education programmes are culturally inappropriate and tend to ignore the “complex social and cultural discursive fields” which influence the reception, interpretation and implementation of HIV/AIDS messages. The 2005 ELRC study referred to above also notes that if behaviour change is to take place, social and contextual factors affecting behaviour also must be considered. Thirdly, teachers are not recognised as active agents of change or as complex socially and culturally situated beings. They themselves may not be comfortable talking about sex and may not be in touch with the social and cultural aspects of their learners lives. They may be ill-equipped to work with learners in a participatory way (Baxen and Breidlid, 2005). All this suggests that we should be exploring ways to help teachers to recognise their own attitudes and perspectives on HIV and AIDS, to consider how social and cultural influences affect their ability to respond to the disease, to find the language to talk about HIV and AIDS and finally, to develop new teaching skills.

Research design

One overarching research question guided this project: *How can visual arts-based approaches be used in education to address HIV and AIDS?* To explore this question I drew on the idea of teachers as cultural producers (Buckingham

and Sefton-Green, 1994) and embarked on what came to be known as the 'From our Frames' classroom-based project. Finding the framework to explore pre-service teachers' use of visual arts-based methods was a challenging process. I started out with the purpose of exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions of HIV and AIDS by analysing the visual texts they produced. I hoped that studying the messages they produced would give me insights into their views of HIV and AIDS as 'situated knowledge' in relation to their cultural and educational backgrounds. This, I supposed, would provide planning insight for the design of courses to help pre-service teachers address HIV and AIDS. However, I began to question the ethics and usefulness of researching these perceptions alone. I also began to see that research into the *process* of their message production was likely to be of more benefit for teacher educators needing to develop projects that encouraged pre-service teachers to engage with the pandemic from their own points of view. I knew from the paucity of relevant literature, that this knowledge was needed Baxen and Breidlid (2004).

Since the study was exploratory, an open, flexible, qualitative and inductive approach was called for. As the researcher I pursued an iterative process that could change in response to what I perceived as the needs of the particular group I had selected, very much as I would do in the classroom. This allowed the design to be adapted as it evolved. I also ensured that data was captured through a variety of methods. In order to provide a clear indication of factors that might have influenced the messages the pre-service teachers produced, this article describes the research setting, participants, researcher's roles, the teaching intervention design and the data capturing tools used as part of the methodology.

The research setting

KwaZulu-Natal is a province at the epicentre of the AIDS pandemic in South Africa, with for instance 37.5 per cent HIV infection rates amongst antenatal attendees (Makubulo, Nedshidzivhani, Mahlasela and Du Plessis, 2003). I selected the University of KwaZulu-Natal as an appropriate site because of its geographical centrality to an area of severely infected and affected HIV and AIDS victims. In addition, most of the future educators of the province now train at its Edgewood campus in Pinetown and have called for courses to prepare them to cope with HIV and AIDS affected learners.

Selection of the group

Since the purpose of this research was to explore, with pre-service teachers, the use of art-based methods to address HIV and AIDS, I decided to work with a group that already had good basic factual knowledge of the disease.

According to my investigations, only two groups had direct teaching in the area and they were those taking modules in school guidance. The options for selection were therefore very limited. The guidance course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Edgewood campus was only in its second year and as a result only two groups had enrolled for these modules. One group was busy working on Module One, where they were gaining factual knowledge of the disease, and the other group was about to start the Module Two where the focus includes sexuality education in schools, counselling skills, and the management of HIV and AIDS in schools. In the opinion of the lecturer in charge of the course, the second group would have basic knowledge about HIV and AIDS. For this reason the group was more likely to appreciate and benefit from a project that encouraged them to reflect on how HIV and AIDS can be addressed. In addition, the lecturer in charge predicted an enrollment of participants from a wide range of ages, varied educational, economic, geographic and social backgrounds. With the expectation that the varied backgrounds would contribute to the diversity of responses to arts-based methods. I selected them as the group most suited to the project. Thirteen pre-service teachers enrolled for the course. According to their own placement in response to a questionnaire, the demographics of the class were as follows:

Table 1: Participants' demographic affiliations

Ethnic identification	Sotho (5)	Zulu (2)	White (4)	Indian (1)	Coloured (1)
Home language	Sotho (6)	Zulu (2)	English (5)		
Last School attended	Ex DET (2)	Ex-C model (2)	Private school (3)	Foreign school (2)	Training college (4)
Age	18-20 (1)	21-25 (4)	26-30 (2)	31-35 (3)	36-45 (3)

Note: There is no correlation between the information shown in the various columns of this table but the table is useful as an indication of just how diverse a range of social and cultural backgrounds were incorporated in this small group. In addition, the ages ranged from 19–44. There was only one male in the class. In terms of nationality, race, language, age and education backgrounds, this was an extremely diverse group.

Method design - the plan

I had to work within financial and time constraints. I also wanted to explore a method which could be employed later by the participants with their own learners. Thus, using a workshop approach could provide, I hoped, a framework for beginning teachers working side-by-side with learners in their own classroom. Having gained the informed consent of the course co-ordinator and the pre-service teachers enrolled in the second module of the guidance course, I organised six, weekly, 90-minute workshop sessions over a period of a month and a half. I selected drawing and the use of unsophisticated photography as the two visual art forms which I considered to be manageable given the particular constraints.

Situating myself: multiple roles

In this project I had to work with the multiple roles of researcher/facilitator/observer. This was not always an easy task. From the first workshop I found that there was a need to fill the role of facilitator if the project was to run and this was as a result of my project design. The project was originally planned and negotiated as an extra or 'add-on' rather than an integral part of, the guidance module and was slotted into times available for the lecturer but usually allocated as student study time. I had envisaged working alongside the pre-service teachers as a co-researcher but this expectation was naïve. Although I tried to generate a high level of participation, the degree of participation of each pre-service teacher and nature of the exploration was somewhat constrained. Working with the idea that participants should benefit from research, I had agreed to the lecturer's request to allow the photo message generated by each pre-service teacher to be awarded a mark that would form part of the module assessment. Such assessment is part of the reality of working within formal education. Once I agreed to this however, the pre-service teachers/students were not, in effect, volunteers. The direction and aim of the research was primarily dictated by me, the researcher, agreed to and written into the course by their lecturer, and student participation was ensured because the workshops formed part of their credit-bearing module on guidance. Participation in the tasks of the project (drawn up by the researcher and approved by the lecturer) carried 25 per cent of the course mark.

While pre-service teachers were asked to suggest any changes to the tasks, this was outside the norms of their experience of university assignments,

particularly since the tasks were presented to them by the researcher on a typed sheet at the first meeting. This I did because I was conscious of the limited time the group would be available to me. It was only once I saw their interest was on such issues as the date for submission and the difficulties of tackling such an assignment that I realised the power dynamics. In my journal I asked myself “How controlled should this process be?” and “what do they think they need to deal with?” but found it difficult to step out of my familiar teaching role. I tried ‘dressing down’ and wore particularly casual clothes, I assumed what I considered to be a less didactic tone and behaviour, but these measures could not overcome the design I had put in place or the setting and accompanying student expectations. Despite deliberate attempts to promote joint exploration, the pre-service teachers only stepped into this role when real power was in *their* hands – when *they* were constructing their representations and at the point when they became peer evaluators using their *own* criteria to assess the completed messages.

Research design - how we proceeded

I organised six workshops to explore the use of visual arts-based methods to address HIV and AIDS. These I describe in some detail below in order to provide an in-depth look at the project.

