THE ETHICS OF PARTICIPATORY THEATRE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

FRANCES RIFKIN

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. GENESIS OF PROJECT: HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND CHALLENGES

INTRODUCTION

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 ethical 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 HE curriculum, in teaching. In Higher Education the guidelines will raise vocational awareness for students and in the world of employment support professionalism for practitioners.

PARTICIPATORY THEATRE – A DEFINITION

In this study the term 'Participatory Theatre' (PT) 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. Participatory theatre 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 participatory theatre 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 and companies and individuals.[1] 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 60s, 70s and 80s; the growth of the women's and gay movements; and the struggle for wider equalities which 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 HE, 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 which can be ethically questionable.

As a practitioner working across fields of participatory theatre and political performance, I have become increasingly aware of a build-up of pressures around what had previously seemed unproblematic practices. In 1993, after 20 years of political theatre with the Trades Union and anti-fascist movements, I cheerfully wrote the following:

> To new generation of practitioners, the landscape is somewhat more complicated. It is for me. 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.

PARTICIPATORY THEATRE 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. Louise Lachapelle.

Participatory theatre takes place now in multiple contexts, each of which present specific challenges.

- It stands between other participatory theatre techniques with ethical codes of their own: Playback, Sociodrama, Psychodrama, Dramatherapy etc;

- 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;

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[1] See Literature Review, Appendix 1 for a more detailed discussion of these issues.

- It is increasingly used as a research tool in HE, and so encounters a range of institutional ethical codes which 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 which 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 uncertainty, bewilderment and discovery. There is practically nothing to indicate to employers and other practitioners by what standards 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 unionisation, 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 wilder excesses in the application of PT by major funding bodies and institutions – for example the European Union and the British Arts Council. In response the Theatre Education Network has produced a practitioners' ethics framework, and Equity is promoting a practitioners' contract. 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 Participatory Theatre, there is convergence and complexity.

The International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies' report 'Ethics in Cultural policy' 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 (be influenced by), 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. [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's has provocatively proposed a Genet-inspired commitment to a betrayal of the civic:

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[2] www.ifacca.org/topic/ethics-in-cultural-policy

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. Rustom Bharucha. 3

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

Stella Barnes has developed a set of ethical principles which underpin the participatory theatre work of the Oval House, London:

- *Choice: participants' agenda not pre-empted.*

- *Respect: developed via creative process, modelled by Fs.*

- *Equality: with groups having little experience, through creative process.*

- *Safety: focus on present/future, no requirement to disclose.*

- *Tutor competence: support and training, shared perspectives.*

(Stella Barnes: Drawing a Line: a discussion of ethics in participatory arts by young refugees, 2008)

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 which echoes, and expands on, the 'certain rigour' 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 ITACCA 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 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

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[3] *Performance Paradigm February 2007, reprinted by Vrede vanUutrecht*

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

The assembling of an ethical framework, or landscape for the teaching and learning of PT would help to produce 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 participatory theatre 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:

LEVEL ONE: DATA GATHERING.

Interviews and workshops with:
- HE Lecturers and students: to identify concerns and issues derived from curriculum planning, teaching and learning and students' practice
- Practitioners

LEVEL TWO:
- Review of findings with collaborators to reflect on the material from the interviews and workshops and to extrapolate principles underpinning the projected ethical guidelines

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
To review the existing literature on ethical issues in the field	Literature Review
To encourage debate and reflection	6 Workshops, interviews, attendance at conferences
To identify ethical issues of concern to lecturers and students	A wide range of views gathered and recorded
To provide a documentary and audio archive of the research process to support further research	• 19 audio interviews: 11 transcribed • Workshop materials
To take into account differences of interest and perspective which may arise	• Interaction and debate in workshops, interviews with practitioners, Equity and some service providers • Attendance at conferences
Through the above process to identify the principal concerns, issues and questions leading to the formulation of workable ethical guidelines.	• Material contextualized by the historical/theoretical basis provided by Literature Review • Production of guidelines

Breakdown of Research Process	

Interviews:	Transcribed:
• 14 interviews with lecturers in university departments	Bill McDonnell, University of Sheffield, James Thompson and Jenny Hughes, University of Manchester, Kerrie Schaefer, University of Exeter, Caoimhe Mcavinchey, Goldsmiths, University of London, Helen Nicholson, Royal Holloway, University of London, Kay Hepplewhite and Nick Rowe, York St John University, Amanda Stuart-Fisher and Sally Mackey, Central School of Speech and Drama, Ali Campbell, Queen Mary, University of London **Untranscribed:** David Grant, Queen's University, Belfast, Matt Hargrave, Northumbria University, Matthew Jennings, University of Ulster
• 5 interviews with practitioners:	**Transcribed:** Stella Barnes **Untranscribed**: Sue Mayo of Magic Me and freelance, Adrian Jackson of Cardboard Citizens, Chris Johnston Of Rideout, Gerry Ling of Lawnmowers
Seven workshops • Workshops conducted with undergraduates, postgraduates and some participating staff	Preliminary workshop: Early introductory workshop with MA students at RHUL: helped to define approach to workshop process. The workshop template was formulated in collaboration with Stella Barnes of Oval House. Participants were included as collaborators. **Workshops:** Exeter, Goldsmiths, Manchester, Queen's Belfast, Northumbria, York St John.
Collaborations	Reflection on developing work in collaboration with: • Bill McDonnell of University of Sheffield who has provided academic support and mentoring. • Stella Barnes of Oval House has offered mentoring, workshop development and has contributed Core Principles. • Elizabeth Hare, Open University: author of Literature Review and expert in field. • Particular support and collaboration from: Matt Jennings, University of Ulster, Matt Hargrave, Northumbria University, Kay Hepplewhite, York St John University. • Senior practitioners and managers in the Voluntary and Health sectors who employ PT practitioners to work with vulnerable and complex groups. They have indicated that the

