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## **Critical Reflection on my role in 'Dying to Live'**

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In our piece 'Dying to Live' there were n clearly assigned roles within the crew structure. Certain people did take the opportunity to assert themselves more in areas which they were not particularly good in order to grow their skills, which is positive from a point of growing as a team.

From the outset, the team was on the back-foot, as we struggled to find a suitable topic for an investigation. I found the process very difficult personally, as we all struggled to find something which we all considered to be interesting and viable as a project. Initially, we were very keen to find a story that required a hidden-camera, which was a bit ambitious. After struggling to find a topic, the team started to get a bit low, but when we settled on our story our story we were all able to relax.

Unfortunately we relaxed a bit too much and found ourselves behind. And needing to hustle to make the deadline. I think we were taking things such as finding a defaulter for granted, and we began to panic when we could not find one. I spent a lot of time on Paddy's phone setting up meetings and pre-interviews. Some people proved difficult to get hold of, and some simply did not reply to their messages, which was of course, frustrating. Eventually, we found the best way of tracking people down was to just simply get into the car and drive there. This is how we found the Jabez Centre who proved to be such powerful influence.

There were a few issues starting to creep in with people not attending meetings, but this was soon cleared up when we realised the pressure we were under. Within the last week, we all worked solidly and cohesively to produce the final product. As said, we didn't all have set positions within

the crew but were very fluid with our roles. This I was able to be involved at all stages of the piece, from pre-production through to the actual production and then the editing.

In the pre-production, there much to do aside from simply setting up the shoots. Preparing the questions was a facet of the interview process that we didn't get to grips with. There were rarely any set questions within interviews, which often left the interviewer unprepared whilst within the interview situation, which was sloppy. I think if we were more switched on during many of our earlier interviews, we would have been able to make a more informed documentary.

From an organisational point of view, once we were under the whip, we responded well. We were able to really up our levels of productivity and after finding Sandie at the Jabez Centre, we became very busy. Perhaps, we could have completed a little more of the editing during the nights but on the whole we had upped our intensity alarmingly.

During the shoots there was an interesting dynamic. The roles typically consisted of interviewer, main camera, sound tech and camera two on the a few of the earlier shoots. There was a lot of rotation around these positions, and I found myself commonly moving between sound tech and interviewer. Bryce obviously played a large role in our productive process and he was very prominent in setting up the shots and cutaways, however there was a far greater involvement from the rest of the group in these aspects than in the past. I was happy to put to use the skills we had learnt in the sound workshops in our interviews. The outside interviews with Sandile and Yolisa were filmed on very windy days, and the sound would have been very poor were we filming without the 'boom' mike. Thus, I was really happy with the quality of the sound within these interviews.

As far as the interviews I took, I found it a very difficult undertaking. We were dealing with many barriers to getting to our topic, such as language and cultural issues that subtly manifested. Many of the people we spoke to struggled to understand what in particular we were looking for, and it was often frustrating when we set up an interview, only for the interviewee to prove to be rather useless to our cause. I guess, I could have been better at prying deeper with our interviewees and

getting to the core of our issue, yet it was often difficult to communicate our intentions clearly and communicate fruitfully. I think it was problematic that we often found patients blatantly contradicting what had been said by others, and aspects such as these I feel are commonly down to miscommunication at many different levels. These hindered our progress in uncovering a defaulter and finding what was at the core of the issue of defaulting. We were very lucky that Sandile acted as a translator and a bridge to the community, however he had his own own agendas that he was trying to push and often slightly misunderstood what we were attempting to do.

These problems we faced in our interviews were not unique, however it became a problem when dealing with the sensitive nature of our topic. We needed to very careful dealing with HIV/AIDS patients, in order to sensitively approach their views yet still needed to probe in order to find own story. I do feel we were successful in finding the balance in this respect, in particular in Nontutu's interview, and those around the tree with the Raphael Centre clients.

I feel our crew dynamic worked particularly well in post-production in our editing process. It did take an all-nighter on Sunday, but I do think that this was reasonable as we only conducted Nontutu's interview on the Saturday, and still went out shoot on our extension Monday. Palesa took an active role in the editing, and commonly alternated with Bryce. All of us managed to spend some time driving the Adobe, although I think I personally was not so involved in driving the editing programmes, as I am not very keen on editing. However, all the editing was done with all four members of RagingFerret present, which I feel played a major part in the quality of the final piece. All the decisions were undertaken with all the crews opinions being heard, which I think was very important, as we all were able to contribute our own opinions and understandings into this piece. There were disagreements, but it is important that they didn't escalate into conflict, as they were always worked out quickly. Thus, despite the pressure of the long hours, we managed to come through and work well as a team.

One interesting argument happened over our decision to take an extension in order gain a more quality final product. It was put forward that we needed to redo the Annelie interview on

Monday morning, which I was utterly opposed to at 6 a.m. It was a reasonable point that if we still had time to work on our piece to improve it, we must and I came across to the idea that we needed to redo the interview. However, the Angelo Seminar went over by an hour and a half and this meant it could not be redone. Our sound was also too shoddy at this stage. I was very happy that once we took the extra day, we all knuckled down and used it very well. We interviewed Annelie in the morning, and then split in order to get shots out at the Jabez Centre and continue editing.

This was a good idea, and perhaps something we should have done more of during our process. I think one of the main things hindering our group's progress is a lack of efficiency and using our time effectively. If we did break up into clearer crew roles this could be negated perhaps, but it must be noted that our lack of clearly defined roles is a strength despite this weakness. The entire process was a huge learning curve, particularly when faced with the fact that next term we have to a far greater workload to consider. I was happy to note how well we fared when under the pressure and am thus very confident going into the third term.

Thus, I was happy with what I learnt in the process of producing 'Dying to Live'. In the production process, it was great to learn new skills on the camera and to effectively use the sound equipment, which I feel was a huge string in our bow. The issues in with the interviewing were greater than anything we faced before yet, I feel we were successful in overcoming our faults. This was the key aspect, our relationship with our subjects, in making 'Dying to Live' what I consider to be a successful piece.