

Applied Theatre: An Exclusionary Discourse?

Judith Ackroyd
(United Kingdom)

Abstract

This paper considers the new discourse of applied theatre and suggests that ‘applied theatre’ has moved from being an umbrella term to refer to a range of particular forms of theatre practice sharing specific common features, to become a term referring to a specific form itself. It suggests that the discourse now delineates a restricted and exclusive type of radical practice, enshrined in an evangelical frame. The new discourse acts to exclude a range of other practices that might once have been deemed appropriately placed under an applied theatre umbrella. Consideration is given to why the term was introduced, whether it serves a useful function, and to its subsequent trajectory. Furthermore, the paper suggests that one of the forms that has been pushed out into the rain is drama in education.

Résumé

Cet article étudie le nouveau discours sur le théâtre appliqué et propose que le terme ‘théâtre appliqué’ ne soit plus un terme générique qui englobe toutes sortes de pratiques particulières de théâtre, partageant quelques facteurs communs, mais qu’il précise maintenant une pratique spécifique. Il propose que ce discours se limite maintenant à un type spécifique et exclusif de pratiques radicales, consacré par une structure évangélique. Le nouveau discours tend à exclure un certain nombre de pratiques qui auraient pu autrefois entrer sous le chapeau du terme théâtre appliqué. L’article interroge la raison de l’introduction de ce terme, pour savoir si elle répondait à une fonction utile, et sur les raisons de sa trajectoire postérieure. De plus, l’article dénonce le fait que le théâtre dramatique enseigné dans les écoles en est une des formes qui a été mise au carreau.

Resumen

Este artículo trata sobre el nuevo discurso del teatro aplicado y sugiere que el “teatro aplicado” ha cambiado de ser representativo de un término amplio que se usa para referirse a una cantidad de formas particulares de las prácticas de teatro compartiendo características específicas comunes para convertirse en un término que se refiere a una forma específica. Este sugiere que el discurso ahora conlleva un tipo de práctica radical restringida y exclusiva contenida dentro de un marco evangélico. El nuevo discurso actúa para excluir una cantidad de otras prácticas que en un tiempo pudiesen haber sido apropiadamente colocadas bajo un término amplio de teatro aplicado. Se le da consideración al hecho de que porqué el término fue introducido, si acaso sirve una función especial y a su consecuente trayectoria. Por añadidura, el artículo sugiere que una de las formas que ha sido descartado es el drama dentro de la educación.

Author’s biography

Dr Judith Ackroyd (currently Associate Dean (Research) at the University of Northampton, United Kingdom) will become Dean, Regent’s College, London in January 2008. She worked in initial teacher training before teaching in a division of Performance Studies. She has published a

wide range of books for teachers at both primary and secondary phases and two more recent texts, *Role Reconsidered* and *Research Methodologies for Drama Education* (both by Trentham Books). Current research interests include drama and health and performed research.

Biographie de l'auteur

Dr Judith Ackroyd (actuellement Associate Dean (Recherche) à l'University of Northampton, Royaume Uni) prendra le titre de Doyenne du Regent's College, de Londres en Janvier 2008. Elle a travaillé dans la formation des nouveaux enseignants avant d'enseigner dans la section Performance Studies. Elle a publié un grand nombre d'ouvrages destinés aux enseignants pour les niveaux élémentaires et secondaires, ainsi que deux textes récents, *Role Reconsidered* et *Research Methodologies for Drama Education* (tous deux publiés chez Trentham Books). Ces sujets de recherche actuels sont les arts dramatiques, la santé et la recherche en performance théâtrale.