Workshop 1 – launching the exploration with the use of drawings

The initial meeting with the selected group took place in the usual module venue, a large and bleak classroom. I introduced myself, explained and contextualised the project and confirmed their consent for participation. A task sheet, suggesting that they should use photography as a medium and produce their own HIV and AIDS message for a peer audience, was handed out for discussion. It proved difficult to evoke much response from the students, who immediately turned their focus to the task as if it was not open to discussion. I am a lecturer on the campus in a different School and though many of the students said later that they didn’t know this, presenting them with what appeared to be a prepared framework for a section of the course and a kind of assignment sheet was likely to have restricted spontaneous and open discussion. Questions related instead to how peer review would come about and whether the use of black and white film was allowed.

Finally, I asked students to reflect on the use of media in HIV and AIDS education by asking them to recall sources that had influenced their thinking,

to provide their own meaning of the official AIDS ribbon logo, and to draw (and write about) their own representations of HIV and AIDS. This was in order to introduce an arts-based approach, collect data on their attitudes and perceptions on AIDS, offer participants an opportunity to frame their responses to HIV and AIDS at that moment and to explain their representations. The use of drawing to access perceptions is well established in research by psychologists and has been used in studies related to health issues including investigation of children's beliefs about health, cancer and risk (Williams and Bendelow, 1998). Drawing, while requiring no more than a pencil and paper, can be a very generative tool for getting at attitudes, perceptions and insights (Collins, 1991; Martin, 1998; Mitchell and Weber, 1999; Schratz, Walker and Wiedel, 1995; Weber and Mitchell, 2004; Wetton and McWhirter, 1998).

Workshop 2 – considering the visual representations of others

Here students viewed and gave their opinions on a variety of commercial media developed to address HIV and AIDS. Students browsed through the comic stories produced by the Soul City project as materials to extend the reach of the edutainment TV drama series Soul City (Esterhuyzen, 2002) and Soul Buddyz.(2003). Also, available for scrutiny were a number of HIV and AIDS books including some from the Heinemann JAWS series suited for lower secondary school readers. Those shown were *Busi must Choose* (Greenstein, 2003); *Simon's Story* (Clacherty, 2004); *I am HIV-Positive* (Flanagan, 2003); *Friends for Life* (Ewing and Ramsden, 2004). Posters on the topic were on view and on the OHP they were able to see the layout of a children's book dealing with an aspect of the effect of HIV and AIDS and still in the process of production. All materials selected for this workshop were chosen because they could be used by the pre-service teachers with their own learners. All were locally produced and therefore expected to have some resonance with known social contexts.

Exploration of these materials was followed by the viewing of two short films. *Sky in her Eyes* made in 2003 by Vuleka Productions (Fredrikse and Smit) is set in rural KwaZulu-Natal and shows a young girl struggling to cope with the trauma and social rejection that follows the AIDS related death of her mother. The documentary *Fire and Hope* (Walsh and Mitchell, 2003) shows youth from Western Cape townships giving their views and messages about HIV and AIDS. Students gave brief written feedback on the materials they had seen.

I kept track of written responses to the various texts and also video or audio-taped the proceedings to establish how different students were responding and to guide project adjustments. Two extremes of differences in responses to *The Sky in her Eyes* illustrate the importance of cultural context. A white teacher, Catherine, wrote, “*I didn’t understand it. I thought their focus was very specific and left out a large portion of the population.*” By contrast, a black teacher, Thato, understood and was moved by a small incident in the film where the child orphaned by AIDS struggles to fetch water from the river, “*the child whose mother died was so young that she could not know that she needed a small container to draw some water into the large one*”.

Workshop 3 – skills and planning for photography

The third workshop centered on the use of photography for message making. The first objective was to provide a supportive environment for students to develop skills and plan their use of photographs to access and promote their perspectives and develop and demonstrate their point of view in relation to HIV and AIDS. Each student was given an inexpensive auto-focus camera loaded with a 24-frame film to use during the project (film development was paid for by the project). I drew inspiration from the work of Wendy Ewald and Caroline Wang and others in that field (Ewald and Lightfoot, 2001; Mitchell, De Lange, Moletsane, Stuart and Buthelezi, 2005; Spence, 1995; Troeller, 1995; Wang, 1999; Wang, Burris and Ping, 1996; Weber and Mitchell, 2004).

