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PROJECT REPORT

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The ethics of Participatory Theatre in higher education

PREFACE, by David Pearson, PALATINE Senior Research Associate

PALATINE (Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Innovation Network) (www.palatine.heacademy.ac.uk) is a centre that provides UK-wide support to the disciplines of dance, drama and music in higher education. Under the umbrella organization of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), PALATINE is based at Lancaster University and is one of 24 subject centres that provide subject-based services and support for learning, teaching and the student experience of higher education.

The following report provides an account of a project that focused on ethical practice in the teaching of Participatory Theatre (PT). This project is one example of work supported by PALATINE and is characteristic of the work of the subject centre in its approach. All of our work during the past ten years has been built on the ideas and practices of educators and practitioners directly involved in working with students in our higher education system.

PALATINE's core activities are events, a funding scheme for educational development projects, and the creation and sharing of information relevant to learning and teaching in the performing arts disciplines. Our events provide a space for debate and the sharing of practice, often in areas of education that are growing, developing, or in a state of flux and due for some

KEYWORDS

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PALATINE

focused consideration. A particular success in recent years has been a series of 'Starting Out' events. These workshops have enabled early-career lecturers to gather for subject-specific discussions and activities at the start of their academic careers. Our Development Awards are a unique source of funding for small, innovative projects. These funds are devoted to the development of learning and teaching in ways that can be shared across institutions, often leading to further innovations. The 'Ethics of Participatory Theatre' project is one example of around 80 funded projects over the past eleven years. We have also recently worked with other organizations to consider the implications for dance, drama and music of wider topics such as external examining, student mental well-being and the role of education in social and environmental awareness.

Frances Rifkin proposed a Development Award project on ethical practice at a time when work in applied ethics was developing within higher education in the United Kingdom. For example, an interdisciplinary centre had just been established to coordinate applied ethics work across the disciplines and professions (see <http://www.idea.leeds.ac.uk/>). PALATINE felt that a Development Award would generate evidence, consolidate links between educators and practitioners, and initiate a debate in the context of courses in Participatory Theatre and community drama, which were being developed in several institutions. We were also unaware of any guide to ethical responsibilities aimed at lecturers in such teaching contexts. We hope that the findings and recommendations from the project will continue to inform learning and teaching, and that the ideas will be discussed, reviewed, contested perhaps, and developed further. What follows is based on the original project report, which is available online, with an accompanying literature review by Elizabeth Hare, at <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/files/ethics.pdf>.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This was an action research project, which took place over a period of two years and involved collaborations with the students and staff in the theatre departments of a range of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. It comprised a series of workshops, interviews with academics and practitioners and theoretical research supported by a literature review by Elizabeth Hare of the Open University. It was mentored by Bill McDonnell of the University of Sheffield and by Stella Barnes of Oval House, London and supported and assisted throughout by PALATINE.

The framework aims to offer both a practical and usefully theoretical approach for the ethical teaching and practice of Applied Theatre in higher education. It explores the historical context within which an ethical framework can be placed, what ethical choices and decisions are needed to support practice, how those choices can be reviewed and developed and how the structure as a whole can both enhance practice and develop and change with it.

INTRODUCTION

In 2006, I conducted a sequence of training workshops in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed in London. Subsequently, with the support of the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange, Jane Hoy, a lecturer in Lifelong Learning at Birkbeck, University of London, and I convened a 'Workshop on Participatory Theatre and citizenship in lifelong learning' on Friday 6 October 2006.

A group of leading practitioners, academics and leaders of community development organizations attended. The need for an ethical framework for PT was discussed. This was confirmation for me that my interest in this was a shared one. As a teacher and practitioner of PT in higher education and in community, I had become increasingly aware of a deficit in the wide range of fields where 'applied theatre', referred to in this document as Participatory Theatre (PT), was practised.

Why, then, focus on higher education? Higher education has a key position in theatre education in the United Kingdom. PT practices form an important part of the Drama and Theatre Studies curriculum. A proposed structure for ethical practice would affect the work of future professionals and through them, the companies they would work with. It would also help lecturers to clarify their responsibilities to their students in the sphere of ethics.

Individual practitioners and companies tend to set their own ethical parameters at work, with little external reference. Other established professional communities – for example Dramatherapy, Psychodrama, Playback Theatre, Community Dance, social scientists, doctors – have codes as a matter of course.

In 2007, I felt it was a pertinent time for some of the valuable and diverse practices in UK higher education to be explored and consolidated. Though I felt that PT, as a community of practice with considerable social and moral responsibilities, lacked such a document, I did not want to produce something that would appear prescriptive. Accordingly, I decided to plan a project that would generate a set of findings, leading to 'guidelines' or 'recommendations' that might be discussed, modified and contested, but which would certainly share practice and initiate further ideas. My hope was that the document could be preceded by a period of fieldwork around the United Kingdom, involving visits to higher education institutions, interviews and workshops with a diverse range of students, educators and practitioners.

I got in touch with PALATINE and developed my ideas into a successful bid to the Development Awards scheme, which enabled the project to go ahead.

I would be glad of responses and additions to the report – it is not static but attempts to suggest an approach to thinking about ethical practice in situations of complexity and unpredictability. Contributions and new thinking are essential to the development of the practice.

1. GENESIS OF PROJECT: HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND CHALLENGES

This research is a response to a perceived absence of consensus on an ethical approach to the teaching, learning and professional practice of Participatory or Applied Theatre. This does not imply an absence of ethical practice in higher education; on the contrary, the research revealed widespread thinking about and commitment to ethical practice amongst teachers and learners.

The researcher's concern has rather been to identify areas both of consensus and of debate in order to create a structure within which the ethics of this rapidly expanding, diverse, and increasingly professional practice might

be theoretically and practically implemented. Recognizing that there are many points of entry into practice, participation and commissioning, the report juxtaposes frames of reference ranging between the political, the civic and the ethical in order to offer a field of practices in which some agreement on ethics might comfortably emerge.

