

Reimagining educational management and leadership: trajectories from the prison environment

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Abstract: The article makes a claim that educational management and leadership in the musical arts discipline generally extend beyond the boundaries of formal education institutions to include and embrace other music education endeavours in other settings of both the young and old, even offenders. Within this space I present some of the encounters with the participants of the music participatory action research (MPAR) in one of the prisons in the Mthatha Medium Correctional Centre (MMCC) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. I draw from Michel Foucault's philosophical theory of governing or governmentality to gain a better understanding of the potential of Foucauldian ideas in analysing educational practices and processes and the wider strategies and techniques of panopticism in the prison environment of how offenders in constructing their new identities as lifelong learners, leaders and managers committed to reconstructing their identities as rehabilitated citizens and artists. I further look at the nature of the collaboration between the community groups to argue for the significance of dialogical interactions among participants for effective reconceptualisation and construction of new identities of offenders as artistic leaders and managers ready for integration into the society. Findings revealed that offenders involved in music activities in prison, although they are not completely panoptic-free, are nevertheless panoptic-conscious, or what I call 'panoptic-wise'. They are free to participate in music activities and perform to the very people they are subjected to, thus, subverting the authoritarian, panoptic gaze into the gaze of an audience.

Keywords: Mthatha Medium Correctional Centre (MMCC); governing or governmentality; panopticism or the panopticon and music participatory action research

Introduction

I argue that with the current rehabilitation ideas and processes, a prison is an informal school where offenders are punished by incarceration and are kept for a while, to atone for their crimes against society in the hope that they come back transformed in some way. In present day South Africa, part of their atoning for crimes, is approached from the

restorative justice perspective that seeks to rehabilitate individual offenders holistically where they are exposed to activities and programmes mounted by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) in partnership with other governments departments such as Departments of Education and Arts and Culture and sometimes in collaboration with communities (NGOs) and individuals outside prison to learn a trade, skill or further their education in a variety of ways that are made available to them while in incarceration.

In claiming that a prison is an informal school I posit that educational management and leadership in the music industry generally extend beyond the boundaries of formal education institutions to include and embrace other music education endeavours in other settings of both young and old, even offenders. Within this space I present the choir music circle learners, as the participants in the music participatory action research (MPAR) in the Mthatha Correctional Centre in the province of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. I draw from Michel Foucault's philosophical theory of governmentality or governing to gain a better understanding of the potential of Foucauldian ideas in analyzing educational practices and processes and the wider strategies and techniques of governing and panopticism among offenders in constructing their new identities as lifelong learners, leaders and managers committed to reconstructing their identities as rehabilitated citizens and artists. In advancing my argument I further look at the nature of the collaboration between the community groups, in this case the choir music circle to argue for the significance of dialogical interactions among the circle leaders and their circle learners and how they managed their music circles for effective reconceptualisation and construction of new identities of offenders as rehabilitated people ready for integration into the society.

Definition of Concepts and Literature

The literature review section commences with the four definition of key concepts used in the research.

Mthatha Medium Correctional Centre

South Africa is governed according to nine provinces, each with its own legislature and parliamentary structures with several government departments like the Department of

Correctional Services (DCS). The DCS administers all prisons in the various provinces all of which report to National Departments and the assembly. Mthatha Medium Correctional Centre or the MMCC under the Department of Correctional Services is a male prison in the eastern region of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in one of the small towns known as Mthatha where short-term to medium term offenders with medium to serious crimes (prisoners) are incarcerated.

Governmentality

Foucault (1991) explains governmentally or governing as similar to panopticism. First, governmentality or governing advocates a possibility of knowing that subjects are observed and can be punished for bad behaviour inducing in them power effects to produce. In this sense their perceptions about what the observer (officer) thinks of them and their action become a technology of the self (Foucault *ibid*) for aesthetic agency (Tia DeNora 2000). Embedded within both processes is the intriguing discovery that the exercise of power is unobtrusive, but partially effective and not always in ways that appear intended, through the identities and norms constructed by the prison and the players within that environment.

Panopticism

According to Foucault (1980), the progenitor of this theory, it is a social system, a theory of surveillance and discipline and a technology of power to utilise human potential to its maximum in a highly organized and structured way. In this way, the principle is that power should always be visible and unverifiable.