Biografía de la autora

La Dra. Judith Ackroyd (actualmente Vicedecana de Investigaciones) de la Universidad de Northampton, (Reino Unido) será Decana de la Universidad Regent de Londres en enero de 2008. Ella se desempeñó en la formación inicial de profesorado antes de enseñar en la división de Estudios de Actuación. Ha publicado una gran gama de libros para profesorado desde la fase primaria hasta la fase secundaria, así como dos textos recientes titulados *El Rol Reconsiderado* y *Metodologías de la Investigación para la Educación en el Drama* (ambos publicados por Trentham Books). Sus intereses actuales de investigación incluyen el drama, la salud y la investigación sobre la actuación.

ackroydj@regents.ac.uk

Applied Theatre: An Exclusionary Discourse?

Context of the paper

Earlier this year, while writing a paper (on drama in training for diabetes counsellors) for the 2007 International Drama in Education Association conference in Hong Kong, I became aware that I was deliberately avoiding the term ‘applied theatre’ and referred instead to drama in education practices outside the classroom. In writing this paper, I have been trying to understand what that reluctance was about.

Asked to give a keynote at the ‘Applied Theatre: Engagement and Transformation’ conference at Sydney University in October this year, I was invited to revisit the article I wrote seven years ago (Ackroyd 2000). The original was the launch address at the opening of the Centre for Applied Theatre Research at Griffith University, Brisbane. It appeared in the first edition of the centre’s journal (this journal), the *Applied Theatre Researcher*. It has been quite a strange experience in terms of looking back and realising what a lot has been written since then. My first words in that article are: ‘The term applied theatre is relatively new.’ In just seven years, however, the term has become common parlance — even beyond the academy.

The second part of the article comprised the description and analysis of a drama. The other reason it has felt strange revisiting the article is because I had coincidentally been using that very drama. It was constructed from a drama devised by Northamptonshire teachers 22 years ago. I revisited that drama at the end of the 1990s, working with sociologist Andrew Pilkington to create a piece that explored political apologies. We presented a demonstration paper on the work at the Cecily O’Neill-directed University College Cork conference, ‘Texts: Transformations’ in 1998. That is a long time ago. However, this summer we had been asked to deliver workshops on this project at two sociology conferences. Hence, while revisiting the article, I have also been revisiting the drama through practice. After all that time, it was a very strange coincidence indeed.

Purpose of the paper

In this article, I wish to suggest that applied theatre has created its own discourse to articulate itself and now masquerades as something neutral and democratic. Yet it emerges as a restricted, even an exclusive, theatre form. Given this new discourse, I am left wondering whether the drama I included in my original article would even be conceived as applied theatre now. It is interesting to reflect now on how my musings seven years ago describe something dramatically more modest in its claims than psychological and community healings that frame the dominant current literature.

First, a few words on that article since many readers may not be familiar with it. It considered the difficulty of determining the parameters of the field of applied theatre since so many drama activities and theatre models might be categorised as applied theatre. Using examples of well-known play texts and performances, I offered a continuum rather than a categorical distinction between theatre and applied theatre. Identifying intentionality as common in the activities, I drew a grid comprising two axes measuring transformation and participation. Activities understood as applied theatre fell into the quadrant high in both of these. Finally, though welcoming the term, I noted the overwhelmingly positive descriptions of the work on the web and in conference papers, and I called for vigilance, since a powerful medium can be used for dubious as well as humanitarian ends.

I should add that since then there has been the helpful addition of ‘location’ in defining the practice, identifying applied theatre as ‘beyond theatre’ (Thompson 2003) and ‘beyond conventional theatres’ (O’Toole 2007), not taking place in traditional theatre settings. The terms ‘specific audiences’ and ‘specific location’ have hence contributed to the depiction of the work.

In this paper I wish to consider three things:

- why the term was introduced;
- whether we need it; and
- what is happening to it.

Why was the term introduced?

Let me consider ‘*applied* theatre’.

Applied.

Applied maths.

Pure maths.

Pure: no impurities maths; no watered down maths; no compounds maths ... just pure. So what are the implications of applied maths? Impure maths; containing impurities maths; watered down; compounds; not pure. Advertisers use ‘pure’ as the epitome of what we should want in food, fabrics and even air.

Applied research. *Pure* research. In the United Kingdom, with the scramble for research funding in the higher education sector, there seems to be an implicit expectation that old universities do pure research and new universities do applied research. Clearly, there is a hierarchy in the two types of university, and hence the privileging of pure is clear. All this supports Rasmussen’s concern with the word ‘applied’ in his article in that first edition of the *Applied Theatre Researcher*. He explains:

I have always found it [the term] somewhat downgrading, implying that the applied stuff is second best, not quite as genuine as the essence ... (Rasmussen 2000).

Interestingly, there has been an attempt to reclaim the term in a more positive light by identifying a usefulness apparent in applied maths and equating this with applied theatre.

Nicholson argues that applied maths ‘is concerned with using theoretical models to solve practical problems’. She adds that: ‘Most practitioners working in applied drama are motivated by individual or social change and there is, therefore, a similar interest in the effects and usefulness of the work.’ (2005: 6) But this relies upon a shared understanding that all applied work is for a public good. I daresay mathematics was applied for the construction of Barnes Wallis’s bouncing bomb, and indeed for the design of gas chambers. Because it is ‘applied’, and some theatre practitioners have ‘sound’ intentions, doesn’t mean that ‘applied’ itself becomes a virtue or should be elevated in the hierarchy.

Given the seemingly reductive associations of the term, why has it been adopted? Many reiterate that the term ‘applied theatre’ is new, but that it has been taken up by many drama educators (Neelands 2007; Nicholson 2005). Drama education conferences, such as those delivered by the International Drama in Education Association (IDEA) and the International Drama in Education Research Institute, now include work beyond the classroom, though they did not when such events were first conceived. It is also the case with the journal *Research in Drama Education*. A journal with this title is full of articles using the term ‘applied theatre’. Perhaps there is an assumed status distinction between drama in education and applied theatre. The latter,

with its sweep of different contexts, does appear somewhat grander. It also contains that magic word ‘theatre’, which is what drama educators fought for. Given that long struggle to successfully argue the case for educational drama practice to be conceived of as theatre, it seems somewhat ironic that drama in education should so quickly be stripped of that status by the addition of the word ‘applied’. But I imagine the change was not motivated by a consideration of drama education, as I will consider below.

What else beyond status hierarchies could have initiated the change? Were we slightly bored by the limits of the field we worked in and just wanted to diversify a wee bit? Is the attraction that applied theatre offers us a greater range of activity to engage with? Was it that the dramatic opportunities were so incredible that, knowing the impact they could have beyond the classroom, we had to spread the word and practice?

Perhaps it is more to do with the context of the time. There is now an established generation of academic practitioners from drama in education who work in the higher education sector, a context that barely existed when I was a young teacher. PhDs in the drama in education field were barely known then. This new generation is creating careers. Some of us have shifted from education departments to theatre/performance arts departments, where ‘applied theatre’ might have more relevance than drama in education.

Let us look further at this higher education context in relation to the growth of the term ‘applied theatre’. *Applied* offers a more utilitarian concept, as we have seen in maths and research. Hence this new term brings some alignment with the recent moves in higher education. There is less of a focus on learning for its own sake and more attention given to higher education’s role in developing national competitiveness in a global age. Higher education requires preparation for life, and skills that will contribute to the job market and engender economic growth. This more mechanistic agenda welcomes an applied theatre model.

Perhaps the change reflected a heightened sensitivity to the current trends in higher education and adapting to what is required — and, of course, implicitly what is therefore likely to be funded. Neelands (2007) argues that the UK New Labour’s agenda for social regeneration, social inclusion, and participation and rehabilitation has created a labour market for applied theatre artists. Hence the broader category of applied theatre gives opportunities that drama in education practitioners may not be offered. As all universities demand academics to tap into new funding streams, academics are going to find that they have access to more options working beyond the classroom. I note that most of the projects cited by Taylor (2003) are funded projects — often by the government offices (2003: xix). I have not seen much regular funding for drama in education projects.

Of course, the problem of funding involves the need to quantify outcomes. An edition of *Research in Drama Education (RIDE)* in 2006 is dedicated to the matter. Here too, we fall into almost mechanistic — or at least reductive — practices, since funders want to know how many people are benefiting and need to have evidence for that benefit. They are more interested in the number of participants who went on to apply for jobs or upskilling programs rather than how many felt touched by the drama encounter. There is a rhetoric of transformation in the new discourse of applied theatre, but applications for funding with proposed outcomes may be perceived as reductive. By stepping into *applied*, we are more vulnerable to demands for outcomes. The funding comes with the promise of change.

There is another driver welcoming the applied, outcome-focused, more utilitarian agendas. It is student recruitment. New courses bring with them new students and new income. Louise Keyworth (2002) is building on the growth of courses in applied theatre, carrying out a

funded project to develop teaching resources for use in specialist applied theatre courses in the university. Many members of government, and indeed parents, will prefer the idea of young people rejecting a seemingly somewhat indulgent drama course if they can instead take up an applied theatre course which leads to specific training for employment and which has a point beyond the study itself. Perhaps applied theatre is helping recruitment figures too.

It seems that moving beyond the school context is a very good move for many different reasons.

Do we need the term?

I am focusing strongly on a drama in education and applied theatre connection, as though there may not have been other foundations for the work. Of course, people working in theatre in education or community theatre may not have started with school-based careers. However, such people do not often refer to their work as ‘applied theatre’. They call it ‘theatre in education’ or ‘community theatre’. My focus on the progression from drama in education is reasonable, since many who write on applied theatre — such as Nicholson, O’Toole, Taylor and many more — are from educational backgrounds.

While there is recognition of ‘many precursors and prototypes’ (O’Toole 2007), there is an increasing tendency to locate the origins of applied theatre in particular radical or avant-garde movements. It has been identified as having ‘roots in the libertarian practices of twentieth-century drama education, community theatre and alternative or political theatres’ by Nicholson (2005: 6). Neelands (2007) writes of the antecedents of applied theatre being ‘in the legacies of the 19th and 20th century Euro-American avant-garde movements in particular’.

Ukaegbu’s (2004) work suggests that this may be a limited view, however, and that — rather than being relatively new — applied theatre forms are as ancient as theatre itself. He traces what might now be called applied theatre in the earliest African performance rituals (2004: 45–54), seeing much of what is applied theatre practices as ‘later spin-offs’ (2004: 52). He explains that:

irrespective of cultural differences, traditional performances everywhere are applied for history informs us that while ancient Greeks ‘applied’ Dionysia performances to strengthen community bonds, the early European Church used them to transform adherents’ overall religious and cultural experiences. (2004: 53)

Ukaegbu argues that what is being described as applied theatre has been going for a very long time — but it wasn’t, of course, called ‘applied theatre’. It was called ‘theatre’ or ‘performance’. He explains that: ‘Traditional African performances straddle sacred-secular boundaries but by commanding some form of investment in efficacious outcome, most performances can serve ritual and aesthetic functions simultaneously.’ (2004: 53) He seems to be slightly bemused by the new discourse of applied theatre and its discussions of function and artistry, and is perhaps suspicious of the neat new term: ‘What is needed is not a new concept or definition but the re-introduction of production strategies and collective concerns that created the traditional performances that audiences attended as participants instead of as detached spectators.’ (2004: 53)

The traditional African practices of which Ukaegbu writes are simply termed ‘theatre’ or ‘performance’. Although a social purpose is well understood, the practice is still seen as theatre because, as explained, the aesthetic and purpose are not extricated in these theatre forms. Why,

then, should it be called ‘applied’? It has intentionality and participant engagement, it takes place outside a specific theatre setting, but it has always been just ‘performance’.

Art has for centuries been seen as cathartic, instrumental, instructive. At the Tate Modern in London last week, I was interested to read the notes on a group of artists who had called themselves ‘Die Bruke’, meaning ‘The Bridge’. They read: ‘Founded in Dresden in 1905, it included Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. The title of the group reflected their belief that “*art had the power to transform society*”.’ (2007) These people didn’t consider themselves applied artists. Some practices are being brought into the embrace of applied theatre in the new discourse, which have been developed for some time with their own specific defining categories. Drama therapy is included in understandings of applied theatre. Robert Landy’s work in Taylor’s text (2003) provides one example of applied theatre, but when I heard him present this work at a keynote address last month (2007) he did not refer to it as ‘applied theatre’ or to himself as an ‘applied theatre practitioner’. (His title is Professor of Educational Theatre and Applied Psychology.) He spoke of his work as drama therapy, and of himself as a drama therapist. I don’t recall the creators of the Laramie project calling their work ‘applied theatre’, but this is also identified as an example. I shall pursue the implications of this further in the next section, but at this point it seems to support the need for considering whether the term is actually worth having.

I accept that in the 2000 article I welcomed the term and provided three reasons why it was helpful. I have changed my mind. I think that part of the reason I have changed my mind is the way the discourse has developed, which takes me to my third point.

What is happening to the term?

Here I wish to suggest that the term ‘applied theatre’ is being used only for specific practices. Certain examples of practice support the discourse and construct this ‘new’ field in a particular mould. The discourse excludes other practices, even though they fulfil the defining features presented. So, rather than applied theatre being an umbrella term for a range of practices (which have specific intention, participation and operate beyond conventional theatre spaces), the term is emerging as a label for particular *types* of practice.

Consider two book titles: *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* (Taylor 2003) and *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* (Nicholson 2005). Neither title gives room for considering that there may be anything but *good* to arise from the practices entitled ‘applied theatre’. And it’s a particular mode of good. Nicholson describes it as a ‘discursive practice ... motivated by the desire to make a difference to the lives of others’ (2005: 16), and as something undertaken by those who wish to ‘touch the lives of others’ (2005: 166). Taylor explains it as theatre that can ‘be harnessed ... to build stronger communities’ (2005: xxi), and ‘where new possibilities for mankind can be imagined’ (2005: xxx). Manchester University’s website explains that its ‘applied theatre projects have made positive contributions to the everyday life of individuals and communities in a variety of contexts’ (www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/catr/about/index.htm).

I am not suggesting that any of the activities described are not worthwhile and beneficial; rather, I am suggesting that a discourse is being created that enshrines applied theatre as, ironically, *pure*. There’s no mention of gospel street theatre or work with the police (very valuably undertaken by Griffith University staff), nor of drama for business thoroughly developed in Tasmania, because these would mitigate against the politics of the discourse being constructed. These are not ideologically suitable.

I have argued elsewhere that the term ‘function’ often camouflages a value judgment. I have suggested that it assumes a consensus that does not exist (2004: 32–35):

To say that education ... [has] functions assumes a particular consensual value system that asserts what the function should be. So a description of what does take place is seen as a description of what it is thought *should* take place. Veiled behind an assumed assumption is a value-laden assertion. (2004: 33)

Similarly, I now wonder about the term ‘applied theatre’ (in the usage of Taylor, Nicholson and others), which assumes a consensus of practice and indeed a perimeter of practice. Whilst there is occasionally a gesture towards different practices, the discourse emerging is one that embraces and focuses upon those that are designed to strengthen communities, transform specific groups, and give participants the chance to find their individual and collective voices. After I provided the keynote address at the conference, John O’Toole gave me a copy of an unpublished keynote he had delivered shortly before in Taiwan. The similarities in our concerns are striking. He too argues that ‘the use of the term Applied Theatre is often restricted to settings where theatre is being used for explicit social benefit’. However, he suggests that this is not an issue in Australia, where ‘we are a bit less moralistic’, but rather it is in the United Kingdom and the United States that the narrow use of the term exists (O’Toole 2007).

Cranfield, one of Britain’s most prestigious business schools, has been employing actors and directors to devise training sessions for over 20 years. