

Reconsidering the Role of Artists in Initial Teacher Training

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ABSTRACT *This article is concerned with the role that artists might have in the process of preparing teachers of drama in the UK. It considers the ways in which culturally held values, which in the West create a distinction between school-based art-making and the professional arts, might be challenged and developed. It proposes a critical understanding of the field of cultural production to explain this divide, and greater consideration of the models of artistic practice that student teachers experience. The article suggests that initial teacher education has a role to play in this process and draws upon a small-scale research project, which proposes a conscious engagement of particular kinds of artistic practice in Initial Teacher Training (ITT).*

Introduction

Nowadays there is growing recognition of the importance of the relationship between arts education and the professional arts, between the work of drama teachers and the work of artists in drama. In 1980, Robinson documented the growing understanding of the relationship between theatre and drama education and this work has continued (Robinson, 1980). Over the last decade the arts funding system in the UK has encouraged artists and arts organisations to develop an educational aspect of their work and this has spawned initiatives giving young people some access to professional arts experiences, learning theatre skills or rehearsing plays written specifically for young people (see, for example, Arts Council of England & QCA, 2000). The UK's National Curriculum and examination syllabuses in the arts subjects reflect an increased interest in the understanding of the professional arts: performance work and artefacts alike. In Art, Music and Drama, pupils are required to study the work of painters, composers, and playwrights, to consider contemporary and live artists in this process (UK's National Curriculum for Art, Music and English, 1999). This situation reflects a change in arts education marked by the Arts in Schools Project [1], which promoted the notions of 'making' and 'appreciating' as the interdependent core elements of arts education, thereby placing a new emphasis upon 'appreciating'. Even more recently there have been changes in drama examinations for 14–18 year olds, to encourage teachers and pupils to draw upon professional practice [2]. However, whilst there may be interest in increased understanding of artistic practice for pupils and of a potential role for

professional artists here (see Oddie & Allen, 1998; Robinson, 2000), there has not been a parallel interest in understanding artistic practice through working with artists, for trainee teachers. Despite a number of initiatives both historically and currently, a difficult distance remains between artists and many teachers. Unless challenged, it is likely that this distance will remain, be reflected onto children and shape their view of the arts and themselves in relation to the arts.

Teacher training institutions, such as those concerned with initial teacher training, are potentially significant in challenging the difficulties of this relationship and in proposing that artists have a role to play in the education of future teachers and children. Bourdieu, amongst others, has argued that the values of a culture are taught and learned, formally or informally and in the West this occurs formally through schools (Bourdieu, 1971). This understanding, that schools are sites in which behaviour and attitudes are modelled, is now commonplace. Schools are required to implement equal opportunity policies in order to instil a culture of tolerance. Outside agencies work with schools to develop particular values. For example, the NSPCC currently offers training in school-time for children from age five, in order to develop a culture of peer-support to combat bullying. Likewise, ITT is a phase of education for teachers where values are instilled, expectations are set and teacher and pupil behaviour is modelled. Yet little attention has been given to the ways in which ITT models teachers' (and in turn, thereby, pupils') attitudes towards artists and artistic practices. In the last decade, some attention has been given to managing effective artists-in-schools work (Sharp & Dust, 1997) but little to investigating how the model of artistic practice affects such encounters [3]. If it were to model this relationship positively what would such 'positive modelling' look like? Before we can consider this question we need to consider further the distance that exists between teachers and artists.

The Dominant Model of Artist

In Britain, the artist is, predominantly, a professional artist. Whilst this may not be the dominant model in every country, the characteristics which I am about to describe will doubtless be recognised throughout the world.

- The most important notion, which is implied in our British conception of the professional artist, is that it is an exclusive term; *not everyone can be one*. This is because,
- to become a professional artist in Britain or even to be able to understand the work of an artist, requires a *particular kind of education and training*. Artistic sensibility is thus defined as only for the few (Williams, 1961; Bourdieu, 1993). Due to the fact that it requires a particular training, it is selective. Typically, appreciation of the work of artists also requires some level of training.
- Artwork is usually shown in a special place: a theatre, a gallery, a concert-hall where *a divide is typically marked between artists/artwork and audience*.
- Professional artists in the UK exchange their artwork for money, that is to say they make their art and receive payment in exchange. Primarily they operate to *an economic agreement*.