Working with photography as a message medium was a new venture for me as my previous experience was limited to holiday and family snapshots. In other words, the researcher/facilitator was no expert on photography, so I turned to the work of Ewald and Lightfoot and made use of their experience, advice and reflections. In the book, *I wanna take me a picture: teaching photography and writing to children* (Ewald and Lightfoot, 2001) Ewald tells how she worked initially with 8–13-year-old children, primarily from disadvantaged communities. Most of them had difficulty expressing their ideas but did so with more confidence once they were supported by photos that they had taken from their own context and point of view. Ewald eventually started a programme called Literacy through Photography in Durham Public School, North Carolina. Some of the advantages which she identified as resulting from combining photography and writing are the following:

- Students were able to bring their home life into school.
- Teachers, who were most often from different communities to those of their students, came to know and understand something of their students' contexts and became more open and enthusiastic in their responses.
- The children went beyond 'cute mimicry' of grown-up mass media imagery.
- Working with these groups Ewald realised that "teachers need the kind of support and encouragement LTP [Literacy through Photography] could bring, as well as the opportunity to develop their own creative abilities" (Ewald and Lightfoot, 2001, p.14).

Ewald describes photography as "perhaps the most democratic visual art of our times" and claims that it "offers a language that can draw on the imagination in a way we may never have thought possible before" (Ewald and Lightfoot, 2001, p.14).

It has become apparent that teachers need to be able to make sense of HIV and AIDS for themselves (NMEIT – National Media Education Initiative Annual Report, 2003). In the hopes that using photography would enable pre-service teachers to address HIV and AIDS from their own perspectives, I drew from Ewald's work aspects that I considered worth exploring because, based on my own experience as a teacher, I thought they might help students to adopt a position and express their ideas in relation to HIV and AIDS.

I borrowed the concept of 'framing' from Ewald and provided each student with a piece of paper with a rectangle cut out of the centre. Depending on the student's level of exposure to photography, calling attention to framing in this way provided an opportunity to discover or focus on the selection process that goes into capturing any photograph. I coupled this view-finding with discussion on point-of-view and how pictures change according to the angle of shot and photographer's position.

The ethics in using photography in relation to HIV and AIDS had been raised spontaneously in the second workshop and this topic was further addressed through small and whole group discussion in this workshop. A central question that they were asked to address in considering the ethics of the media

was ‘why might people refuse to be photographed for this project?’ With the help of a worksheet, the groups were asked to discuss ideas and potential problems related to implementing their ideas and to comment on the ethics letter drawn up as a result of views that arose in workshops 1 and 2. Ways of overcoming or framing difficult concepts were discussed in conjunction with sifting through newspaper photographs where the angle of shot addressed ethical imperatives to protect the subject.

To ensure that the pre-service teachers had support as they considered and planned their message construction, each student was provided with a storyboard or frame grid and encouraged to plan, discuss and write about their ideas for messages. Responses to this workshop immediately revealed very different levels of familiarity with photo techniques. Whilst some students needed and appreciated the opportunity to consider how to deal with the medium, two were confident that they had nothing to learn. The group left with a high degree of excitement to capture their photographs during the week.

Workshop 4 – voicing views of HIV and AIDS

In the planning stages, this workshop was deliberately left open for negotiation. This was so that it could be used to meet the group’s emerging needs. During the week preceding its implementation, it was apparent that various students were experiencing difficulties in capturing the photographs that were supposed to be handing in for development so that they could work with them in the developed form during Workshop 4. Some experienced technical problems with their cameras and others had difficulty gaining access to the sites where they wanted to take photographs.

As a result of these difficulties I decided to split the class into two groups during Workshop 4. Those whose photographs had already been developed met and worked on an exercise adapted from the work of Caroline Wang. Wang and Burris developed a participatory action research strategy called ‘photo-voice’ initially to promote health with Chinese village women. The three main goals of this approach were to:

1. record and reflect the rural women’s personal and community strengths and concerns,
2. promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs,
3. reach policy makers (Wang, 1999).

Whilst the pre-service teachers cannot be regarded as disempowered to the extent that the uneducated Chinese women were, in Wang's study, there was some similarity with the goals for using photographs, namely that of addressing a complex and serious health issue in the interests of promoting social change. Wang's photographers followed their photo taking period with a three-stage process promoting analysis of their pictures. The photographers first selected those photographs that they considered to be central, significant or best. Having done so they shared them with others by explaining them in context, telling their stories about them in group discussions designed to promote 'voice'. Finally, they identified themes or issues emerging from their discussion. (http://www.photovoice.com/method/index_con.html) This part of the photo-voice process I adapted for the pre-service teachers on a worksheet which required them to work alone to select and write about a photograph they considered central to their HIV and AIDS message and then to contextualise and share their work with the group. The third and final stage of Wang's photo-voice method, however, seemed inappropriate to the aims of the project which, rather than attempting to reach policy makers, was aimed at both pre-service teachers' and researcher/teacher-educators' exploration of ways in which visual arts-based approaches could be used to address HIV and AIDS. Reflective practice reviews of both producers' own representations and processes involved was, therefore, appropriate and so the last two questions required them to identify common themes and to discuss aspects of HIV and AIDS awareness they had been unable to address through the assignment. The group also negotiated criteria to be used for the peer assessment of their task once it was completed.

Those who were still working on taking photographs worked on a set of questions designed when their difficulty became apparent. The aim was to promote an opportunity for drawings and further discussion on the difficulties and possibilities of the photo task and to promote critical thinking. In particular they were asked to depict through drawings how various characters they were developing encouraged to depict in drawings might experience HIV and AIDS. During the following week all the students went on to produce their own media messages without further assistance.

Workshop 5 – sharing and evaluating each others work

Each pre-service teacher listening and watching the presentations evaluated the representation according to a printed synthesised list of criteria. This list resulted from their individual and collective perspectives on what was important in photo-based messages to address HIV and AIDS. The task of peer

evaluation absorbed those watching and, in general, those presenting did so clearly and spoke with confidence of their reasons for creating their message as they did. Peer evaluation/review was chosen generally for its participatory nature and potential to promote reflection. It is also widely recognised that group debate and negotiation of messages can enhance development of new norms of behaviour and commitment to change (Van Dyk, 1999). One of the theorists behind this thinking is Freire who called on educators to bring about critical dialogue and true critical reflection, prerequisites, in his opinion, to bringing about commitment to transformation and change. (Freire, 1972). The presentations were captured on video.

Workshop 6 – reviewing and discussing the uses of visual arts-based approaches

This session took place in a carpeted and more intimate room than the conventional classroom. Feedback and discussion of the messages were assisted by a viewing of the video which had captured the presentations of the photo messages. Each student was also given a written assessment mark and comments which were collaboratively compiled by the course lecturer and by me in my role of facilitator. These took into account the following: peer reviews; creative and original use of the medium; clarity of concept and link between rationale and product. The course lecturer also took part in the open discussions which covered two areas: (1) pre-service teachers' reaction to seeing themselves as presenters on video; and (2) the appropriateness of the representations for addressing HIV and AIDS. At the end of the workshop, pre-service teachers were asked to answer open-ended questions and provide written feedback and through drawings indicating their perceptions of HIV and AIDS at that point and their opinion and reflections about the usefulness of the process.

Sharing the messages with the target audience

An additional session came in the form of an open day event, a month after the workshops ended. I asked the students if we might display their posters so that visiting high school students could have an idea of the kind of projects and activities in which the faculty was involved. Three volunteers arranged and manned the display. Not only did we display the messages but the pre-service teachers decided that an interesting add-on would be to set up a competition asking prospective teachers to select the message they thought best and say why.

Three months after the workshops ended, the campus was mobilised for a week for the 'Festival of Hope and Healing', when activities and displays were arranged to promote awareness and ways of addressing HIV and AIDS. The pre-service teachers' photo messages were viewed with much interest and were the subject of animated discussion by many of their peers during this festival when they were again displayed by members of the project group, this time alongside a collection of more professionally mounted photographs from the 'Positive Lives' photography collection. This was observed and greeted with surprise by the students who were putting up and taking care of their displayed work, and by myself. Based on what we heard and observed it was apparent that recognising their peers in photographs was part of the attraction but it appeared also as if the social and cultural relevance of the photo stories kept them looking at and viewing these media message.

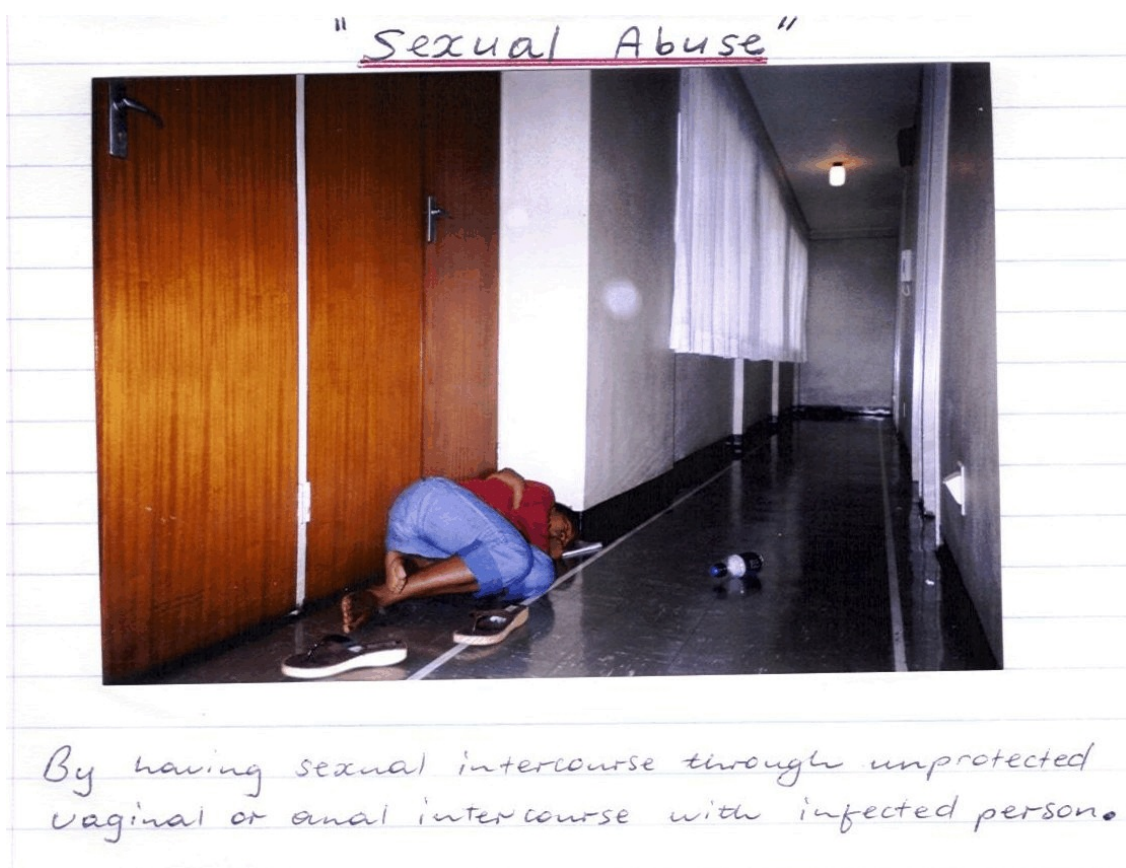
Points of viewing

A primary data source that emerged from the workshops was the visual texts constructed through drawing and photography and supported by writings. Although no genre of text had been requested, all the photo texts fell into the category of photo-stories or media posters. To answer the key research question I asked two more: what can we learn from the representations of pre-service teachers using arts-based approaches to address HIV and AIDS and what are the implications of the representations and associated processes for teacher development? I adopted a constructionist stance to analysis and identified with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (1995), and Stuart Hall's arguments that texts should be seen as primary sites for the construction of meaning but subject to cultural and production influences (1997). As the researcher I was the interpretive tool and my approach was obviously subjective and subject to bias but where possible my conclusions were tempered by the responses of the peer audience or by the stated intention of the producer. Further findings on the texts and value of this arts-based approach also balanced my analysis and were drawn from audio-taped discussions with participants, their written responses to open-ended questionnaires on the process, researcher observations recorded in field notes and journals, video taped records of participants presenting their messages, and informal discussions I had with the course lecturer. I have written extensively on these findings elsewhere and how amongst other things, photographs were used to provide visual representation of emotions and factual information and how they highlight examples of the pre-service

teachers' socially contextualised recognition of stigma and gendered sexuality but did not envisage solutions (Stuart, 2005).

Transformative power of this approach?

Should we involve ourselves in further development of ways to incorporate visual arts-based approaches into trainee teacher modules? At least four findings of this project suggest it may be worthwhile. Firstly, the rich variety of texts or photo representations produced as their messages (Stuart, 2004) demonstrates that this method is flexible. It allows students coming to the disease from a wide range of perspectives to explore and adopt positions on the disease in relation to social and cultural contexts of relevance to them.