The research has been based upon an action research methodology. Its aim was not to teach, impose or test a set of *a priori* ethical values, but to enable a dialogue with collaborators on the issue of practice ethics in PT. In other words, to discover what values were operative, whether explicit or implicit, to identify gaps and to attempt a provisional codification.

The aim was to produce a set of ethical guidelines for use in the higher education curriculum, in teaching. In higher education the guidelines will raise vocational awareness for students and in the world of employment they will support professionalism for practitioners.

PT: A DEFINITION

In this study the term 'Participatory Theatre' is used to cover practices referred to variously as Applied Theatre or Drama, Community Theatre, Workshop Theatre, Role Play, etc. The practice ranges between work with a performance focus to process-based work aimed at personal group and/or social development. It takes place in a wide variety of employment, political, social and community settings and practitioners come from a variety of backgrounds. Practitioners may be professional theatre performers and directors, dedicated trained facilitators, or professionals from other backgrounds, e.g. social work or education. PT is internationally associated with radical and popular theatre forms such as Theatre in Education, Young People's Theatre, Forum Theatre (Theatre of the Oppressed) and Theatre for Development.

While the research emphasis has been on the interactivity of the workshop situation, its considerations extend to, and are applicable to, forms that involve participants, professional and non-professional, in creating, devising and performing in a wide range of modes and relationships.

The historical context

Radical PT practices have historically been founded on a cluster of ethical/political principles. These principles have been articulated through the methods of practitioners such as Dorothy Heathcote and Augusto Boal, and through the Theatre in Education and political theatre movements and their organizations, companies and individuals. These ethical approaches have been recorded in varying ways over time, but have emerged from the debates and competing approaches of the practitioners largely as praxis, which has been difficult to formulate and to share. The underpinning notions were strongly influenced by contexts of political and social struggle and exploration, for example the anti-war movement and trade union struggles of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the growth of the women's and gay movements, and the struggle for wider equalities that has grown out of these.

As the generation of originators and initiators who argued for a partisan and socially critical practice begins to give way to their successors, the absence of a consensus on what the nature of an ethical approach might be has become problematic.

It is nowhere more problematic than in higher education, where PT practice is a popular part of many curricula, and where many students hope

to use their skills with the widening range of marginalized and vulnerable communities.

There is also an industrial PT sector where forms such as Forum Theatre and Role Play have been appropriated in ways that may not have been anticipated by their earlier proponents. In parallel with these developments, increasing numbers of artists whose principal objective, rather than having a social orientation, is to produce their own work, are combining with a range of community groups to pursue their aims in ways that can be ethically questionable.

As a practitioner, working across fields of PT and political performance, I have become increasingly aware of a build-up of pressures around what had previously seemed unproblematic practices. In 1993, after twenty years of political theatre with the Trades Union and anti-fascist movements, I cheerfully wrote: 'To a new generation of practitioners, the landscape is somewhat more complicated. It is for me' (author's personal notebook). What seemed clear is still clear in itself, its questions valid and current but the context has shifted. The ethical project reveals itself as fragile and temporal.

PT and ethics: Contemporary challenges

Therefore, ethics is not only an attitude of questioning, a disposition, and intention, but a project – a fallible and perishable project – that exists in tension with (and therefore bound to), a setting, history, tradition and language.

(Lachapelle 2004)

PT takes place now in multiple contexts, each of which presents specific challenges.

- It stands between other PT techniques with ethical codes of their own: Playback, Sociodrama, Psychodrama, Dramatherapy.
- Practitioners work extensively with so-called marginalized groups and others, and must respond to statutory requirements around duty of care, equality, diversity and Health and Safety.
- It interfaces with situations where concepts of good practice are long-established but not necessarily applicable to a creative practice, for example in attitudes to risk and challenge.
- It is increasingly used as a research tool in higher education, and so encounters a range of institutional ethical codes that are sometimes incompatible with its working practices.
- Where practitioners are employed outside the social and political fields, they can face complex challenges to the demands of creative practice in employment and funding contexts that are unsympathetic to process and person-centred practice.

While at its most progressive, PT fosters and embodies the creative desires and commitments of practitioners and participants for ethical, equal and collaborative working, it does this without a general consensus on how these crucial elements might be identified and clustered together.

There is little to protect the freedom of competent practitioners to set working methods, agree agendas with participants, choose and develop ways of working, evaluate in appropriate ways, work creatively with notions of

1. TEN contributed to a structure, though work was discontinued due to lack of funding.
2. I would propose a correction to the original text, as follows: *'an entity of measures by which different operators in society consciously seek to influence, and [be influenced by], cultural activities in society'*.

uncertainty, bewilderment and discovery. There is practically nothing to indicate to employers and other practitioners by what criteria competence and ethical standards might be understood.

This vulnerability, which practitioners share with some of their constituency, is exacerbated by an absence of clear ethical contracts of employment, poor unionization and consequent isolation and lack of support. It all adds up to poor or no professional recognition, status and trust. There is in addition a deep concern, even dismay amongst many practitioners at the restrictive and directive approaches to the application of PT by major funding bodies and institutions such as the European Union and in Britain the various Arts Councils. In response, the Theatre Education Network (TEN) in 2007 helped to formulate a practitioners' checklist and Equity is currently considering an employment contract for practitioners.¹ This research then is part of a wider context of concern about the application and ethics of PT practices.

Ethical frameworks: Convergence and complexity

When it comes to outlining what applied ethical frameworks might be relevant to PT, there is convergence and complexity.

The International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies' (IFACCA) report 'Ethics in Cultural Policy' (Koivunen and Marsio 2008) expresses itself in human rights language, with an emphasis on the civic:

Cultural policy we understood in the way Jarmo Malkavaara defines it as *an entity of measures by which different operators in society consciously seek to influence, and influence cultural activities in society [...]* Ethical choices are not black-and-white right-or-wrong setups but can, in different situations, be justified by different means and aim at different effect. In cultural policy the important thing is to make choices consciously and transparently after a keen scrutiny of ethical consequences.