Music Participatory Action Research

Music participatory action research (MPAR) is the methodological focus of this research where musical practices and activities at the Mthatha Medium Correctional Centre were researched. AR and PAR are basically the same: methodologies that focuses on the effects of the researchers' direct actions of practice within a participatory community with the goal of improving the performance quality of the community or an area of concern, music education in prisons in the case of my research, hence MPAR. Earlier proponents such as Kurt Lewin (1946) in his writings on group dynamics called it action research. When later twentieth-century proponents such as Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, Jean McNiff, Jack

Whitehead, William Carr, Stephen Kemmis, and Orlando Fals-Borda began to theorise the dynamics of participation and collaboration it came to be known as participatory action research (PAR) with a variety of emphases such as living theory (Whitehead 1989 and Whitehead and McNiff 2006) or community action (Fals-Borda 2002). I elaborate more on the research process in the methodology section below.

In the post-apartheid era, governmental annual reports and policy documents, including keynote addresses by successive ministers of the DCS, have shown some consistency in their attempt to create a humane environment in prisons, with more programmes for the development of offenders emerging after 1994, according to former DCS Minister Ben Skosana's address in 2002¹ and the DCS's Annual Report 2003/2004 (2004). Key points in this new direction are the notion of restorative justice and an approach to rehabilitation that involves the department, offender, victim and community working together. My own personal attitude, and consequently the direction of my research project, reflects a strong belief in this approach.

Rehabilitation initiatives by DCS, extended from 2005, influenced by the idea of incarceration as a developmental rather than punitive exercise (for example, giving assistance within specific programmes to offenders after release) are what define the MPAR project. Such initiatives are premised on basic human rights as enshrined in the South African Constitution, and principles such as *Ubuntu*, especially for the aftercare of offenders, where the community plays a significant role, are at the forefront of Government rhetoric (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005).² The current initiatives include the National Offenders Choir Competitions (NOCC), the history of which spans a period of 14 years. It was a strategy of the DCS introduced in 1997, because they saw it as 'an important vehicle towards attaining the Departmental strategic objective of rehabilitation' (Policy

1 www.polity.org.za/article/skosana-correctional-services-management-board-02122002-2002-12-02. Accessed 24/11/2002.

2 www.info.gov.za/whitepapers/2005/dcs.pdf&w=white+paper+papers+corrections+correction+south+africa+2005&d. Accessed, 18/08/2006. Needs-based rehabilitation programmes and services are of two kinds. 'Offence-specific' programmes address needs related to offences: admission assessment and a correctional sentence plan to deal with offences committed, offences suffered, and harmful addictions in relation to violent offending, sexual offending, and drug and alcohol abuse. 'Offence-related' programmes cater for areas such as family support, damage from drug use, accommodation needs, development, care, education employment, sport, and recreation. See DCS Strategic Plan for 2005/6–2009/10 (Policy Document 2005).

Document, 2005: 2). It was launched and exists as a biennial event, with the first contest held on 10 September 1998 in Parktown, Johannesburg (in the Linder Auditorium, now on the University of the Witwatersrand campus)³

The NOCC created a model that continues to this day, which in turn is modelled on the national Old Mutual adult choir competitions, featuring two main sections, 'traditional' and 'choral'. In the traditional section (South African) traditional music and dances are featured, with nothing specific prescribed. The choral music section, just as in competitions outside prison, features vernacular and Western prescribed pieces,⁴ for female, male, youth, and mixed choirs. In the 2008 competitions the new feature of an operatic solo item – also entering into national competitions – was added. This phenomenon has become an important tool to the DCS for the success of rehabilitation endeavours (Skosana, 2003: 7). I problematise and find it contradictory that DCS officials use the NOCC as a power tool to normalise life in prison rather than to rehabilitate and ensure successful reintegration of offenders into society after their term. From what I have observed (Twani, 2002) the DCS as a whole is simply trying to render prison a liberating and enlightening space for offenders, when music education of a serious nature occurs within this environment.

Ethical considerations

In conducting this research, ethical considerations were of prime importance, particularly because the study dealt with human beings who had come into conflict with the law. One of the key aspects was to obtain permission from DCS by submitting a proposal to the DCS research unit, which was approved, and on occasion submitting a report on the research. Ethics forms and consent for participation forms were signed by the Area Manager and the Head of Arts and Culture unit in the correctional centre on behalf of the offenders. Also, student participants and DCS officials participating in the study gave individual consent. I have used pseudonyms and clan names to identify the various research participants. Post-

3 www.info.gov.za/speeches/index.htm. Accessed 10 February 2004.

4 In the current schools and adult choir competitions administered by the South African Schools Choral Music Eisteddfod (SASCE), the Eastern Cape Choral Music Associations (ECCMA) and Old Mutual National Choir Festival (NCF), the term 'vernacular' has fallen into disuse in favour of 'African' songs. I retain it to distinguish the traditional music section from the choral music section lest they are construed as the same thing.

research procedures involved submission of the completed research for scrutiny and approval by the DCS and finally a presentation of the findings of the research at a colloquium according to the Department of Correctional Services prescriptions. This article is the first submission for publication after this process was finalised on 11 November 2012.

Methodology

Both AR and PAR on which the MPAR process is modeled involve all relevant parties in actively examining together current process (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts which make sense of it. In this sense, it is action which is researched, changed and re-researched, within the research process by participants over a length of time of different stages or phases of the research. It aims to be active co-research, by and for those to be helped where planning of the action, implementation thereof, reflection on it, and evaluation of the process is featured. Re-planning is a bigger part of the research process and it can occur at any stage with the revised plans implemented, reflected upon and evaluated.

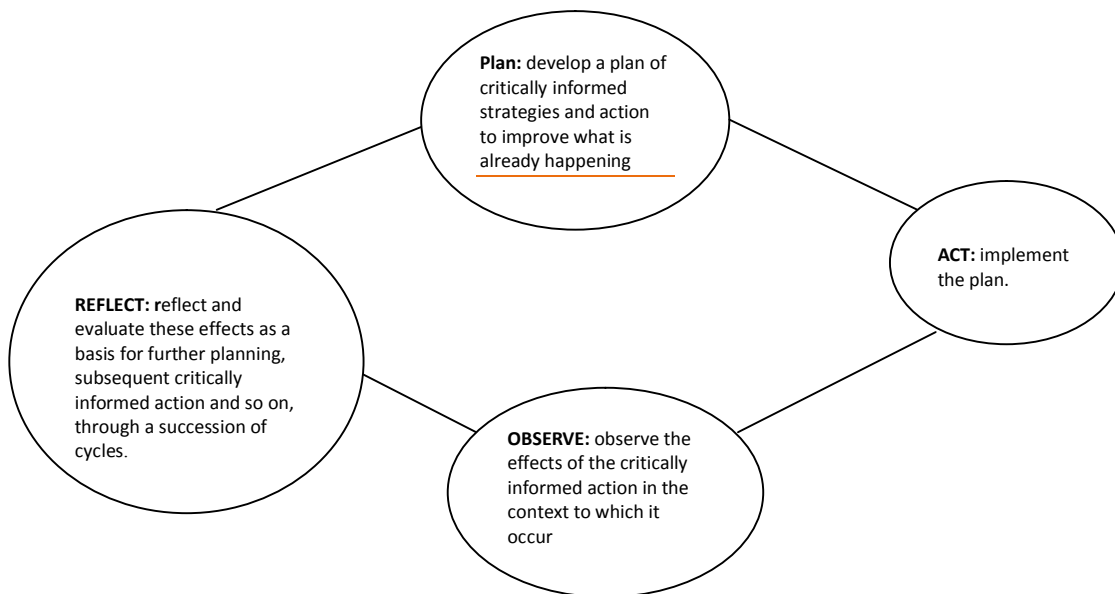


Fig. 1 Four stages of a cycle, adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart 1992: 8

Within this methodology theory and practice, praxis, according to Freire (1993) are intertwined. It cannot be used by one group of people to get another group of people to do what is thought best for them - whether that is to implement a central policy or an

organisational or service change - but instead "tries to be a genuinely democratic or non-coercive process whereby those to be helped, determine the purposes and outcomes of their own inquiry" (Wadsworth 1998).⁵

Both AR and PAR emphasise collaboration between the outsider and insider participants who bring about actions that seek to change and develop participants such that the changed situation is self-initiated in order to create new knowledge. Lewin believed that such change should emanate from the belief that knowledge creation should come from problem-solving in real life situations (see Herr and Anderson 2005). AR/PAR is carried out under diverse intellectual traditions and it comes with a variety of names such as action science. Its emphasis is on participants' self-initiated and needs-driven processes to solve situations.