The picture above shows how one student used her particular perspective. Here she represents sexual abuse as one of the many ways in which HIV is transmitted. It is modelled by a university student lying in foetal position in the corridor of a university residence. From my perspective it is a powerful composition inviting the viewer to consider the implications of her choice of a female model, scattered shoes, an abandoned drink and a yawning and bleak

corridor beyond. What inspired this idea? It is one of a series submitted by a student from Lesotho who prefaced her photographs with the written story about someone she knows who contracted HIV as a result of her husband's infidelities but through care and support is still living a full life. She did not however use her photographs to illustrate the story. She used the opportunity instead to apply what she knows about HIV transmission to her immediate setting – campus life – and all shots are taken on or around campus and pertinent to student life. Her photographs and captions first show how it can be transmitted in diverse ways and can affect anyone regardless of race, economic status or gender and then move on to recommend ways of preventing the spread of the virus, testing, the importance for the infected of good diet, exercise, entertainment and friendship.

Much of the latest research argues that effective training of future teachers “first has to have an impact on the teachers themselves, helping them examine their own attitudes towards sexuality and behaviours regarding reproductive health and HIV prevention” (James-Trarore *et al.*, 2004, p.4). Most of the pre-service teachers in this project indicated through their texts and feedback at the end of the project that this had happened.

Secondly, Norman Fairclough says that “any text makes its own small contribution to shaping social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge” (Fairclough, 1995, p.55). Through their use of photography and anchoring verbal texts and by drawing on their exposure to other texts, genres, discourses and life experiences relating to HIV and AIDS, the pre-service teachers also produced new texts relevant to their own socio-cultural contexts. When displayed, the local relevance of the texts had resonance for other students and opened up debate. In this way the teachers and their photo-texts have the potential to shape social change around discourses such as the sexuality and stigma issues they represented in photo-story form. We need to ensure that these new texts do not spread misinformation but this should not deter us from developing them.

Thirdly, cast as producers, students were compelled to move from being passive recipients of factual knowledge to active agents of their point of view. Many found this demanding but liberating. For instance, Robert, though verbally articulate, had always referred to HIV at the level of statistics according to the course coordinator but made what she called a ‘paradigm shift’. He found a way to touch some of his silenced emotions through using photographs like the beauty of a sunset as a symbol.

Why let HIV/AIDS take this away
from us and those who should
follow?



Life is too good to live it just for
you. Don't be selfish. Live
responsibly for the next
generation's sake.