For each of these reasons the culturally inherited and still largely dominant view of an artist is problematic for schools. It is exclusive and predicts failure for many. As such, it conflicts with the core activity of teachers which is to develop all children's potential. Willis (1990) has echoed these sentiments denouncing the educational practice of the national arts organisations as irrelevant to the lives of young people. He suggests instead that recognition and support be given to developing young people's existing creative responses to their own culture. His emphasis upon active participation in and celebration of one's own culture allies his view to other models of artistic practice. The dominant British model may not be dominant elsewhere. For the African peoples, for example, whilst the model described above exists, it is not culturally dominant and in their dominant model the characteristics are almost inverted.

- In Africa the dominant model of an artist suggests that it is an inclusive term, *everyone can be one*. As Kwesi Owusu says, 'In orature [4] the most important "actors", "directors", "poets" and "painters" are the people, the masses living out their life dramas and expressing them through cultural media and institutions' (Owusu, 1986). This quotation reminds us that there are cultures for whom the term 'artist' does not exist, simply because art-making is a naturalised part of everyday life requiring no special term [5].
- In the African orature tradition, the inherent qualities of *participation and tradition ensure a communal and shared acquisition of artistic practices*. Some people, the nearest equivalent to British professional artists, have more skill or expertise than others but because the work is centred upon 'the masses', their role is necessarily to involve others resulting in a constant traffic of artistic experience and understanding between people.
- Performance spaces are marked out for the performance event but typically use the same space as is used in daily life. There is at least a blurring, often no clear line between performer and witness.
- Whilst it may well involve payments, where art-making is a communal activity the agreement is not driven by economics, but by a *social agreement*. Participants and witnesses share in the belief and culture of art-making as expression of the patterns and experiences of their daily lives.

Looking at the characteristics of the African model, we can see some links to educational drama practice. In drama education we have long espoused the first: the ideal that art-making should be a naturalised part of a child's education (Slade, 1954). This is at the core of drama practice in schools. We also work with children as active participants whether as doers in, or watchers of, the event. This tends to be emphasised by the kinds of spaces in which we work, which are typically unlike theatre spaces and in which the divisions between audience and performer, participant and witness are flexible [6].

Drama in schools operates as a social agreement, because it is for, by and with the people in that community. Its purpose is more to mark and celebrate the experiences and learning of its children, than to create performances that might be valued purely on aesthetic grounds. Even when a commercial transaction takes place, such as the selling of tickets for a school play, the dominant culture is still of a social agreement because

the event is community-based. It is local and celebratory and the audience is an extension of that school community.

Of course, art is culturally specific. One culture cannot simply import another's art, but we can learn from the models that others offer. As drama educators we can and do ally ourselves with models of artistic practice which offer the greatest potential for our students to learn and grow in drama. The influence of Boal's work on Theatre in Education and classroom practice today is a prime example. However the focus of this article is not just to find appropriate models for drama education. It is to make sense of the disparity between the dominant models of artistic practice and educational practice in the UK, and to demonstrate to teachers and students that other models of art-making (other than the dominant UK model) are not just available but thriving.

Let us look for a moment at the dominant artistic model. How have we arrived at the selective view of the artist that is still culturally dominant in Britain? Before the nineteenth century the term artist simply meant someone who was 'skilled' or 'a practitioner of the arts', which at this time meant the seven arts or muses—a much broader definition than we use today (Williams, 1976). Our current conception was developed and perpetuated by the bourgeoisie, the new middle classes who, suddenly being possessed of economic wealth as a result of the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, saw art and artists as the cultural capital which could confirm their new status and position them alongside the existing middle class who formed the influential ruling class of the nation. Cultural capital was important to the formation of a specific class identity, it created an important distinction between this new middle class and the working people who they wished to keep below them in the social order. Through patronage, the bourgeoisie allied themselves to certain kinds of artists. For drama this meant, at best, that certain playwrights would be given attention—in drama it was the literary tradition, not popular forms for example, that was patronised. This was compounded by the dislocation of working classes from their traditional crafts and popular arts through the need to move to the cities in search of work. In this way the British notion of 'high' arts was created: a small number of types of artistic practice, preferred and selected by a few culturally and economically powerful people (the ruling classes) were protected and made sacred. By contrast, anything not selected by the ruling classes therefore became 'low' arts, popular and profane. In this way, for over a century 'the arts' in Britain, by representing only a small part of the field of practice, have disempowered large sectors of the British population, for whom popular, local and participatory arts practices were, or are, significant.