(Koivunen and Marsio 2008: 7, original emphasis)²

IFACCA define three ethical lenses through which cultural policy can be evaluated: virtue, responsibility and benefit. Underpinning these is the notion of Fair Culture, rooted in human rights principles.

In contrast, Rustom Bharucha has provocatively proposed a Genet-inspired commitment to a betrayal of the civic:

I think betrayal can seem perverse, but if one sees in it the possibilities of a certain rigor in not succumbing to bourgeois morality and feel-good liberal, even 'radical' sentiments, it can serve as a robust corrective to political correctness and the illusions of good citizenship. To what extent am I prepared to endorse the ethics of illegality in order to activate the process of social and political change beyond the boundaries of theatre practice? This, indeed, is my ethical dilemma. Not so much in 'crossing the line' of unethical action, but in not crossing the line with the necessary combination of political rigor, cunning and audacity.

(2007)

This approach is in clear conflict with more sedate notions of 'good practice', and the observation of Health and Safety regulations!

Stella Barnes (2009) has developed a set of ethical principles, which underpin the PT work of the Oval House, London:

- Choice: participants' agenda not pre-empted
- Respect: developed in the course of the creative process, modelled by facilitators
- Equality: gained through the creative process with groups having little experience of equality
- Safety: working focus on present/future, with no requirement to disclose traumatic personal material
- Tutor competence: support and training encourage shared perspectives for the facilitators

She describes a process whereby ethics are embodied and developed in the creative process; where sensitivity to personal and creative risk, and mutual respect, inform the work; where the group is viewed as collaborators and not participants; and where reflexivity and critical thinking are at the heart of the process – an approach that echoes, and expands on, the 'certain rigor' of Bharucha's text.

The concept of 'competence' is a crucial anchoring for ethical practice: without this, the complexity of Bharucha's position, the pitfalls and strengths of the IFACCA proposal, and the densely textured implications of the Oval House principles would be impossible to deconstruct and grasp in practice. We can see in these three positions the long-standing partisan politics of PT in an apparent stand-off with the civic. The third position opens up a passage between the first two, responding to the concept of the civic, without pre-empting the right of participants to reflect critically.

Bharucha recognizes that global power/class relations frequently override stated civic and human rights and ethics. IFACCA classifies and proposes an ethical frame based upon a projected universal liberal human rights framework, in order to avoid unfairness. Both Bharucha and Barnes are clear that these very human rights principles are frequently overridden both in civil and other societies: though it has to be said that the civic has to exist in order to be betrayed.

Convergences on ethics are many and contradictory. While there is a widespread conviction that the reflexive creativity achievable through theatre practice is capable of generating aesthetically powerful, socially transforming art, Bharucha's caveats are a necessary brake on assumptions about the efficacy or implicit ethical goodness of PT forms of work:

If I had to get beyond the euphoria of the moment, I would have to acknowledge how difficult it is to activate these truths in collaboration with political agencies. Perhaps, the greatest lesson that I've learned from my interactions with oppressed communities has to do with the ethics of illegality.

He continues:

[A form of] radical performance, or anti-performance, or non-performance, which could highlight the beginnings of new and more complicated ways of representing and problematising ethics, where there is no clear-cut distinction between 'good' and 'evil'.

Rather, we are all implicated in the very crimes that we condemn, either through complicities of silence, indifference or apathy. For performance to be truly radical, it can no longer afford to fall back on the earlier assumptions of an artist's innate, if iconoclastic, goodness.

(2007)

The creation of a questioning ethical framework, or landscape for the teaching and learning of PT is aimed at helping to develop a generation of reflexive practitioners with the confidence and vocational as well as academic skills to steer the work in an ethical direction. Reflexive practice introduced into theatre education would not only have the potential for transforming students but staff as well.

2. AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Aim: To research and develop a set of ethical guidelines for practice in PT for use in higher education by teachers, researchers and students.

Methodology: The work was within an action research framework in which participants were invited to reflect on their approach to ethics. The research was collaborative and included two levels of exploration: data gathering and reflection.

Literature review

The literature review (<http://www.palatine.ac.uk/files/ethics.pdf>) offered: an historical context to the practice of PT in that it described its origins and its provenance; it provided a critical interrogation of the practice by raising questions and provoking discussion; and it added depth to the practice by offering the scholar/student/practitioner points of reference to explore further in the work of the practitioners described, to enrich and enhance their engagement with the practice itself.

The workshops

The workshops aimed:

- To explore existing notions amongst participants of what ethics might mean to them.
- To find out what structures might have been adopted individually and institutionally to assert ethical practice.
- To explore the relationship between notions and structures in the context of relations between practitioners and participants, and between practitioners and commissioners of work.
- To explore the potential for an assertive, principled, ethical framework as opposed to a code, capable of enhancing creativity while supporting practitioners, participants and institutions.

The workshop used a flow model, designed to find out how the processes of theatre practice might interact with ethical principles.

3. AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PT

This section sets out the results of the research process embodied in the workshops and interviews carried out with higher education academic practitioners and students.

It offers a provisional framework for ethical practice in PT.

The span of this proposed framework covers a range of questions for ethical practice from the fundamental questions about what kind of values are in operation to how relations with recipients and commissioners of the work can be contracted.

The structure contains the following elements, which will be dealt with as a consecutive process or succession of stages in practice:

1. *Radical Ethical Frame* (REF) – founded in the theory and practice of originating practitioners.
2. *Values* – a set of cultural ‘lenses’ proposed by IFACCA (Koivunen and Marsio 2008).
3. *Core Principles* – the ethical base of practitioners at Oval House, London.
4. Stanislavsky's questions ‘Who? What? Why? Where? When?’
5. The question ‘How?’
6. *Evaluation* and Reporting.

The aim is to demonstrate how overarching concepts may be broken down to provide a basis for an ethical practice capable of practical application. Questioning within the parameters of the REF will produce useful answers to be tried out in practice, reflected on, evaluated, learnt from and developed further. Intertwined with this is the practitioner’s reflexive process in which perceptions, values, knowledges and skills are developed through critical thinking and practice into a developing praxis.