I conducted the research to raise the consciousness of the DCS community, the numerous offenders and officers, in order of their seniority, that the music activities that take place in the prison and the National Offenders Choir Competitions were tools through which music education was possible. Given this problem, I asked the question: To what extent can participation in music activities empower offenders with alternative skills and harness their rehabilitative endeavours?

All of these participants were purposefully sampled from my knowledge of the phenomenon and research site (Twani, 2002). The research itself, known as the 'Music Participatory Action Research' (MPAR) project was conducted in four cycles, which are commonly known as research phases (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992, 2000), as is customary of all action research (Whyte, 1991). The cycles were three months long, except for the final one which was much shorter (two months) due to prison conditions. Historically, although the research started with 16 participants, because of the multiplier effect (MacIntyre, 2008) of action research, it ultimately, included 146 people whom I called 'research actors' with varying levels of participation.

⁵ <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-ywadsworth98.html>. Accessed on 14 April 2010.



Fig 2 – 13 of the 16 action research leaders with the facilitator (front row²nd from the right hand)

Research (learning) took place in these music circles with the research leaders and their respective group members in the form of weekly, fortnightly and cycle-end meetings that were characterised by:

- discussions
- dialogue
- communicative consensus (Habermas, 1976)
- practical music lessons
- report writing and evaluation of both verbal and practical presentations by external participants in the cycle-end meetings.

Data was collected through multiple sources, such as

- narrative journals (kept by the 16 research leaders, including myself)
- video footage
- photographs
- evaluation reports.

I then went through a process of coding for ‘theming of data’ (Saldaña, 2009: 13). Saldaña emphasises the application of coding to qualitative data from a multiplicity of textual sources such as books, essays, interviews, photos, speeches, artifacts and informal conversation. I then analysed the themes generated using the thematic content analysis approach (TCA) advocated by Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) as a process-oriented

approach suitable for analysing themes emerging from several sources of qualitative and descriptive data.

Results and discussion

The first cycle of the research involved 16 research leaders, including myself, who were empowered with the processes and procedures of the PAR methodology in an activating workshop (Lammerts, 1988; Van Beinum, 1988), which introduced the research to the research actors. The research took place in 11 music circles (classrooms), a term which I modelled from Freire's (1970, 1993) culture circles in his Brazilian literacy projects. These music circles emerged out of the chosen music topics and genres.

It was clear, for example, from those who had some choral experience that their number one desire was to learn to read and write music. Cingile Qoboza commented with excitement:

Eyi, mama intle lento uzenayo, uyabona mna nalamajita [colloquial for gentleman] ndicula nawo, sihlala sithetha ngento yokucula itonic solfa. Kungakuhle gqitha ukuba singaphuma kule project sikwazi ukufunda nokubhala i - tonic sol-fa, namagqudu⁶ la, lento ye staff. [You know what you have brought us, mother, it's what the other choristers and I talk about, namely, singing in tonic sol-fa. It would be quite nice if we could leave the project knowing how to read and write both tonic sol-fa and staff notation.]

Andries agreed with Cingile and he mused:

I Staff mna ndisibona sibalulekile, ingakumbi nje ngokuba mna ndibawela ukucula lomculo we opera and kufuneka umntu awazi lamagqudu. Kakade, Mam' uTwani, ndingakwazi ukucula ngesasi Jamani okanye isiTaliyane? [I see staff notation as the most important thing to learn for me since I am interested in singing opera music

⁶ There are no proper names for most of the music terms in IsiXhosa; however, some Xhosa words have been invented in the process of formally introducing music as a learning area within the education system. One of them is 'amagqudu', to describe music notes written in staff notation because of their round shape and the stem that resembles a knobkerrie.

and I need to learn staff notation. Mrs Twani, is it possible for me to learn to sing in German and / or Italian?].

At the cycle-end meeting of cycle 2 the Male Voice Double Quartet presented and showcased music literacy skills of high quality when they performed their songs reading from both tonic solfa and staff notation scores. When I first met them in 1998, they had been singing their music with music scores held upside down, BUT within a period of six months they had made such strides on their learning curve.

The organisation of the music circles entailed a grouping of six individuals per circle to ensure effective management of these; however, the participants demonstrated a certain level of maturity and knowledge. From this very first cycle, they were active in managing some of the aspects of the research as Papa suggested:

we cannot have a choir of six people, this will not work. All of us who are in this workshop are already in the choir and we all want to learn to sing staff notation. How about we keep the choir members as they are and request sis Makholi to be the research leader for us to learn from her?

Everybody agreed on this arrangement and the workshop finished with a rendition of two items from the choir, with one of the offender/ conductors leading the choir, as evidenced by the picture below:



Fig. 3 Mthatha Medium Correctional Centre Choir under the baton of Cingile Qoboza, the assistant conductor, giving an impromptu performance at the cycle-end meeting of Cycle 1.

The overall organisation of the MPAR also allowed research actors to acquire skills in managing the music circles. Group decision-making and collective management was part of the process. In some cases research actors had to make impromptu decisions, as in the case of the research coordinators who influenced the decision to organise and stage the third cycle-end meeting.

The circle learners and leaders in the choir music circle continued to make strides in researching technical and artistic aspects and the choir brought in an interesting innovation of shared leadership, where two research leaders and later three leaders plus a research coordinator: Papa, Tshayimpi, Zama, Vuyo and Skhulu tried their hands at directing and training the choir in breathing and breath control, tone placement, tone classification, articulation of vowel sounds, interpretation of dynamic levels and expression marks in their repertoire, and movement regarding folksongs. Papa wrote in his journal as follows:

Our plan is to practise whenever we can. The choir is one of the activities we do all the time ... But today I want us to work on tone classification. Please assist us, Skhulu (referring to the research coordinator). There is a problem that I see here, people do not know which part they are supposed to sing, even where we have a shortage of singers in one part or another, we simply ask volunteers to sing a particular line.

The next entry of 12 July reads:

I want us to work on movement and actions in our folksongs. We seem to have difficulty in this aspect, remember some of us are naturally clumsy, It looks like we undermined the fact that even actions need constant practice.]

In the next meeting of 21 July Skhulu reflected, “what I want to do today, I want us to research and learn about conducting. Each one must choose a pattern and a song to conduct”. This was quite a move forward from the reflections of other research leaders. Brief as it was, the action plan, method and purpose were clearly and succinctly indicated with a forward-looking strategy of how the knowledge would be applied; a sign of maturity on the part of the coordinator, especially as four participants were immediately identified to lead the ‘cascade’ of teaching-learning conducting patterns. DVD footage captures Papa, Tshayimpi, Zama, Vuyo and Skhulu, all conducting the choir at different intervals, obviously trying out the patterns. Of essence in this exercise was the interactive and participatory

approach that Skhulu used, to and ensure they were understood and applied. The cascade model was very efficient and effective. Also, I noted with excitement the depth and determination to research fundamental technical and artistic aspects in this cycle. Ways of working were interactive, problem-based, project-oriented I, using thematic studies and working in groups or teams: the kind of “praxial music education” advocated by Leonhard and House (1972: 73).

Senge’s (1990) ideas on the five disciplines that apply in organising learning occupy centre stage in this discussion, particularly his principle of personal mastery. According to Senge (1990), the five disciplines that are essential to learning organization and that should be encouraged at all times are: personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system thinking. In his explanation of the disciplines, he posits that personal mastery is about how people learn continually from their experiences and thinking to map out their future (vision), regarding the mastery of the task they are undertaking for proficiency and development in a particular environment. This notion relates to how individuals and groups of individuals articulate their views, experiences, feelings and perceptions to influence their development, and how they collaborate, think and work together as a team in bringing about positive change to situations they are involved in, for example as stakeholders in the schooling system.

Working together in the choir circle to produce the best voices and good choral effects in the choir was the one important goal for the choir leaders. Papa led the circle for two weeks, after which Tshayimpi took over: “In the same way as Papa did, Tshayimpi today is your turn to teach a conducting pattern” (Skhulu, pers. comm. 04 August). On 05 August Tshayimpi had a plan for the next round of meetings, and was able to get into the following kind of detail:

Today we did tone placement and articulation of vowels. This helps with diction in singing, how you sing and place the different vowels. You see, gentlemen, we have vowels like ‘i’ ‘a’ and ‘e’ which are problematic and difficult to sing. That is where the

problem is, they must sound like 'i', 'a' and so on. Let us take a song and apply this, let us take *Long Day Closes*, the English songs are usually where these problems occur.

This illustrated a grasp of the fit between theory and practice, and shows his teaching background emerging quite strongly as a strategy. Looking at the work that was being done in this music circle, on DVD, I was thrilled by the level they were at. Notions of lifelong learning in the education of adults as suggested by scholars such as Fejes and Nicoll (2008), Freire (1993), and Habermas (1996) seemed to be represented in this music circle in Cycle 3. Through "dialogue which requires critical thinking" they were "also capable of generating critical thinking" (Freire 1993: 57). They seemed to have reached the point where, as Habermas (Ibid: 56) posits: "knowledge and skills [are] directed through processes of self-directed learning ... communicated through deliberations between learners and teachers [and] understood [as] an activity that [is] fun and naturally rewarding". Tshayimpi on the same day discovered the usefulness of what he had been doing with the school choir prior to incarceration:

It is true that whatever you have learnt is not in vain, my experience with the school choir is helpful. Also Mafunda's presence made things a lot easier. Oh, I have a plan, let us take one song and discuss its dynamics and expressions and then apply these as we sing the song]. I have also understood the explanation that they must be contextualised to the meaning of the song, *yiyo* hence the suggestion to work on these as they appear in the songs, besides just knowing that 'p' stands for piano and means soft, the question is how soft is soft in this particular song? Is it not important to know what the song is about? For instance, 'p' in a lullaby cannot be applied in the same way as 'p' in the song entitled 'The Prayer of a Prayer' because a lullaby is in its nature a soft song since it is about putting a baby to sleep while *Amandla Omthandazo* is a powerful song that tends to be more on the loud side so, 'p' in *Amandla Omthandazo* will be relative to its loudness which is generic throughout the song.

This connectedness Skhulu discovered came about through self-reflexivity and led him to think ahead:

Mr Tshayimpi, I must remember to ask Mrs Twani to make more copies of the learning support material that she gave to the music literacy groups which gave explanations of some of the expressions that are commonly used in music.

Senge asserts that “we learn best from our experiences, but we never directly experience the consequences of many of our important decisions” (Senge 1990:23). Such a stance, speaks to how people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. Papa and Tshayimpi were quite methodical and systematic in their research attempts, as the last journal entry from Skhulu (pers. comm.. 05 August 2007):

The choir is doing very well and the two research leaders know how to schedule and divide the work to be done. I can see that the choir numbers are dwindling because of the releases. I wish they can continue with the work even outside prison.

This is about a “group of people who are continually enhancing their capabilities to create what they want to create” Senge, (1990:1). Such actions are likely to bring about desirable changes within the structures and systems of an organization.

Conclusion

I conclude by stating that prison, by its very nature, operates on strict subjective control and strict surveillance of offenders; after all, it was initially designed to be this way. However, the musicians behind bars were enabled to proactively manage their own learning and harness their leadership skills. Ladies and gentlemen you can conclude for yourselves whether leadership is inherited or acquired, but ‘I learnt through the project that leadership as a management task, is wired within all of us human beings and education of whatever nature and regardless of the environment can harnesses such inherent skills for a better tomorrow.

The results from the data were strong indicators, to me, of a number of issues pertaining to education in general and music education itself. Matters of concern that took centre stage included methods and approaches to teaching and learning, content, skills audit, problems and challenges experienced (illiteracy rating as the number one problem), values attached to education and education.

I agree that to a certain extent at the beginning of the process some amount of influence and consciousness-raising was essential through the activation workshop. However, the process was not in any way prescriptive; hence participants were given the opportunity to choose with whom they were going to learn. The what, why and how of the learning was their guided responsibility. I use the term 'guided responsibility' since the outside researchers played a major role in coordinating, supporting and facilitating the research, its procedures and processes, for the inside researchers to acquire leadership and management skills. This was of the essence since the knowledge base of the inside researchers was largely locally contextualised to the prison environment. My data shows that before the intervention there was no formally structured and recognisable music education forum in the environment apart from the music competitions. Findings of this study indicate that participants see education as a tool for lifelong learning, something that will benefit them even in future. This is especially so with skills-related learning both in music and elsewhere.

From this experience I conclude that identities are considered to be discursive constructions and, according to Foucault (1984), people are shaped and emerge through participation in various practices. Identities are thus versatile, plural and contradictorily negotiated. They are established through social interaction and specific patterns of activity. They are relational activities, where people ultimately assume a different identity from the one with which they entered a situation, as in the case of the choir circle leaders.

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