The Field of Cultural Production

Raymond Williams noted this selective tradition in British arts some 40 years ago. In more recent years, Bourdieu has offered analyses, which echo and extend Williams' work in his description of the field of cultural production. This field, Bourdieu suggests, is populated by 'possibles': a whole range of different kinds of artistic and cultural practice. However, we see a very limited range. This, he argues, is because the field is dominated by those kinds of practice which reflect the taste and sensibilities of the dominant group. In a capitalist world this group comprises those who possess economic,

cultural and political power. In order to achieve funding and recognition, artists are encouraged to operate to the economic, cultural or political criteria preferred by the dominant group and this situation forces artists to take a position in a competitive, hierarchal field. Every artistic practice flourishes at another's expense and each position-taker is seeking to gain economic or symbolic power so the field of cultural production is a 'site of struggles' (Bourdieu, 1993). There is always a dominant and dominated group but the artists within these groups are not consistent; there are changes.

In the 1960s when the modernist movement was growing, the Labour government was a large part of that dominant group and saw their 'Arts for All' policies as one of the means of making a better world. Socially committed artistic practices were preferred and became the most visible, dominant form. Theatre in Education (TiE) and community arts, which emerged at this time, can be seen, in part at least, as products of this context. In the late 1970s and 1980s the Conservatives re-prioritised, stressing the need to build the economy and the new dominant group focused more upon aesthetic value, removing funding from many socially committed projects. A clear example of this is John McGrath's account of a director of the Arts Council discussing theatre companies who criticised the social policies of the government and questioned 'whether it was the duty of the state actually to subsidise those who are working to overthrow it' (McGrath, 1990). In this period many TiE companies closed due to a reduction in central funding (estimated to be a cut of £1 million—Rogers, 1995) as funding carried with it the need to operate in the interests of funders and such companies were unwilling to shift their position. The Belgrade company, for example, the founding TiE company, closed in 1994. Those that remain have survived by re-conceiving their position in order to acquire the support of the dominant group who control funds (central or sponsorship). More recently, since the 1997 Labour government, there has been a change in priorities and although less dramatically than in the 1950s, there is still a noticeable shift towards socially committed arts [7].

But changes in the field are not simply the result of changes in government. Tensions result from conflict between the tastes of the economically powerful and the culturally powerful, which are typically very different. Intellectuals, who constitute part of the culturally powerful group, are constantly developing cultural understandings and responding to cultural change. Consequently as their tastes and sensibilities alter, they prefer different kinds of artists and stimulate the advancement and demotion of different artists' position in the field (the 'transgression' [Bourdieu] between invisible and visible practice). In this way movement becomes possible within the field, and artists may transgress the invisible divide between dominant and dominated groups, either with particular pieces of work or at particular times or more permanently. A good example of such an artist is Brecht who was 'invisible' in his lifetime because of the politically unacceptable import of his work, but very visible today primarily because of his contribution to the development of theatre form—an aesthetic value. The same might be said of DV8. Ten years ago they represented the voice of certain 'minority' groups in society, and their work was seen in fringe venues by small audiences. Today they are funded to play in middle- to large-scale venues, make films and are studied on school education courses, because of recognition by the culturally powerful that they propose a new and significant aesthetic.

A key point that emerges from Bourdieu's work is that the arts are essentially codified forms. In a culture like the African one, these codes become shared through regular communal artistic practice. In Britain this is not the case. Access to these codes is restricted by education. To protect their influence, and the class-structure on which it relies, the ruling classes have traditionally restricted access to the codes by which such art communicates to the middle classes. Consequently, not only have large numbers of artists and artistic practice remained invisible to the British population, and a small selection of artists been naturalised as 'the artists', but restricted access to these artists has been sustained by an educational tradition. As Randall Johnson suggests in his introduction to his English translation of Bourdieu:

Access to works of art cannot be defined solely in terms of physical accessibility, since works of art exist only for those who have the means of understanding them. Comprehension involves a decoding operation, and the ability to decode works of art as they are meant to be decoded (that is according to the values established in the artistic field) is not a universally shared talent. (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993)

Bourdieu provides us with a way of understanding the difficulty and gap that exists between professional and school drama. The explanation is valuable because it makes sense of our experience. One may assert that in a pluralist society, pluralist conceptions about the arts should be realised, but as the structure of the field of cultural production illustrates, this is not the reality. Selected conceptions are promoted as if this were the full picture. This is significant to the artists and education relationship, because it suggests that the naturalised experience of every teacher and, especially of young student teachers, is that they will be culturally disposed to view the dominant models of artistic practice as valuable and, by default, other models such as local and community-based ones as less significant. By this measure, student teachers are likely to judge art and their own artistic practices by these standards and in turn to promote such views in their teaching unless they are challenged in this respect. There is a strong argument, therefore, for a revision of the role of arts educators as more interventionist, providing an explicit, critical view of the whole field of artistic practice. In terms of initial teacher training, this might enable student teachers to understand that the conception of the arts which they have received is just one of many, and why a particular conception is advanced at the expense of others. Our awareness of other 'possibles' opens up the awareness for which Richard Schechner (1988) has argued that the restrictive vertical axis of low-high art be extended along a horizontal axis to encompass the extremes of communal oral practice and private literary practice. Such awareness is a prerequisite for teachers to seek out the kinds of artists who will support and encourage a full range of artistic practice in drama.

Our awareness of the codified nature of the arts is important too. Developments in arts education over the recent decade have sought to address the need for schooling in the codes of 'the arts', 'to [develop] young people's critical understanding of other people's work and their knowledge of different cultural practices' (Arts in Schools Project, 1990). Increased demand for such schooling is also evident in recently revised curricula and examination syllabuses in Drama [8]. Artists work and communicate in

highly codified ways. They use a specialised vocabulary and develop methodologies which naturalise complex kinds of training as part of their daily practice. Aspects of such work are understood fully only by fellow artists: those with whom they work and communicate. If artists working with students can enable the latter to access these codes there is a significant role for artists in education.

The Theory Against the Practice

I began my own research building on experience of working as an Education Liaison Officer, developing education work in relation to visiting artists. With the extreme naivety of my cultural position, as a white middle-class woman, I had begun with an assumption that teachers would, like myself, relish the prospect of improving their pupils' experience of the professional arts. Through a consultation process I spoke to around 100 primary and secondary teachers who had been invited to attend one of 17 meetings arranged in their locality in order to discuss what they wanted of a professional arts resource. The consultations occurred in the context of educational reform. The UK National Curriculum had prioritised Maths, English and Science as the core subjects and thereby reduced the importance of the arts in schools. At public examination level, syllabuses were becoming more closely prescribed. The consultation indicated that whilst teachers were interested, schools saw the arts as a lower priority.

I encountered resistant attitudes, which took one or both of the following forms. Firstly, predominantly amongst primary teachers, the view emerged, even amongst those teachers who considered the arts to be important, that the professional arts were largely irrelevant to children's study. Theatre visits, for example, were considered a 'treat' rather than an aspect of the study of drama—certainly it was not naturalised as a legitimate part of education. This was testimony to Willis' assertion (see above, Willis, 1990). There was an expectation that artists who worked in schools should be competent as teachers and that their role was to teach pupils the skills they possessed. Secondly, teachers often considered themselves to be ill-qualified in the arts, practically or academically, and the prospect of working with artists alongside children was a risky and threatening one. Certainly they rarely perceived themselves as competent art-makers or did so in the terms of their teaching or community role, never in the context of the models of professional artists. Of course, these teachers were simply reflecting the problems of the dominant model, which Willis (1990), Williams (1961), Schechner (1988) and others had expounded. This raised for me an urgent need to consider a research model that might challenge this situation. It seemed that there was scope for a new 'schooling' to challenge the cultural domination of an exclusive artist model.

In practice, the first learning for me was watching and working with Badal Sircar, an Indian theatre practitioner. Sircar always began with us all in a circle. Here he looked at each and every one of us. Through the work here and in the space, he sought to emphasise our communal identity, our individual responsibility to the whole and thereby the strength of our interrelationships. He trusted the human desire to belong communally and to develop individually. In our physical work he observed where we needed guidance and helped us through a series of what can most easily be described as actor-training exercises and improvisations but which resonated for us with

significance. The sensitivity that Sircar developed within the group was powerful. This, Sircar assured us, was the way his theatre group, *Satabdi*, made their plays. Whilst they draw on the actor-training of Grotowski and others they have developed this physical training into a more psycho-physical form. For themselves they prepare work collaboratively, in an exploratory, transformational way and seek to reproduce this experience with their audience, by playing close to it and with an awareness of its presence. The kind of theatre is revealing. Sircar has called this 'third theatre'—neither the imported colonial nor the traditional folk theatre. Whilst this is not the same definition as Watson's on Barba [9] there is a shared emphasis on the social value of theatre. For me this was an important initiation. Here was a representative of a socially committed theatre group who refuse to operate to an economic contract; instead they tour free theatre to the disempowered people of Calcutta. *Satabdi* refuse funding which may tie them to articulate a given agenda or work in a given way. The group lives very simply and survives on donations given for its performances. This is an extreme example of social commitment. How they make their work takes precedence over what is produced. They choose to make free theatre, creating plays that seek to expose the myths of the ruling classes. They take this work out into the streets, into the villages. Although we had only a brief view of this work, for me and the students alike, this transformational, collaborative psycho-physical process engaged us. Here was a model of actor training, of performance that embraced the holistic values of educational drama and which had been able to teach us about an alternative model of theatre that had tested us in just one short experience. I understand that for the students he worked with over a week, the experience was transformational of their practice.

Some months after this experience, I was offered the opportunity of a week's residency with *Rambert Dance Company*. Here was a company at the opposite end of the spectrum from Sircar, an internationally renowned dance company whose education work historically had been the 'poor relation' of the company's activities, its priority being the production of dance. An amateur began the project with a group of drama and physical education students, easing them in gently with exercises of increasing complexity, focusing primarily on building their confidence. She was a warm, engaging person and frequently mocked herself in order to present herself as ordinary rather than expert. She built a strong relationship with the group many of whom, being insecure as performers, relied upon her support. After the introductory work a dancer came in, specially chosen for this project for his experience in choreographic devising which, it was anticipated, would facilitate easier links with the teacher-type approach of the amateur than a more typical, schooled dancer. Despite this the differences between amateur and dancer remained huge and threatened the stability of the work. Many of the students who had found confidence with the reassurance, structure and small group work instigated by the amateur, began to feel insecure by the invitation to invent and perform in front of the whole group. Some of these students overcame these difficulties and found that the new opportunities, the impetus that the dancer gave them individually, became a spur to their learning and that they achieved more than they had imagined they were capable. They felt they had been able to learn how to make dance for themselves, to see their own potential and creative ability. Here it seemed that the vitality of an artist's role to provoke and challenge had

been crucial to the nature and extent of creativity. This in itself created students' confidence in themselves as art-makers, but it also required a level of trust between each member of the group, the artist included. All of the students were very clear (especially those who had spent the week fearful and on the edge) that without the groundwork and the collaborative culture developed by the animateur this would not have been realised. Nonetheless the project appeared to highlight the limitations of the reassuring, structured approach in facilitating creativity and confidence in creativity. It appeared that on its own, the learner-friendly environment of the animateur, without the risk presented by the dancer, would have prevented the students from the vitality of experimenting and learning, both on a personal and an artistic level.

As a result of the agendas established by these two polarised experiences, which I treated as a pilot study, and my academic studies, I established the pattern for the fieldwork for the research. Each artist project followed the same form. Each was framed by critical study of the field of cultural production and the positioning of the artists with which students worked in the field. The critical frame also asked students to consider the mode of learning/teaching and the processes and skills involved. Artists and students were involved in a 3-day residency over a 2-week period, working collaboratively to devise a piece of performance. The students involved were drama specialists on a 4-year degree which prepared them to become primary teachers. The artists had experience of working in education, were involved in planning and were aware that one of the agendas of the work was to encourage the students to work with artists. The research I had undertaken, both academic and practical, suggested that the students needed to have an experience as art-makers at their own level, to begin to engage with the processes and learn about themselves and the artists as art-makers. The measure for the value of the experience came in the use made of the experience in a subsequent devising project and in following up the work a year later, which enabled a consideration of teaching practice. I monitored the work through video documentation, detailed note-taking, anonymous questionnaires, informal discussions, student notebooks and written assignments, and one-to-one interviews with a sample group of students on each project who from observation represented a range of responses to the work with artists. The research covered a further seven projects, over a 3 year period between 1994 and 1997.

The difficulties that had been present but not paramount in the *Rambert* project became evident again in the work of two artists, both performers of physical theatre. Here it became clear that a 'schooled', master-pupil model had a number of characteristics that were difficult for our students, certainly as an introductory experience to working with artists. Firstly, the hierarchical structure, which distanced learner from teacher, was alienating. These students were sensitive to the group dynamic, both as learners and as teachers attuned to creating co-operative learning environments themselves. The lack of interest of artists in using the participants' names for example was felt very keenly. In essence, the transmission mode of learning denied dialogue between the two cultures.

Secondly, the form of the work emphasised physical skill, and required a disciplined separation of mind and body. Students were encouraged to mask their inner feelings in order to communicate clearly with their bodies. This emphasis upon skill and control, with little attention to engaging students to invest in the content or process, was very difficult. The form appeared to demand a high level of skill in order to gain a sense of

achievement and students felt disheartened by their achievements. The focus upon individual skill acquisition taught in this master-pupil mode generated student disenchantment. This was the case with one artist, who repeated that 'the point of the exercise is not to get it right, because you won't' and proceeded to consistently identify what needed correction. Some of the students were enraged by this, which they experienced as public humiliation of the individual. Again this was oppositional to students' classroom training where teachers embrace the psychological state and seek to offer positive encouragement to the learner.

The effect of these characteristics was to turn the devising project into a training exercise in which distance was placed between student and skill acquisition, and between skill acquisition and the creative process. When students came to apply the experience to their own devising, they were largely unable to synthesise the skills they had learnt into a creative process. There was negligible evidence of the skills learnt in subsequent work. Here were examples of artistic practice, which emulated the dominant model and demonstrated the crippling effects of the exclusive, individual skill-based model in education. For the students the experience compounded the culturally inherited view of an artist as specially skilled, exclusive—an ideal that was unattainable.

Other experiences with experimental artists proved much more fruitful. Projects, with Claire Russ, a dance-theatre artist, and with Carran Waterfield, a performer of ritual theatre, were significant in the progress of the research. Both of these artists were, at that time, struggling for recognition. For each there was a drive to help students engage in and understand their work, to crack the codes of performance and to feel successful.

For both of these artists the devising process, although driven by a set of principles and a particular kind of practice, was collaborative and experimental. It was negotiated with the students through consultation, engaging them and enabling them to invest in the form and content of the work they made. Both artists demonstrated an interest in and respect for the views of the students, and prompted a genuine exchange in discussion. As such the projects began with a sense of mutual respect and a willingness to 'have a go'. Both artists also operated with an implicit conviction about the creative potential and capability of the students. For each of these artists that belief came from their training and their approach to devising. Each had received some formal training but each had also formed their own company in order to interpret and develop that training individually. They were familiar with seeking out further training opportunities and developing work in collaboration with other artists. Theirs was a self-directed as opposed to a schooled training, which relied on a belief in their (and others') capacity to create and form work.

Whilst the work of these two artists also focused upon the body and was physically demanding, it built upon a mind-body connection. Both artists celebrated this connection and positively wanted students to invest their ideas, their meanings and their emotions in the work they made. Waterfield's practice began from a shared context: the child growing up. Personal materials brought in by the students were woven into the piece so that whilst the methods employed were those of the artist, because this was experienced through the exploration of communal and personal material, students felt ownership of the work. Russ combined the teaching of physical exercises with movement improvisations that required students to invest their own personal stories or apply

invented contexts. She also taught exercises modelling movements but talking about 'the body' movement emphasising the properties of 'the body' (such as the way the pelvis rotates), which are common to everyone. In this way she suggested that the capability to do was inherent in the body rather than in the skill or talent of the individual. As she circulated she reassured students to trust in their body's capacity and where differences in suppleness, for example, affected students' performance she encouraged students to be comfortable with their own realisations of a movement. Russ worked with principles of contact improvisation and natural body weight to enable students to achieve a high level of success when learning skills. Thus she removed a sense of needing a particular kind of body or fine skill.

For both of these artists the work fluctuated between the process of generating ideas, through discussion and experimentation, and focusing upon particular aspects or skills. The process focused upon the participants operating communally or as groups within the communal set-up. There was no sense of skills being needed before devising could begin, but simply of a communally respectful commitment to the work. Warm-ups and exercises built towards improvisation—in the case of Waterfield this was a seamless process. Her role, especially, was that of a facilitator engaging, supporting, directing and provoking the students to improvise and discover. They might work for over an hour uninterrupted from warm-up into improvisation, before they would stop to reflect on what they had made.

Reflection was another significant aspect of these artists' work. Both constantly moved in and out of making and reflecting upon the work in process with the students. Waterfield marked this process on paper encouraging the students to engage with the meanings and significance of their work on a mythic and symbolic level. She might write 'Sky/earth' or 'the unknown place'. Of course this was a characteristic of her own performance practice, connecting personal and mythic narratives in ritualistic physical theatre. So she was in part enabling the students also to understand some of the codes of her performance style and the training that informed it. Likewise, Russ began by discussing students' response to dance and continued the project by enabling students to choreograph their own and each other's work on the basis of the meanings that it might signify culturally and personally, shaping separate sequences within a common frame. For both groups of students, the devising process that they had shared enriched the experience of seeing their artists in performance. These artists emphasised the importance of experiencing the practice. They operated from an understanding that reflection and analysis about performance work comes from knowing the work from the inside and then engaging in the struggle of articulating that understanding with one's fellows.

One of the most striking characteristics of these projects was the way in which students had travelled from a position of insecurity in relation to the artists they had worked with to such a high sense of their own performance capability. They understood their work and that of the artists. They had learnt skills through a training experience which had emphasised expressivity. They had taken risks, physical and emotional, and had discovered more about themselves and their creative potential and ability in the process. The apparent lack of emphasis on taught skill had actually promoted it. The dangerous edge of an artist as an 'other', 'skilled', 'special' person had been less problematic than with the previous models of artistic practice. Of course, the experience

was not wholesale. For some students the difficulty of an unfamiliar experimental theatre form remained, at least in terms of their appreciation of the artists' work, but it was rare for students to have a negative experience.

Although this was a small study, a number of consistent features emerged from the work. It appeared that there were some characteristics, more common in certain types of artistic practice, that are valuable in overcoming some of the difficult distance which is commonly perceived to exist between artists and teachers.

A significant consideration was the *mode of operation*—the way in which an artist works, devises, trains and was trained. Artists who had undertaken a relatively 'schooled', specialist training tended to reflect this process in their teaching, to emphasise the learning of skills. Artists who were more 'self-directed' in their training, seeking out and working with those whose practice appeared to connect with their own interests, reflected this in their work with students where they sought to make connections, to operate collaboratively, to draw upon the students' personal lives. The effect was to communicate a belief in everyone's capability and creativity. These artists built confidence and competence and encouraged students to invest in the process personally and communally. They ensured that this process was underway before focusing on any explicit skills training. The 'mode of operation' then describes artistic practice, whether for example, the predominant characteristic of an artist's work is that it is socially committed, or that it has strong aesthetic value—the socially committed or autonomous artist models. Typically the artists who were most significant in terms of this research agenda were those who demonstrated an explicit or implicit social commitment in their work. This was evident in the kind of material developed, in the communal working processes, and in an apparently physical practice, significantly informed by the relationship between mind and body. Together, these characteristics enabled students to trust, feel capable, risk and discover something of their personal and communal capacity for expressing and communicating through performance.

Another significant consideration was the *reflective practice* (Schon, 1987) of the artist: the extent to which an artist is actively engaged in reflection and analysis of their own practice as part of their creative process. Artists engaged in the constant crafting of their work appeared to be predisposed to offer a critical account of the experience in process and thereby to help students understand the form and processes they were experiencing. It appears to be significant that these artists were experimental, small-scale performers.

These factors lead me to suggest that it is important to consider the model of artistic practice when engaging artists in education. Here at least, it appeared that positive modelling for student teachers, working for the first time with professional artists, required consideration of the mode of operation and reflexivity of the practice of artists. Here, artists who were effective in empowering and teaching student teachers to feel capable were those who are reflective practitioners, socially committed and whose practice is collaborative, enabling and grounded in personal experience.

Conclusions

As others have suggested (Braden, 1978; Kushner, 1991; Arts Council, 1997, 2000 [10]) in a UK culture where the dominant model prevails, the basic philosophy of formal

training for artists renders much artistic practice inappropriate for schools. Student teachers in drama tend to reflect an uncritical and inherited cultural view of artists and artistic practice, which emphasises the acquisition of skill and suggests the exclusivity of artistic practice. It appears that this may affect their confidence as art-makers and their readiness to work with professional artists as a part of their teaching in drama.

At present within initial teacher training (ITT), there is a limited amount of time for student teachers to develop their experience in working with artists and this does not include offering a critical view of the field. It is likely that these factors contribute towards the lack of confidence that these student teachers, and qualified teachers, express about their own creative ability and their willingness to engage in art-making. ITT has some responsibility to demonstrate that our notions of artists and artistic practice are constructed, to make explicit the structure of the field of cultural production, which determines the divide between professional and educational arts, and to offer young teachers access to a fuller range of models of artistic practice. The involvement of socially committed artists in ITT may be one potentially effective means of initiating this process positively. If ITT were to take a role in this process it has the potential to shape the artistic values and practices of future teachers and children. Certainly the cultural change, which currently is re-prioritising socially committed arts and the renewed interest in the role of educators of the arts (Robinson, 2000; Harland *et al.*, 2000) may present new opportunities to develop the relationship between the professional arts and education.

Although this research project is only preliminary, it suggests that there is a significant role for artists in ITT. I would like to conclude by outlining the recommendations of my research which indicate the elements of practice which might be offered through ITT.

Firstly, students should be involved in the processes of art-making, the devising/rehearsal process from the position of an artist, 'as if' an artist. From this position students may identify the interwoven strands of working methods and reflective practice which shape the personal experience. Trainee teachers can thus be better equipped to teach art-making and appraising as integral aspects of the arts. This experience happens at adult, not child level, yet it is a pedagogic model for their future teaching [11]. In ITT, trainee teachers are in learner mode, a similar position to children; yet they are also always trainee teachers: a dual identity. For this reason, the models of artistic practice and the particular kinds of process, which future specialist arts teachers encounter in ITT, are especially fertile and significant to the kinds of arts teaching that they develop. Such models are also significant to the view they develop about the important relationship between professional and educational arts.

Secondly, experiences working with artists should be supported by a critical frame which positions an artist's practice within the wider field and helps students to identify the traditions it draws upon, the contexts in which it operates and to what effect. This should involve both prior and on-going analysis throughout projects.

Thirdly, the experience of working with artists should be a regular and repeated one throughout a training programme. The purpose of this would be both to naturalise the experience and to ensure that students experience a range of practices.

Fourthly, there should be a strand in the programme that ensures that the learning is transferable to teaching. This should be complemented by curriculum projects where the

work is targeted directly at children. There should also be options for individual research into the work of artists in schools.

These proposals are reliant upon those in power having a greater belief and investment in the arts, and more flexibility for both school and ITT programmes. There are some signs that this context may slowly be emerging. The result might be the opportunity to develop more creative, confident teachers of the arts who in turn will inspire young people through effective artistic activity.

Notes

- [1] The Arts in Schools Project ran for 5 years from 1984 to 1989, an experiment to promote the arts in schools and to develop understanding of good practice. Its findings were published in 1990 in *Arts 5-16*, including the core notions of arts education being centrally about 'making' and 'appreciating'.
- [2] GCSE syllabuses have offered options in theatre-craft, such as lighting, direction or stage design, which require some modelling from professional practice, but recent revisions, effective from October 2001, have added further to this. The EDEXCEL GCSE requires awareness of the practice of different theatre traditions, all GCSE syllabuses emphasise skills in devising, reflecting the emphasis in professional practice of devised work. There is certainly a higher demand for specialised subject knowledge, more closely connected to professional practice. EDEXCEL's AS Drama specification requires understanding of contemporary performance and directorial practice is common to many modules.
- [3] Some acknowledgement of this as a significant area is made by David Oddie and G. Allen (1998).
- [4] Owusu appears to use this term to signify orally communicated expression. The term encompasses a range of art forms categorised separately in the West, but inclusively in this term in Africa.
- [5] The Balinese have no equivalent term for artist.
- [6] For a fuller account of the significance of the architecture of space in signifying the role of performers/witnesses/audiences, see Neelands (1998).
- [7] The Arts Council of England has, through its funding requirements, ensured that educational work (in the broadest social sense) is an aspect of any artist in receipt of state funding. Its lifelong learning and funding partnership initiatives are also part of a vision of the arts as socially committed.
- [8] National Curriculum references to Drama require students to be taught about the structure and form of plays. GCSE syllabuses since October 2001 require a study of a play in performance. AS/A2 syllabuses require knowledge of plays, forms, genres and practices. (See EDEXCEL and AQA syllabuses.)
- [9] See Watson's *Towards a Third Theatre* (1993) where Barba defines his third theatre as not commercial mainstream or avant-garde.
- [10] The Arts Council of England is currently engaged in initiatives to develop the professional training of artists and this includes their preparation for educational work, which suggests an understanding of this problem.
- [11] Parks has also suggested the significance of the artist as a pedagogic model: 'The artist as communicator ... The artist as one who knows him/herself ... The artist as inquirer ... The artist thinks qualitatively ... The artist is concerned with technique to the extent that it enables the expression of an idea'. This model, he suggests, 'emphasises the individuality of the teacher ... stresses quality and growth, [and] provides not only a role model for teachers to emulate, but for students to emulate as well' (Parks, 1992, pp. 54-57). All of these features are noted by Parks as features of the effective artist in school, a model for interactive teachers, adept in a range of teaching styles.

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