To clarify: this process is offered as an approach to enhancing ethical practice. Reference to teaching and developing practice structures and skills is not directly made here, though cross-referencing is inevitable.

STAGE ONE: THE REF

Introduction to REF – some propositions

- The ideas that inform PT as developed by Boal (1979, 1995), Heathcote (1984) and others form a REF.
- For Dorothy Heathcote, pedagogy involved the setting of boundaries, empowerment, questioning and reflection.
- Augusto Boal, creator of *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), which includes Forum Theatre, refutes the notion of an absolute set of moral values, espouses radical dissent, and believes that ‘only out of constant practice will the new theory arise’. He identifies the purpose of his theatre, which is to empower the powerless and vulnerable and to effect change in their real lives through engagement with the fiction of the drama. He stresses the aesthetic of ‘the oppressed as artist’ and the nature of theatre as creatively and socially transformative. ‘The practice of these theatrical forms creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfilment through real action’ (Boal 1979: 142).

- Boal's ethics and politics are deeply embedded in his theory, and in the structures of his games, exercises and theatre forms. The practice has become diffused, however, and what may have appeared clear as a politics and ethics to those working with him in the late 1980s now requires some unpacking.
- The role of Boal's Joker/facilitator embodies the questions of how the balance between individual and group might work, both for the Joker and in the relations between participants: it raises important considerations about how power is exercised, shared, and/or handed over in the Theatre of the Oppressed and other practices.
- Theatre in Education's interest in moral values and politics was never explicit in its public agenda, although they formed the heart of its subject matter and dictated its ethics. Its explicit agenda was for good theatre and its value in children's lives. For many practitioners, the politics were deliberately implicit and subversive.
- Elizabeth Hare states, in personal correspondence with the author during compilation of the literature review, that:

The reflective and reflexive nature of the process of TIE, [is] a characteristic that has had a profound influence on the conduct of Participatory Theatre in the UK ever since [the 1970s]. It also forms the core of the current concern to identify and formulate the ethics of current practice. The accounts of TIE programmes are always accompanied by accounts of evaluations.

REF

The following core ethical/political objectives for PT have been derived from the practitioner interviews, student workshops and the literature review.

- To empower
- To question, to reflect, to be reflexive, to learn from experience, to create 'change in understanding, to reflect on the practice for its enhancement' (Jackson 1980: 73)
- To challenge accepted ideas, to question and challenge power relations, to transform, to transgress, to subvert
- To become equal, to be democratic, to work with consent, to dialogue
- To take power, to effect change
- To explore metaphor through theatre, to make theatre, to be creative, to be artists, to transform through beauty, to have fun
- To enrich teaching and learning
- To create vital communication between people, of thoughts, feelings and ideas (Jackson 1980: 4), to create group working while supporting individual autonomy
- To find effective actions in the world

It is useful to see the REF as a set of working ideas or contexts for the application of the values or 'ethical lenses' that are set out below. Taken together, they can assist in clarifying the ethical purpose and intentions of a project or work process.

STAGE TWO: VALUES

At this stage in the reflexive process it is useful to ask questions about a work's or project's role or function. There is a useful tool in IFACCA's document 'Ethics in Cultural Policy' (Koivunen and Marsio 2008). The section is entitled 'Fair Culture?'. It proposes the use of 'ethical lenses' through which to determine the way funders

might understand and refine their policies. In funding practice, particularly in arts funding, the idea of a hierarchy of aesthetic worth generally relegates PT or socially based work to the lowest level as 'utilitarian'. 'Fair Culture' can be usefully adapted to helping define the purpose of the work, helping to avoid value judgements that discriminate against either the notion of art for art's sake, or socially targeted work: it suggests a spectrum rather than a hierarchy of practice.

The document goes on to offer a definition of Human Cultural Rights:

In order to illustrate the ethical aspect in cultural policy, we created a new concept 'fair culture', which we defined as follows:

Fair culture means the realisation of people's cultural rights and inclusion in cultural signification, irrespective of age, gender, language, state of health, ethnic, religious or cultural background.

The dimensions of fair culture we divided into the following categories

1. Access to humankind's and one's own cultural tradition
2. Physical, regional and cultural accessibility and availability
3. Diversity of cultural supply and its matching with demand
4. Participation in cultural supply, and
5. Opportunities for, inclusion in and capability for cultural self expression and signification.

(Koivunen and Marsio 2008: 7–8)

This formulation is derived by IFACCA from Aristotle's ethics, though it moves quite a long way from its original. I have adapted it and suggest it as one means to differentiate between related practices.

Virtue, responsibility, benefit: The ethical values or lenses proposed by IFACCA

A virtue – or 'freedom' – ethic focuses on issues of freedom in art and culture; on freedom of self-expression and the autonomy of art. It views creativity and art as intrinsically valuable and therefore legitimate goals in themselves. [...]

A responsibility – or 'rights' – ethic relates to the cultural identity of a community, the safeguarding of cultural traditions, and the realisation of cultural rights. Policy choices revolve around infrastructure, cultural services, accessibility, availability, participation and inclusion.

A corollary – or 'benefit' – ethic sees creativity as a tool, focussing attention on the application of art and culture and cultural policy as part of social and economic policies, including the protection of intellectual property. Policy choices relate to the role of art and culture in promoting welfare, the commercialisation of art, the economics of the cultural sector, and cultural exports.

(Koivunen and Marsio 2008: 3)

How might practice use these ethical lenses?

The positions indicated under each category are not mutually exclusive, and a piece of work might combine more than one. The corollary lens, for example, could combine with both the other two to look at the relationship between creative arts work and social or political intervention.

The lenses, with their underpinning in human rights, point up those issues of ‘inclusion’ and ‘marginalization’, which PT continually addresses and critiques. What is the work aiming at in any particular context, what drives it?