In the original colour photograph of this sunset the fiery glow of a setting sun lights the underside of storm clouds and its beauty is highlighted by the yellow page on which it is mounted. The intended significance of this photograph is evident from the words which anchor it as an appeal to peers to recognise what is good in life and ensure that their (sexually) responsible lifestyles allow future generations to experience such beauty. This unusual image in association with HIV forms one of a series of six posters which can stand

alone to communicate their messages or operate together as a challenge to viewers to think about their own responsibilities in relation to HIV and AIDS. Robert had some technical skill in photography, a high level of verbal competence and some exposure to a breadwinner struggling with AIDS. Despite this he was one of the slowest in the group to create a message. From his reflections on the process it appears that it was difficult for him to access things that had moved him and adopt a position. But he was able to do so and claimed *my project was based on thought rather than research, and the resulting ideas were in my head for a long time, but have never been released*. There is evidence that this methodology has the potential to challenge, address and even break down well documented silences (Morrell, 2003) that make people unable to deal with aspects of the disease. Developing the language to speak about HIV and AIDS seems particularly important for teachers.

Finally, it was in dealing with difficult dilemmas directly related to using photography that another value of the approach became evident. We were all confronted with and forced to see HIV and AIDS in the social context, as attempts to capture photographs were met by fears of being associated with the stigma and discrimination that can result in unhappy or even life-threatening situations. Pre-service teachers needed to be supported as they grappled with ways of dealing with the fact that photography captures recognisable copies of people. Looking at examples of ways around ethical dilemmas related to photography's tendency to create an illusion of, or represent, reality proved useful and helpful in that it modelled solutions to ethical dilemmas. Being on the receiving end of the fears related to being identified as HIV positive however, also offered pre-service teachers an opportunity to experience the depth and consequences of social stigma. This is apparent from their comments:

The difficulty I faced when doing this assignment was that my friends refused to be in the photographs as that would mean that they had to pretend to have AIDS (the thought of that seemed to horrify them!!!)

It is difficult to go up to a person and ask them questions related to HIV/AIDS because they will presume you are saying they are HIV positive.

It is not easy to get people to photograph or video-tape because people fear being stigmatised.

Some of the people whom I intended to photograph refused, as they didn't want to be identified as HIV/AIDS victims.

One of the models drawn into a photo-story was so worried about being associated with masculine attitudes to sex that he insisted that his photograph was removed from the script. An implication is that the choice of photography as a medium introduces particular problems because of society's attitudes to the HIV and AIDS affected, and a researcher or facilitator needs to be aware and offer guidance here, but I suggest that precisely because it creates this problem, there is a strong reason for using photography. Doing so leads to embodied experience of rejection for producers and a deeper understanding of the effects of social stigma. The ethical dilemmas forced a realisation of the power of the stigma related to AIDS and this realisation is capable of promoting more compassionate and sensitive engagement.

Conclusion

Using a visual arts-based approach in a teacher-training environment to address HIV and AIDS is challenging but participants' written reflections on the process were positive. The camera allowed for a new perspective and through the visual, a different language for exploration and expression of their own points of view, and thoughtful and deep engagement with HIV and AIDS in local context. Sharing these texts offered a platform for recognising and discussing often radically different levels of understanding, engagement and exposure to HIV and AIDS. Research into how personal engagement with constructing and sharing visual texts will affect teachers' abilities to tackle HIV and AIDS in the classroom with skill and sensitivity would be useful. Many described how they would adapt the project process which modelled a participatory method that values each person's unique position in relation to HIV and AIDS.

Small though the project was, the data was rich and I am now hopeful that Marilyn Martin is correct in asserting that the visual arts can affect the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and that teachers can become a transformative power. Further research could test this approach further by trialling it in different contexts such as with inset teachers. It would also be interesting to discover whether a different group of teachers could engage critically with the texts already produced and identify and envision solutions to social difficulties such as gendered sexual powers which have a profound impact on individual ability to negotiate safe sex.

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