	framework has uses beyond the PT field.
Literature review	Elizabeth Hare, Open University • review of published literature relating to ethical issues contributing to theory and history of PT
Outcomes	
Guidelines	Ethics Framework for discussion and application by lecturers and students in higher education and for use in professional life.
Documentation	Workshops: Scribing by researcher, materials generated by participants in the form of drawings, plans and some post-workshop reflections. Written up as reports. Photographs.
Audio Interviews	19 interviews, 14 transcribed.
Literature Review	On PALATINE website.
Archive	On PALATINE website.
Dissemination	
Publication of guidelines for practice and appropriate materials on the PALATINE, SCUDD, Sheffield, Oval House and Equity websites	Offers a basis for exchange between higher education, theatre practitioners, arts organizations, unions and arts employers: offers current experience of field practitioners within Higher Education.
Conferences	• Applied Drama Conference Exeter 2nd-5th April 08. • Presentation at TaPRA September 2008. • Workshop on 'What do you do?' called by Kay Hepplewhite, York St John University, at Live Theatre, Newcastle. • LCACE conference on Ethics in the Arts in September 2008. • PALATINE Conference in January 2009: 'Teaching Applied Drama'. • 'Aesthetics of Uncertainty', Manchester May 2009. • Presentation at TaPRA, Plymouth, September 2009. • *Living and Learning, Learning and Teaching: Mental Health in Higher Education* conference, Lancaster University, 30-31 March, 2010.
Acknowledgement of contribution of collaborating departments and individuals	Return of materials to departments. Names of participants on record of work.

Literature Review

The Literature Review offers: an historical context to the practice of participatory theatre in that it describes its origins and its provenance; it provides a critical interrogation of the practice by raising questions and provoking discussion, (as well as in the longer term we hope it will actually give a theoretical underpinning to practice); and it adds a depth to the practice by offering the scholar/ student/ practitioner points of reference

to explore further in the work of the practitioners described, which will enrich and enhance their engagement with the practice itself. The literature review can be found in Appendix 1.

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, 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 was a flow model, designed to find out how the processes of theatre practice might interact with ethical principles. The workshop structure and exercises can be found in Appendix 2.

3. AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PARTICIPATORY THEATRE

INTRODUCTION

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

It offers a provisional framework for ethical practice in Participatory Theatre.

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 the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)

3. **Core Principles** (CP): the ethical base of practitioners at Oval House, London

4. Stanislavski'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 into 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.

ORIGINATING PRACTITIONERS

For the purposes of this research project, these have been identified through the Literature Review and in the interview process as:

- Augusto Boal

- Dorothy Heathcote
- The TIE practitioners of 1970s, 80s and 90s

Politics and Ethics interrelate in different way in their work, and are embedded in their practices, but are not necessarily identified as such. It is in the values and principles explicit and implicit in their praxes that this structure finds the ethical basis of Participatory Theatre or PT.

Strong influences on all of them are Brecht and Stanislavski: Brecht for his commitment to 'making strange', questioning and reflecting on what appears normal in the dominant culture; Stanislavski for his understanding of the internal life of characters in the theatre space.

FROM IMPLICIT(ISH) TO EXPLICIT(ISH).
NOTE: The use of (ish) indicates recognition that in creative work not everything can be spoken or explained, that there is always something elusive.

This structure looks at the boundary between what is implicit and what can be made more or less explicit in a developing praxis.

The ideas informing the body of work of the originating practitioners are coherent in that they make intellectual, cognitive and intuitive sense. However, the ethics of their work are frequently **implicit.** This may be because they initially relied on personal transmission of their work and its politics/ethics. Additionally, they were often working in a context where there was a high degree of political consensus amongst committed and would-be practitioners.

Accordingly, this Ethics Framework approaches such questions as:

- What do we do about ethics before and as we enter the workspace?

- What informs our practice in the space and how much of this can be made explicit without reducing the power of what Boal calls 'the aesthetic space'?

- What kind of ethically informed procedure might enhance and creatively develop practice?

- How do we discover whether a practice is ethical and in relation to *what* set of ideas is it ethical?

- If ethics are implicit in PT, what do they derive from, and how can a judgment be made about their effectiveness?

- What is the relationship between Politics and Ethics? How do issues of class, gender, race, justice, equality and power intersect in an ethical practice?

STAGE 1: THE RADICAL ETHICAL FRAME (REF)

1.1 Introduction to Radical Ethical Framework **– some propositions**

- The ideas that inform PT as developed by Boal, Heathcote et al. form a **Radical Ethical Frame (REF).**

- For **Dorothy Heathcote**, pedagogy involved the setting of boundaries, empowerment, questioning and reflection.

- **Augusto Boal,** creator of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), 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.[4] 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'. [5]

- 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 TO 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 was deliberately implicit and subversive.

- Hare states 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. 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'.[6]

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[4] Hare, Literature Review, 2010 (Appendix 1)

[5] Boal 1979, p142

[6] Hare, Literature Review, 2010 (Appendix 1)

RADICAL ETHICAL FRAME

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'[7]
- 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[8], 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' which are set out below. Taken together they can assist in clarifying the ethical purpose and intentions of a project or work process.

STAGE 2: VALUES

INTRODUCTION TO 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 the 2008 **International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies'** document 'Ethics in Cultural Policy'. The section is entitled 'Fair Culture?'. [9] 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 judgments which 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:

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[7] Bolton in Jackson, 1980, p, 73.

[8] Vallins in Jackson, 1980 p. 4

[9] Ethics in cultural policy www.ifacca.org/topic/ethics-in-cultural-policy/

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 realization 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

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 interests and identities of communities and groups, working in the context of cultural traditions, and the realization of cultural rights. This involves accessibility, availability and provision, participation and inclusion.

- A **corollary** – or 'benefit' – ethic can see creativity as a tool, focusing attention on the application of arts practice in complex social and economic contexts. It's also applicable to industrial spheres for e.g. the protection of intellectual property, contractual relations with employers and funders.

    o   How might practice use these ethical lenses?
    o   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.
    o   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 3: CORE PRINCIPLES

CHOICE, EQUALITY, RESPECT, SAFETY, COMPETENCE. [10]

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 which 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 over-use of these terms: exploration revealed that many meanings cluster around the words, and shift according to context, individual interpretation and institutional context. [11]

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 risk, emotional risk, or touching, They are there to often 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. However, what kind of risk is being alluded to? 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 Participatory Theatre 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 (below) will help to clarify what's 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 group work are issues of power: relations between facilitator and group are especially complex and change as process develops.

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[10] Stella Barnes

[11] See Introduction

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 judgment.

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

Competence

- 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 your range and repertoire of strategies and working practices at each stage of working life.

- Developing the ability to exercise judgment in relation to work process by developing a systematic and imaginative approach to analyzing 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 Equalities, 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 1960s and 1970s 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.[12]

Recently, Professor James Thompson[13] has written about the ethical questions raised during work in the Sri Lankan war zone. Both Theatre for Development work and local UK work with groups experiencing injustice or coming from sexist, lawless and oppressive regimes, can raise particular political and ethical issues. Judgment 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, how does it affect notions of Equality? In what way would the decisions change in, say, a community centre or a school?

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[12] See TaPRA presentation for Rustom Bharucha on 'the civic'

[13] Professor of Applied and Social Theatre, University of Manchester

STAGE 4: QUESTIONS: WHO? WHAT? WHY? WHERE? WHEN?

4.1: INTRODUCTION.

This stage of the process applies Stanislavski's questions for character-building to reflection on the 'character' of the work or project or learning context, and of its participants.

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 organisation** 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 Implicitish into the Explicitish. 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 can't be usefully or even truthfully answered, and will again help to protect practice.

An example is a funders' desire to close down and over-determine outcomes – very prevalent in Northern Ireland, for example, where artists are used for complex community work but where, as is common, art and its uncertainty is feared and mistrusted. Or 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. In for example, refugee work, Theatre for Development and again in Northern Ireland, 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? Age, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, status, employment, presence, health etc.

- Who am I/are we as practitioners: what 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 which 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's wanted? Who wants it – employer or participants or both – whose agenda is it? What are the preconceptions the participants have, do 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 *I* 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?

- Location and environment, physical and social. A rich area, a dangerous place etc. What are the implications? How do you get there?

When?

- 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 5. 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 realise 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.[14]

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 HE 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 HE environment. Such a practice needs to safeguard what is central creatively and ethically while responding to the commissioners' needs in an environment in which, unlike that of HE, there is 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 summarised and focused through a Proposal and a Contract:

PROPOSAL: Aim and objectives of the work in writing including

1. A description of how you work, your methodology

2. Your ethical values and boundaries.

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[14] During the workshop phase of the research for this structure, students formulated contractual approaches which clarified their thinking and represented their work in a way chosen by them.

DEVELOPING A CONTRACT:

- This takes different forms: e.g. a contract with a group of participants, with an employing or contracting organisation, 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 which 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's done and if the scale of the work warrants it, who will pay for it and who will carry it out.[15]

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 **RF/Core Principles** above and the answers to your questions inform your workshop structure?

- What kind of games, exercises etc. 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 – 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 which may 'challenge' the system.

- **Exercising power**: acknowledge your power as Joker, facilitator, workshop leader: How do power

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[15] See model contract attached.

and Equality correlate? Being clear about having different roles is part of Equality, as is understanding how these might change as the process develops.

- **Ground rules:** asking the group to propose some (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 don't 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's 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.[16]

- 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

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[16] Augusto Boal *Rainbow of Desire*. Routledge 1995. P 42 'Second hypothesis: metaxis'

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** – 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 beyond the (ish). 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 accepted 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 judgment 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, judgment is required to gauge what constitutes safety and risk in, for example, a primary school, a prison or a workplace.

The PALATINE Conference '*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.[17]

SAMPLE GROUND RULES (IT'S GOOD TO AVOID THE WORD 'NO' WHERE POSSIBLE)

- Listen to each other (don't interrupt)
- Supportive challenging (don't 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!

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[17] http://www.palatine.ac.uk/events/viewreport/1699/

- Use material you're comfortable with

STAGE 6. EVALUATION AND REPORTING

6.1 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 HE as it is for those in mid-career.

Evaluation criteria should be agreed with the commissioner at the outset, and, in HE 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 which 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.

6.2 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 which 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.

6.3 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 to the internal analysis practitioners need to practice for the development of their work.

STAGE 7. REFLECTION AND REFLEXION

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 to 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 **Radical Ethical Frame, 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 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 will become second nature.

APPENDIX 1. ETHICS OF PARTICIPATORY THEATRE: A LITERATURE REVIEW BY DR ELIZABETH HARE

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a literary and academic background to support the framework for practice which forms the main body of the project report.

The framework itself is intended to inform the work of facilitators and project leaders in Participatory Theatre, and further, would shape the educational processes for students in Higher Education who are studying the subject, usually called Applied Drama,[18] within the performing arts disciplines. This literature review will identify the sources and intellectual ideas which inform the proposed framework, from the considerable body of scholarly writing extant in this area. In this paper I will deal with the historical precedents for participatory theatre and the historical context from which it has emerged over the last 40 years.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of contemporary participatory theatre begins in the middle of the 20th Century. There emerge three significant areas of practice which may be deemed essential to the understanding of the practice of participatory theatre in the UK since then and at the present time. They are: the work of Dorothy Heathcote (and Gavin Bolton) in educational drama; the practice of Augusto Boal in Forum Theatre and the work of the TIE (Theatre in Education) companies, here in the UK, in the 1970s and 80s and in the English speaking world, most notably in Australia in the 1990's.

There already exists a considerable body of scholarly writing about these practitioners and areas of practice, accumulated during the last thirty years of the development of participatory theatre, which has for a long time been an element of university teaching in the performing arts, and an element of education in our schools system, and also, perhaps more pertinently here, a body of such work undertaken by professional practitioners with a wide range of vulnerable and excluded groups of all kinds in our society. It is not the remit of this project to re-examine that literature in detail, but rather to identify and examine the ways in which it may contribute to the present discussion of the ethics of this of the practice.

This body of literature, most of which describes, analyses and critiques practice, contributes significantly to the emergence of the central questions of this project. I would like to identify these questions as follows:

- Where did the work we are looking at come from?

- What were the ethics that have informed it?

- What are the ethics that inform it now?

- What could an examination of this material contribute to the development of an ethical framework for current practice and training in the practice of participatory theatre?

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[18] The term 'participatory theatre' is used throughout this discussion because the researchers take the view that the activities with which they are concerned are theatre rather than drama, and participatory rather than applied. See section two for an expansion of this idea.

DOROTHY HEATHCOTE.[19]

In the late 60s and early 70s Heathcote's work in Drama in Education emerged as a practice, which was later reviewed and document in literature, in two important books and numerous articles (Wagner 1973 and O'Neill and Johnson 1984 and various journals). More recently a biography of Heathcote by Gavin Bolton, her long time friend and colleague summarizes her contribution to educational drama over the last 60 years.[20] However, we are here concerned with the historical context and therefore I will confine my discussion to the earlier works.

Both in the practice, and in the contemporary literature which documented it, Heathcote's ethics were implicit rather than explicit. For example, in Wagner 1972, there is a chapter headed 'Thresholds' which describes the *setting of boundaries* necessary for the conduct of a successful drama session, and relates to the emotional safety of the participants and confidentiality of the work. These thresholds take the form of practical advice and do not attempt to propose an ethical framework for the work, but they do implicitly offer one. They describe clearly the necessity for boundaries between facilitators and participants and between the fiction of the stage and the space occupied by the audience or participants in their real lives. This distinction was to become, and remains, a central concern practitioners of participatory theatre. It is connected with the equally important questions of whether the activities of participatory theatre can affect reality and of that way in which the emotional safety of participants can be compromised and must be protected.

Another significant characteristic of the relationship between Heathcote and her participating groups is that of *empowerment*. This is of particular significance as many of the groups she worked with were vulnerable people: for example, young children and the learning disabled. Examples of how her work is characterized in this way can be seen in Wagner's accounts of her techniques, such as 'Mantle of the Expert' and 'Teacher in Role' (Wagner 1973). In the use of these techniques the power is deliberately abrogated by the teacher, the culturally assumed powerful figure, and given to the participants. By handing over the knowledge and direction of activities and decisions to a group of young children, the teacher motivates them to learn and discover, and by assuming a dependent role, the teacher allows them to solve problems and make decisions in the imagined adult context of the drama. The theatre activity becomes participatory to the extent that the leadership and direction of the activity is handed over from the assumed powerful figure of the teacher or facilitator to the members of the participating group, however young or vulnerable they may be.

At no point has either Heathcote or any of the scholars who have documented her work, laid down a prescriptive or explicit ethical framework, but it is clear that these two elements of setting *boundaries* and *empowerment* are both central to her work and imply an ethical framework, a set of underlying principles, in operation.

A third characteristic of Heathcote's practice is *questioning*, and as her questions are open ended and thought provoking, this technique might be described as having ethical implications. Heathcote's practice, like that of Theatre in Education, is primarily pedagogical, and the openness of the questioning implies a pedagogy of a particular kind; a pedagogy that teaches questioning and thought rather than coerces into prescribed attitudes; a pedagogy that is radical, liberal and profoundly political; a pedagogy that has become a central characteristic of participatory theatre. The current work in British universities in participatory theatre remains essentially pedagogical in nature in that post and undergraduate students are taught skills and practice. That pedagogy retains the spirit of radical questioning that comes from Heathcote's work.

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[19] The Dorothy Heathcote Archive is housed at Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK and is a rich source of information and material for further study. Visit http://www.partnership.mmu.ac.uk/drama

[20] Bolton G *Dorothy Heathcote's Story: The Biography of a Remarkable Drama Teacher* 2003

To summarise, there are three aspects of Heathcote's work that can clearly be said to inform the current practice of participatory theatre. They are the *setting of boundaries*, the *empowerment* of the given client group and the centrality of open and genuine *questioning.*

AUGUSTO BOAL[21]

The same may also be said of the work of Augusto Boal, emerging in the 70s and is the most significant influence on the practice of participatory theatre which has developed in the context of British universities since that time. Boal's work as recorded in his book *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, (UK translation 1976)[22], rests on the radical politics of the struggle for liberation and human rights and the empowerment of minority and vulnerable groups. It is self evident that this work has to have an ethics which informs the practice, and this ethics is indeed central to the considerable literature on his work.

It is clear that the ethical considerations which inform Boal's work overlap with those of Heathcote and that, like her, Boal is not explicit in any ethical prescription but from the earliest stages in the development of his practice an ethics is implied and discussed.

Boal's work has developed, and come to form the lynchpin of participatory theatre. Most undergraduates will be introduced to the techniques of Forum Theatre and it has become clear that this, the most significant form of his practice to influence current work in participatory theatre, cannot be authentically practised outside of a clear ethical context. It has become the most used, and probably by default, most often misused, technique in participatory theatre. For these reasons it bears a little more scrutiny here, in order to identify its implicit ethical characteristics.

Boal himself relates, in the early chapters of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1976) how badly things can go wrong if forum theatre is approached without a full understanding of its potential, and the correct use of its techniques.

The creation and development of good practice of this form of theatre is informed by a return to the ethics of Aristotle and his notion of 'virtu' (Boal op cit pp 33-35 and following 1976). Boal takes his exposition from the ethics of Aristotelian tragedy, with its notion of the fatal flaw, through the politics of Machiavelli and the philosophy of Hegel, to the point where he refutes the notion of an absolute set of moral values and says that in the new form of theatre he espouses radical dissent and declares that 'only out of constant practice will the new theory arise' (Boal op cit p79).

Boal is scrupulously honest in identifying the pitfalls of working in this form of theatre, and facilitators attempting to use it as part of their practice would do well to take heed of his experience as recounted in the final section of the book, *The Development of the Arena Theatre of Sao Paolo*, (Boal op cit pp159-190 1976). [In this early work he uses the term 'arena theatre;' the basis of the group of techniques later to become known as forum theatre.] In these early examples of practice he discusses the problems attendant on the central task of empowerment and the need for boundaries between fiction and reality, and the question of the impact of the work on people's real lives, as I have already identified in Heathcote's work above.

Pertinent to this review, the book includes a chapter entitled the *Poetics of the Oppressed,* in which Boal outlines his thinking, his philosophy and theorising, of this own work (Boal op cit p119 1976). He gives a thumbnail sketch of theatre history, and identifies the masses, the audience, as the oppressed, and the theatre elite, (actors directors etc.) as the oppressors. He describes what, to his mind, is the crucial moment when this

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[21] For reliable background information visit http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org

[22] The original text was in Portuguese and first published in English in the United States in 1973

oppression began, as the moment when the role of spectator was separated from that of the actor; when the spectator became merely the passive recipient of the work, and the actor/ theatre maker held all the power over what was said and done. Boal advocates a return to participatory theatre, and from this point onward his work is focused on this goal.

Boal talks about power, and specifically about the powerlessness, of any audience in the theatre experience. This is the starting point for the ethical dimension of his work. He goes on to parallel this with the powerlessness in reality of the members of the vulnerable groups, the oppressed with whom he works. In this way 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, a purpose that remains at the heart of the practice to this day and is moreover, essential to an understanding of its ethics.

Boal's mission in Forum Theatre is to reverse the power balance, both in the theatre and, to the extent to which participatory theatre can be deemed transformative, in real life. He talks about how in the Forum Theatre 'the spectator starts acting again' (p119), and to give the power in the theatrical event over to the participants.

In a much later work, *The Rainbow of Desire* (Routledge 1995) Boal gives a consolidation of this principle into a useful series of practical guidelines for working ethically in Forum Theatre. The emphasis of the book on guidance for practice and what ethical guidance there is, is, like Heathcote's, implied rather than explicit.

Unlike Heathcote, who works in participatory drama rather than theatre, the overt purpose of Boal's work is to remove the barrier that the conventions of theatre had previously placed between audience and stage (Boal, 1995 p90). It follows that the techniques created by Boal have become, and remain, central to many forms of participatory theatre.

Participation in the theatre experience does not take place simply because the conventions of theatre are ignored. It comes about because of what is put in their place, and is carefully constructed, through a series of techniques and exercises, and development of the audience's understanding of its participatory role in workshops with groups over a period of time. This development is clearly outlined in the first two chapters of *The Rainbow of Desire*. In its fully developed form, Forum Theatre allows not only for participation, but also for the intervention of audience members in the performance, in order to change the script and the outcome of the play's events.

Another significant characteristic, in which Boal's work differs essentially from Heathcote's, is the overt political nature of its content and purpose of political empowerment. He says:

> 'The practice of these theatrical forms creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfilment through real action' (Boal 1979, p142).

The politics that Boal is dealing with in his own practice is that of the divisions in society created by poverty and class. Since his work has become current among practitioners of participatory theatre, it is a politics has been applied to many other kinds of divisions and exclusions in society. For those who take on the tradition of Boal's practice giving into the politics of coercion is not an option. It is around these questions of power and coercion that many of the ethical considerations affecting the practice of participatory theatre revolve. In contrast practitioners learn to work within the framework of liberation and radical change.

Coercion, however, can come from many different places in participatory theatre and can operate on a number of different levels. It is one of the most significant and difficult challenges for those wishing to engage with ethical practice. For example, coercion might be embedded in the attitude and policy of the funding bodies, particularly if they are public or state institutions, such as charities or local authorities. Therefore

practitioners need a clear ethical position with which to resist coercion in the interests of the creative learning and development of the client group. This is what the framework and its informing literature intends to offer.

While participatory theatre is not a revolutionary movement it is a movement for change and many public institutions and bureaucracies resist change as a matter of course, a resistance that is often accompanied by a prejudice against artistic activities per se. Boal's discussion of the politics and techniques of effecting such change discussed above provide useful precedents in this respect.

The third historical context that bears some investigation here is that of Theatre in Education, or TIE. This movement begin in Coventry in the UK in 1967, and has spread as an educational practice widely across the English speaking world. In its original form it is, sadly, now defunct here in the UK, but it has had a profound and far reaching influence on the development of participatory theatre and on the pedagogy which underpins the training in this practice in British Universities.

From its inception TIE has had an overtly political and social agenda, a radical and left wing politics and a principled pursuit in the spirit of that politics, and of social improvement. It has also had a symbiotic relationship with main stream educational provision, albeit not always a happy one. TIE has always relied on interest expressed by individual schools in the projects to provide its work. Even in its most successful period the provision and funding of TIE in school was always scattered and fragmentary. It was always perceived as radical and subversive, and its wide influence on practices that have developed since, is the more remarkable for that.

In its halcyon days of pre-Thatcher government funding, TIE focused its own ethical framework within and responding to, and sometimes challenging, the educational mainstream. It forged its own moral agenda, created its own values and expectations. Its principles were underpinned by the emerging culture of inclusiveness which at that time was styled, variously as 'multi-culturalism' and 'equal opportunities,' a culture that has more recently become mainstream in our society in terms of legal provision and cultural expectation and which uses a language of diversity and identity.

Behind this agenda in British politics of the last decades of the twentieth century, lay a wider global political and social agenda of Human Rights and the activism of various kinds that expressed it. While TIE engaged with this agenda in its work in the 70s and 80s tackling racism and antifascism in its very earliest programmes, across the world its voice was echoed to the discomfort of many, in various establishments, in the emergent *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* and in grass roots movements such as feminism, black civil rights and gay liberation. TIE was itself one such grassroots movement and in tune with the times.

Despite limitations imposed by its continual fight for funding and lack of national recognition, TIE consistently focused its work on addressing these political issues and the accompanying social problem in its programme.

In her book *Can Theatre teach?* (Pergammon, 1983), Christine Redington captures the mood of the early days of heady optimism. She outlines a mission to change in a world ready to be changed. This was the case even in mainstream school education where TIE was initially greeted, like all arts activities, with suspicion and mistrust. Redington gives a useful well informed and optimistic account of the development of TIE companies in the 70's and 80's all over England, and describes the impact that their work had on educational thinking and practice.

The work of the TIE companies was linked with the then dominant classroom practice of teaching through project work and the philosophy of child-centred learning. TIE was seen as an appropriate educational tool, providing stimulus and engagement; allowing for imaginative response and teaching children to think for themselves.

In his book *Learning Through Theatre* (MUP 1980), Tony Jackson takes the educational and historical context for TIE further back in the period of the early 50s and 60s seeing its origins in the educational drama work of Peter Slade and Brian Way. Early work in TIE drew its stated aims from these origins, and they emphasised the main purpose of their mission was to encourage an interest in theatre, rather than the dissemination of political and social reform, with which the programmes themselves were clearly and overtly preoccupied. It is important to note that at this stage and indeed throughout most of its heyday, TIE's interest in moral values and politics was never part of its public agenda, although they formed the heart of its subject matter and dictated its ethics.

Jackson identifies two important characteristics of the practice of the TIE companies, as a 'peculiar interaction between the dramatic event and the learning process' and that 'the practitioners respond to and learn from their achievements and mistakes' (Jackson 1980, introduction p. vii). His book outlines the legacy of TIE which may be summarised as an intention to nurture and provoke change by a process of collaborative learning, accompanied by a commitment to the evaluation of and reflection on practice. In this legacy, which characterizes the way in which participatory theatre is taught in universities, there is a clear indication the way in which TIE has had a profound influence on the conduct of participatory theatre in the UK ever since. This legacy forms the core of the current concern to identify and formulate the ethics of current practice. (See Jackson and Redington for examples.)

These evaluations related to the original TIE materials and projects themselves form a subjective ethical framework, based on the experience of each of the individual programmes and their participants. If a collective ethics emerges, it indicates a sense that the companies had of their role as agents of social change through the provision of a deeper and richer and learning experience. The early evaluations of work in the 60s and early 70s, (of which a detailed account is given in Redington, see above) are concerned with the learning experience achieved for the pupils and for the success of the theatrical event, rather than with a discussion of the wider political or social impact of the content of the work. In them the actor/ teachers reflect on the extent to which the work was understood by the children, on the way in which the children reacted and on whether the piece worked as a performance. They are not concerned for the political or social impact or for the possibility of a changing reality as a consequence of what they have done. It is almost as though this is somehow assumed. In this they are different from the present day practitioners of participatory theatre, whose central concerns are often for politics and the social problems of the situations to which they bring their practice and the ways in which that practice can address and seek to resolve them.

The contribution of TIE may be summarised as offering an enriched educational experience characterized by thinking, questioning and discussion; a mission to empower the young to change the world in which they are to be citizens; energy to effect social change and to articulate political awareness, and a commitment to reflection on and continual improvement of the practice.

By 1976, TIE had already, because of political antagonism and withdrawal of funding, begun to move into the wider community, to link up with community and professional touring theatre and to become the core of a much more varied practice, which was to become known as Applied Drama/ Theatre. Even in the 1980s, Jackson writes prophetically of the challenge of survival facing the arts in a recession! However, the movement of participatory theatre into a wider than purely educational context was not only for reasons of financial survival, although has always been and remains a central issue. It was a movement engendered also by a broader political agenda of social change. Jackson describes a central reason for this move as a lack of understanding of, and indifference to, the benefits to political, moral and social education. He attributes this prejudice to the insistence on a distinction between learning and entertainment in the cultural mind.

Once established as part of the educational landscape in the schools sector, by the mid 1970's TIE was declaring its central identity as that of an agent of change. This identity was reinforced by the formation in

1975 of the Standing Conference of Young People's Theatre (SCYPT), an umbrella organisation intended to bring together various forms of theatre and drama with which young people were engaged to share a commonality of values, in both formal and less informal learning environments, and to develop an ethical position. SCYPT was an organisation that has TIE at its heart and its prime movers were members of TIE companies.

Several of the contributors to Jackson's book emphasize the centrality of the emotional experience to the work of the TIE companies. Gordon Vallins speaks of a 'vital communication between people of thoughts, feelings and ideas in response to a living situation' (Vallins in Jackson 1980, p4) and Kathy Joyce talks of the 'direct emotional and intellectual impact of (TIE) on the audience' (Joyce in Jackson 1980, p25).

These emotional preoccupations also have a political dimension. In Jackson's book, David Pammenter identifies a key idea in relation to intended political effect of the programmes. He discusses the factors which 'govern the extent of the children's understanding', the chief of which he says is 'the extent to which they have been able to secure access to understanding, and the extent to which social conditioning has succeeded in mystifying them' (Pammenter in Jackson 1980, p43). Here he suggests that there is a conspiracy on the part of the educational authorities to keep children in the powerlessness of not understanding.

Transferring Pammenter's thoughts to the modern context of participatory theatre it is possible to substitute 'language and cultural difference,' bureaucracy' or 'alienating systems' for the educational establishment, and see the important ethical concern that remains at the heart of participatory theatre, the question of whether it can be a means of empowerment for the disadvantaged and excluded. In this way the ethical dimensions of TIE are linked with the implicit ethics of both Heathcote and Boal and with the practice of today.

Another connection between TIE and the other practices discussed here is a preoccupation with the centrality of discussion and questioning in the practice of participatory work. Whereas Boal and Heathcote emphasize the need for open ended questioning as part of the process of engagement with drama and theatre, the TIE companies were at pains, despite accusations of left-wing political bias levelled at them, to create dialectic rather than a political didactic as the bedrock of their interaction with their audiences (Jackson 1980, p44). They did not espouse the promotion of one particular political view, although they were frequently criticized for doing so.

Jackson cites one headmaster's evaluation as claiming that the theatre piece was 'dangerous' because of its 'political overtones' and its 'critique of irresponsible capitalistic enterprise' (Jackson 1980, p45). It is not difficult to see, given this kind of remark, why TIE and other forms of participatory theatre sought a more friendly environment, and eventually found a like minded one in Higher Education in the late 80s and 90s.

The content of TIE programmes was usually focused on addressing social issues and problems, not necessarily resolving them, but opening them up for discussion. Central to all companies' work and all programmes was the clear educational objective of a 'change in understanding' (Bolton in Jackson, 1980, p73).

The other issue that was hotly debated by the companies, and is still important to the ethical stance of our contemporary versions of participatory theatre, is that which might be broadly described as the suspension of disbelief and the boundaries between the fictional world of the stage and the real world of the audience. In a theatre form that sets out with the express purpose transgressing those boundaries, this has always been, and remains, significant, be it with Boal's audience who thought the actors' guns were real and that they were going to join the workers in the revolutionary struggle, to the school child who thinks that acting out a way of dealing with bullying, is actually going to make the real bullies go away. Pam Schweitzer in her essay in the Jackson book, sums up the paradox that this presents for the practitioner of participatory theatre:

> 'On one level what the children are asked for is a subjective response to an emotional conflict, but on the other they are asked for a high degree of objectivity in dealing with difficult 'adult' questions' (Schweitzer in Jackson 1980, p83).

This raises two important ethical considerations for all practitioners then and now: first a need to ensure that the audience and/or participating group understands the boundaries between fiction and reality, and a decision as to whether or not the work should aim to effect any real social change.

The ethics of TIE reflect the educational ethics of a libertarian and radical period in British education in the 1970s and 80s, now sadly long gone. By 1976 when TIE moved away from its work with schools, the end of its era was already in sight. It was the victim funding withdrawal, and the introduction of the rigidity of the early versions of the National Curriculum in schools, which excluded almost all creative activity from the classroom.

At this point, TIE and other early educational biased forms of participatory theatre moved 'underground' into the burgeoning academy of Drama, Theatre Studies and Performing Arts where it currently has its home as 'Applied Drama'. In making that move it was transformed by the theorising that was needed to contextualize it, despite the fact that most work that undergraduates undertake in this area is practical and much of it still within educational settings of various kinds.

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Of the above, Redingon is a useful and evaluative survey of TIE, and Jackson is the most ethics-centred account.

APPENDIX 2: 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 which proposed a space in which ethical considerations might exist.

2. offered a conceptual framework based on Oval House's five ethical principles[23] (referred to as Core Principles, Core Principles in the structure) within which a debate about the parameters of ethics could begin.

3. asked participants in small groups to use theatre image 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 the three circles diagram.

6. asked the group to consider Gibbs's[24] reflexive cycle as a diagrammatic representation of the flow-model of working which 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 recognisable process which 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.

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[23] Choice, respect, equality, safety and competence. See also Appendix 2: Workshop Outlines.

[24] Appendix 2: Gibbs's Reflective cycle.

Some opening games, usually Boal's Hypnosis and versions of the Milling exercise, Fear and Protection, were used as a reflective tool: It was useful to de-neutralize the 'warm-up' and to re-assert 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 (Core Principles): Choice, Equality, Respect, Safety, and Competence.[25] This invariably opened up a space for heteroglossia in which meanings clustered and shifted around, between and beyond the five Core Principles: a space which 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.[26] The Core Principles offered a structure of familiar words, buzz-words, 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.[27]

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.

For a full range of examples see the workshop transcripts. These scenarios and images were deconstructed, analyzed and debated.

THEMES

- Scenarios about HE 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 maneuverings 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's a criminal, 'political correctness' and respect, boundaries and confidentiality issues.

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[25] See Framework

[26] Crucially, the use of the CPs 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?

[27] Oval House's longstanding ethical practice continually questions and renews these CPs.

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's 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 they 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.[28]

Evaluation by participants revealed a range of learning focused around the initial objective. In some cases, students sent written reflections. [29] 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 which functioned as a starting point.

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[28] See Appendix 2.

[29] See Appendix 2.