The value of these lenses is derived from their relationship to the REF set out above, and to the Core Principles elaborated below.

STAGE THREE: CORE PRINCIPLES

Choice, equality, respect, safety, competence (Barnes 2009)

3.1: Introduction

This stage, during which continual reference to the Radical Ethical Framework and Values stages will be made, is intended to narrow the focus onto a set of working concepts that both connect with and challenge current ideas of ‘good practice’ in the political and social spheres. The research workshop process revealed that the Core Principles are resonant with meanings that may be obfuscated by institutional overuse of these terms: exploration revealed that many meanings cluster around the words, and shift according to context, individual interpretation and institutional context.

In terms of the Radical Ethical Framework, these principles may emerge as a challenge to and a questioning of legal and institutional concepts of ‘good practice’ and of research ethics. The principles were developed in the context of work with complex and vulnerable groups for Oval House, London, by Stella Barnes, their Head of Education and collaborator in this project.

Under prevailing codes of practice, notions of safety, for example, tend to default to limiting or preventing physical and emotional risk, including touching. They are often there to protect against legal action and facilitator incompetence, amongst other things. In arts and theatre practice, on the other hand, risk is an accepted element in group and individual development, both in personal and creative forms. Group work involving physical activity and touching is regarded as standard. What kind of risk is being alluded to here? Does it conflict with the statutory position on risk or not?

Similarly, ‘respect’ may conventionally be seen as excluding ‘challenge’, an element of the Radical Ethical Framework, while ‘choice’, in the context of PT working situations, can be provoking and provocative for all involved, owing to imbalances in power relationships, and to agendas being set by commissioners rather than by artists or participants.

Asking the questions ‘who?’ ‘what?’, etc. will help to clarify what is needed and what the Core Principles might mean in a specific context: a group of learning-disabled people may require a different approach to a group of railway workers, for example.

Acceptance of gender inequality in ‘vulnerable’ or ‘marginalized’ groups raises specific issues of practice. Inherent in all groupwork are issues of power: relations between facilitator and group are especially complex and change as the process develops.

3.2: Notes on Core Principles: Choice, equality, respect, safety, competence

With reference to the Radical Ethical Framework and Values, it is helpful to reflect on what competence actually is. Is it a state of being or of becoming? It is certainly a key to exercising useful judgement.

During research it emerged that becoming competent is an incremental process. At its centre is reflection and reflexivity: a new practitioner who reflects, questions, learns from mistakes and successes and moves on is developing competence. The skills and knowledge grow with practice and in combination constitute the means whereby practitioners develop their praxis.

The following is a cluster of capacities relating to Competence proposed after consultation:

- As an artist, developing and consolidating knowledge of theatre and its potential and how to work in and hold the theatre space
- Learning from and reflecting on experience, and developing honest useful knowledge and self-awareness of own capacities and limits at any stage
- Learning, especially from mistakes
- Working to develop personal skills in reflection and transmitting these to others
- Developing, valuing and understanding a range and repertoire of strategies and working practices at each stage of working life
- Developing the ability to exercise judgement in relation to work process by developing a systematic and imaginative approach to analysing the work, its context and key factors
- Increasing ability to question and to take working decisions with flexibility and creativity
- Understanding the implicit contract between yourself and those you are working with
- Acquiring knowledge of Equality, Health and Safety and other legislation and of accepted good practice
- Working to gain analytical rigour and imaginative freedom
- Developing ethical skills in negotiating, planning and contracting with employers to support both the working situation and yourself as a professional.

Competence here is both an ethical principle (an incompetent practitioner in a complex situation is unacceptable), and a necessary bridge between theory, principles and practice.

3.3 The Core Principles

Having considered Competence at some length, it is worth pointing to the ambiguities that might surround the other Core Principles. Questioning of the Core Principles is appropriate, not least because there are socially received notions about what they might mean, and these notions may have to be challenged; this is especially true in places where control and repression are practised, such as old people's homes, prisons and young offenders' institutions.

It is important to take into account the civic context in which the work might take place. For example, in Brazil, the coup of 1964 and continuing opposition to state repression and violence generated Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* with its penetrating analysis of power and oppression (see Bharucha 2007, on the 'civic').

James Thompson (2009) has written about the ethical questions raised during work in the Sri Lankan war zone. Both Theatre for Development and

local United Kingdom work with groups experiencing injustice or coming from sexist, lawless and oppressive regimes, can raise particular political and ethical issues. Judgement and skills are needed in these contexts, but trial and error are also part of the process.

The meaning of choice, for example, has to be carefully considered in a prison where choice is restricted: what role can theatre play in explicitly or implicitly confronting the issue? What happens when the practitioner's perception of 'choice' differs from that of the authorities? How might the REF influence decisions? What role does safety have, and how does it affect notions of equality? In what way would the decisions change in, say, a community centre or a school?

STAGE FOUR: QUESTIONS: WHO? WHAT? WHY? WHERE? WHEN?

4.1: Introduction

This stage of the process applies Stanislavsky's questions for character-building to reflection on the 'character' of the work or project or learning context, and of its participants (Stanislavsky [1936] 1989).

Asking useful questions can help us to reflect on, clarify and structure ideas for all parties involved, and facilitate a clear, ethical proposal and realistic expectations of the work.

The questions will help particularly, perhaps, in the process of consulting and of developing an agreement with the organization offering the work, the commissioner, and/or with those taking part in it (who may also be the commissioner).

Using this approach to explore the commissioner's position, it is possible at an initial stage to decide whether or not the work is within an acceptable ethical frame and how/whether or not to do it. The process of asking will increase your competence and help in the accumulation of critical understanding: reciprocally, as your competence increases, so over time, the questions will be integrated into your work and will give rise to new questions and approaches.

These questions are crucial in the process of emerging from the Implicit-ish into the Explicit-ish. They can (mostly) be answered, and usefully so. Other questions cannot always or ever be answered: some of these are frequently answered when they should not even be asked and are found on application forms to arts and other organizations and in evaluation forms.

This process as a whole helps in the task of seeing what can and cannot be usefully or even truthfully answered, and will again help to protect practice.

An example might be a funder's desire to close down and over-determine outcomes. They may ask for outcomes to be described before the group has had a chance to decide what it will do, precluding choice in, and ownership of the work by all involved. Strategic and tactical decisions can be made as to how to answer. For example, discussions with practitioners in, for example, refugee work, in Theatre for Development and in Northern Ireland, have suggested that funding may be dependent on achieving results at odds with PT ethical practices. Is the work worth doing anyway?

4.2 Using 'Who? What? Why? Where? When?' in practice

The summary of possible questions/issues set out below cannot be comprehensive, as answers are context dependent. As you work, reflect on what the REF/Core Principles mean here. What is the relationship with legal and good practice principles, for example?

Who?

- Who do I think I am? Who do the group think I am? Who will be there? Consider age, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, status, employment, presence, health, etc.
- Who am I/are we as practitioners? What is/are our presence, stake, involvement, desires, connection, culture, knowledge – how much do we know? Does it matter?
- It is useful under 'Who?' to challenge the stigmatizing and reductive use of language that defines people by their perceived victimhood or disadvantage: 'marginalized' and 'excluded' are examples. Such terms are often used by power holders (in the benefits system, the immigration system, etc.) to classify groups and are picked up by other organizations and by individuals, including people in the groups involved.
- Whose is the idea/work, whose will be the outcomes (ownership)? Are you happy with the answer to this question (refer to Core Principles)? Have the participants chosen the project/work?
- For whom is the work being done? To whom will it be performed, and for whose benefit? Is it to tick the boxes for a commissioner? Go to *How!*

What?

- What is wanted? Who wants it – employer or participants or both? Whose agenda is it? What are the preconceptions that the participants have? That I have? What are the power relations?
- Do the participants know about the work? Have they been consulted? If it's imposed, what do respect and choice mean? What do *you* want – is it contradictory or in harmony with the project? What are the aims and objectives, have you scrutinized and agreed them as part of your contract, what choices have you made already?

Why?

- Why now? Who wants the work and why? Is it a free choice?

Where?

- Consider location and environment, physical and social. Is it a rich area, a dangerous place, etc? What are the implications? How do you get there?

When?

- Consider time of day, time in history, in the lives of people and organizations, your life, the lives and contexts of the participants, in social and political life.

STAGE FIVE: HOW?

5.1 Formal structure of the work

In arriving at 'How?' the practitioner is in a position to think about how the work will be done – what elements, plans, strategies might be selected to realize the project. Through the questioning process, she will have created a vision

of the context and particular demands, of the character of the project. Using this approach the practitioner can explore the commissioner's position; decide whether or not the work is within an acceptable ethical frame, whether or not to do it and how to mediate the problems through discussion or subversive action. This structure is not a guide on how to be unemployed, but on how to decide, ethically, what to do. There are many examples of work done ethically by practitioners working in problematic contexts.

The interchange with the commissioner creates a relationship in which each party is clear enough about the other's position on creative, ethical and work issues enabling a contractual agreement to be reached on the whole process from initial set-up to evaluation. During the workshop phase of the research for this structure, students formulated contractual approaches that clarified their thinking and represented their work in a way chosen by them.

5.2 How? Making agreements

How does the work get done, given the knowledge accumulated through your ethical inquiry? Reflect on each stage of the process by referring to REF and Core Principles.

This process is one that is as appropriate for practitioners in training in higher education as it is for those in mid-career. The practice of working to get a clear and ethical agreement with commissioners is crucial to an assertive and convincing practice.

Developing a template for dealing with commissioners can be approached through applying this process to work between teachers and students within the higher education environment. Such a practice needs to safeguard what is central creatively and ethically while responding to the commissioner's needs in an environment in which, unlike that of higher education, there may be little or no understanding of the values and principles of the work.

The following is helpful. It can be used internally with teachers or colleagues to clarify what you will do, and with commissioners. Thinking can be summarized and focused through a Proposal and a Contract.

Proposal: Aims and objectives of the work in writing, including:

- A description of how you work, your methodology
- Your ethical values and boundaries.

Developing a Contract

- This takes different forms: e.g. a contract with a group of participants, with an employing or contracting organization, an internal agreement with colleagues to clarify work plans and relationships.
- It should be noted that a contract needs to be written down and is a legal agreement that, properly formulated, creates professional and structured working relationships. It includes the Proposal.
- Contracts of employment/engagement have particular requirements including days/hours of work, dates, statement of what you are offering, ethics statement, what the employer agrees to provide, number of people needed, Health and Safety and statutory requirements, appropriate support and briefing, the appropriate number of facilitators, money. Issues of copyright and ownership of materials should be included.

- A contract should contain an agreement on evaluation, how it is to be done and if the scale of the work warrants it, who will pay for it and who will carry it out.

5.3 How? Work planning and execution

The practice plan and ethical factors

- What is the work for? Balance between creative and social objectives? (see Virtue, Responsibility, etc. above)
- How do the REF/Core Principles above and the answers to your questions inform your workshop structure?
- What kind of games and exercises will help to create the interactions and outcomes you want?
- Alternative strategies: uncertainty, change and unpredictability will inform the process. What is fixed and what can be changed as needed? What happens if participants want to change things? Answers depend on context, ethical positioning and competence.

Work process

In working in PT the following are context-dependent and all or some might be useful. They create an arena where agreed boundaries (e.g. 'no violence') are transgressed in image in the 'other', aesthetic space.

- *Negotiating* the work with commissioners: for example, where the commissioner might consider it risky, emotionally and physically, for young offenders to work on certain issues of their own choice that may 'challenge' the system.
- *Exercising power*: acknowledge your power as Joker, facilitator, workshop leader. How do power and Equality correlate? Being clear about having different roles is part of Equality, as is understanding how these might change as the process develops.
- Asking the group to propose some *Ground Rules* (see suggestions below) or offering them for discussion demonstrates a practice that respects participants, engages them from the initial stages of the work as equals, and offers them choices and control in the process and the right to consent to it.
- *Ground rules* delineate areas of power and responsibility: they clarify for everyone in the work situation equal though different roles. Who is running the work? (Collective? Facilitator?) What role do participants play in contributing, commenting, consenting, saying 'no', hearing each other? This requires the facilitator to reflect on her own role: what are the boundaries, what is the power actually for, how does she handle the balance between her role and the participants' roles? If, for example, listening is a ground rule, how does the facilitator understand this? What happens if participants do not like the work – what does she do if she is listening? What is appropriate in the context?
- Explain and review the *Aim* of the work. Offer good, appropriate *explanations* of what is going on, encourage feedback at appropriate times, encourage listening, reflection, questioning. Review progress, share reflections.
- Being *clear* about what you seek to achieve but having alternative strategies and courses of action: knowing what is *fixed* and what is *flexible*.

- *Ownership* is an issue where participants contribute creatively to a devised piece, material for publication and/or exhibition, etc. Recognition and crediting of the material is essential and, where financial gain may be involved, clear contractual boundaries are needed.
- *Use of personal stories*: issues around disclosure, past trauma, and decisions to work with autobiographical materials relate to confidentiality, emotional safety and ownership. Where groups and individuals agree or even volunteer materials, the decision to use them, whether in the workshop space or in public, needs special ethical attention, depending on context. The choice of whether to use such material does not necessarily rest with individuals whose willingness to disclose might be problematic.
- With personal and other kinds of difficult material, the need for competence in holding the theatre space is exemplified. Ensuring that the groups work through the distancing – ‘containing’ – that theatre enables is creative, competent and safer. The Boalian process of making an image of reality and then working with the reality of the image (metaxis), encapsulates this (Boal 1995: 42).
- Personal stories are a subject for attention. Working with refugees on personal, traumatic and sensitive material involves consideration of aesthetic, funding, personal and social issues. A decision to work in the present and with the whole person as a life not solely characterized by trauma, for example, is an ethical decision with consequences beyond the immediate piece of work.
- Taking on *uncertainty, change and unpredictability* is inherent in the creative process. This requires mediation in your interface with commissioners who may not grasp the centrality of these and may want to be reassured that the opposite is the case.
- *Competence* entails making decisions within your capacity at different stages of your development.

5.4 Comments: The Explicit

This is where the question of the Explicit emerges. The REFs within which the originating practitioners’ work was situated provided their ethical/political basis; getting group consent, for example, was usually implicit in their practice. The age of statutory regulation was barely beginning.

Contemporary practice does suggest an explicit use of ground rules, boundaries and rules of engagement. In a litigious environment, they act as a signal to commissioners that good practice and statutory obligations are being acknowledged and observed appropriately, and that the danger of being sued is minimal.

However, the ambiguities and complexities of meaning discussed under REF, Values and Core Principles stand. There is no universal rule: there are exceptions. The issue is to consider how the work can be enabled and to make a judgement as to what, in context, might be the optimum course of action.

Statutory requirements on child protection, health and safety, etc. are a legal imperative. Abide by them: physical safety is a given; allowing elders to fall over misplaced furniture is clearly unacceptable. Beyond the statutory, again, judgement is required to gauge what constitutes safety and risk in, for example, a primary school, a prison or a workplace.

The PALATINE event ‘Calculating Risk: assessment, ethics and risk assessment in durational and site-based performance work with/by students’

in January 2010 is a useful reference here, though it focused on a different field of work (see <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/events/viewreport/1699/>).

Sample ground rules (It's good to avoid the word 'no' where possible)

- Listen to each other (do not interrupt)
- Supportive challenging (do not be rude but feel free to disagree)
- Confidentiality
- Negotiate difficulties (no violence)
- Be on time
- Eat at breaks
- Phones off
- Discussion at the agreed moments
- You can say no
- Have a go!
- Use material you are comfortable with

STAGE SIX: EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Criteria for assessing the effects of the work need to be related to the aims and parameters set out in the initial contract. Once again, this approach is as appropriate for practitioners in training in higher education as it is for those in mid-career. Evaluation criteria should be agreed with the commissioner at the outset, and, in higher education contexts, should complement the usual internal evaluation of course outcomes. Sometimes, of course, the two will overlap. There is a range of available approaches from simply asking the participants to say or write their reactions in the final session, to structured schemes that might involve focus groups, external assessors, etc.

Referring back to the Virtue, Responsibility, Benefit spectrum, the REF and the Core Principles will be helpful and at this stage it should be possible to evaluate confidently. Ethically, it is essential to check out with participants themselves how the work is going at regular intervals during the process and to record their responses as part of a collaborative evaluation process.

Issues of confidentiality will be especially important in situations where participants have offered personal material: for example prisons, large business organizations, children's homes, local councils, trades unions, etc. where comments may be made that individuals do not wish to have reported back. Anonymity can be promised via the ground rules and the commissioner can be informed of this ethical position via the contract.

Due to pressure from funders, in some cases evaluation has become a marketing tool for promoting the work to new commissioners, of little benefit, in its published form, to the practitioners involved. Attempting to ensure ongoing funding should be seen as separate from the internal analysis practitioners need to practise for the development of their work.

STAGE SEVEN: REFLECTION

This is the final staging point prior to returning to the beginning of the structure to reflect on the process you have carried through, assess how it relates to the criteria suggested, and think about how you will develop your thinking and practice.

In the moment of reflection, throughout the work and at Evaluation, bring back into play the REF, Values, Core Principles and Questions as a context to help assess whether the practice is still holding a relationship with its aims. What happened? Gibbs's Reflexive Cycle (1998) offers the following questions to assist thinking about work. Mistakes are opportunities for learning!

1. *Description*: what happened?
2. *Feelings*: what were your thoughts and feelings?
3. *Evaluation*: what was good and bad about the experience?
4. *Analysis*: what sense can you make of it?
5. *Conclusion*: what else could you have done?
6. *Return* to 1.

These questions can of course be used at any stage in the work process. Like the essentials of the structure as a whole, they become second nature.

APPENDIX: THE WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

The principle aim of the workshop was to work with the implicit knowledge and feelings of participants about 'ethics', and to create a space in which they could reflect on and structure their thoughts. The process was reflective and reflexive – an opportunity for individuals and group to recognize their existing knowledge and to develop their praxis.

The process moved between intuitive and cognitive work which:

1. opened with an exercise in word associations that proposed a space in which ethical considerations might exist
2. offered a conceptual framework based on Oval House's five ethical principles (choice, respect, equality, safety and competence, referred to as Core Principles) within which a debate about the parameters of ethics could begin
3. asked participants in small groups to use Image Theatre and Forum to share with the group any dilemmas of practice they had experienced, using the previous exercise as a basis
4. asked the group to work and rework the images and scenarios together and to begin to extrapolate useful principles, practices and learning
5. explored the shifting relationships between good practice, politics and ethics through a three overlapping circles diagram (Venn diagram) drawn on a sheet of paper
6. asked the group to consider Gibbs's reflexive cycle (1998) as a diagrammatic representation of the flow-model of working that was actually in process in the workshop and to apply their new perceptions to a useful device or outcome: a statement of working principles, a contract, a structure for practice, for example.

What follows is the researcher's reading of the workshop processes. The workshops differed in detail but the workshop structure opened up a recognizable process that structured each encounter. The workshop transcriptions provide the specifics: these varied with the age, level, experience and background of the groups.

This reading is offered as a process of learning through facilitation: many ideas and connections were new to the researcher as the process grew. That

it was possible to repeat the workshop six times with correlated outcomes suggests a significant level of consistency.

WORKSHOP: FIRST STAGE

The opening question: 'how clear do you feel about your understanding of ethics in your work?' asked the group to respond by holding up a hand, from low to high, to indicate the level of understanding each believed they possessed. This generally elicited a response of medium to low, with the odd exception. The atmosphere was tentative.

Some opening games, usually Boal's Columbian Hypnosis and versions of the Milling exercise, Fear and Protection (Boal 1993: 63, 116), were used as a reflective tool: It was useful to deneutralize the 'warm-up' and to reassert the Boalian notion of exercises and games as having living content.

The group wrote words associated with ethics on paper tiles, spread them over the floor space, debated chosen words in groups and then distributed them around the room in groupings under the Core Principles from the Framework: Choice, Equality, Respect, Safety, and Competence. This invariably opened up a space for heteroglossia in which meanings clustered and shifted around, between and beyond the five Core Principles: a space that highlighted the potential for confusion by embracing it.

It became clear that this was a sufficient and effective trigger to begin a process of thinking and experiencing. Energetic debate, disagreement, rethinking quickly replaced the tentative beginning. Crucially, the use of the Core Principles also raised the question of within what value structure the meanings were held, a question not explicitly addressed in the workshops. This in its turn highlighted the roles of Implicit and Explicit knowledge. What is and has been assumed as common or implicit knowledge at different stages of the teaching and learning of PT? In developing the Ethics Framework, how far and in what way is it desirable or necessary to unpack the underlying theory, history, meaning behind PT practice?

The Core Principles offered a structure of familiar words, buzzwords even, that are found in funding application forms and ethical codes, but the process revealed the diversity of the ways in which they are actually understood and initiated a process of individual and group reflection. (Oval House's longstanding ethical practice continually questions and renews these Core Principles.)

Crucially, this exercise embraced diversity of view and allowed participants to exercise resilience in the face of confusion and fluidity and shifts of meaning, to recognize their capacity to reflect, to feel usefully challenged by shiftiness, to decide, review and learn from experience – a process essential to workshop facilitation.

WORKSHOP: SECOND STAGE

This process was focused next into image and scenario work around specific problems and experiences in which the importance of context as a container for decisions as to the specific meaning of the Core Principles was able to emerge. The meanings are not abstract but related to different demands in context. These scenarios and images were deconstructed, analysed and debated.

Themes

- Scenarios about higher education and relationships with tutors – worked on with the tutors, a sign of real confidence in the teachers

- Relationships with commissioners: bullying by a school, background manoeuvrings in institutions
- Imposed agendas, especially in culturally and politically complex contexts, commissioners' instrumental approach to work – box ticking
- Relationships with participants: crush on facilitator, nervousness around youth workers, problems with respecting someone who is a criminal, 'political correctness' and respect, boundaries and confidentiality issues

Competence

There was a perceived tension between the pressure to accumulate skills and knowledge and the desire for experience and fluency. Working with Gibbs's Cycle and the three circles diagram the workshop explored competence, as a process of growth and becoming, with the capacity to reflect and learn as central. Reflexivity nourishes competence and fuels knowledge and skills. A particular repeated remark by students was, 'it's great that you can learn from mistakes!' It is not possible that this was never said to them before. It was the context that brought it alive and gave it meaning.

Workshop outcomes

The final stage of the workshop was working in small groups to talk about reflexive practice and to develop a framework for that practice whether as an ethical frame, a statement of principles, a set of criteria for commissioners, or something else that would support their practice. There were many examples, during discussions, of problems with explaining to commissioners and each other what people wanted to do in their projects and also of undervaluing by commissioners and by themselves of what they were trying for.

The workshop provided a language and a frame for thinking about these things: the tentative silence of the opening was transformed into a passionate, articulate and thoughtful expression of aims and desires. The workshop transcripts contain a group of work plans, ethics statements, contracts of employment or engagement and graphic structures all of which are clearly derived from the workshop structure and most of which are workable.

Evaluation by participants revealed a range of learning focused around the initial objective. In some cases, students sent written reflections. There are clearly differences between the experiences of second-year and third-year students, postgraduates and staff but what seemed to be useful was a shared nexus of words, ideas and particularly of structure that functioned as a starting point.

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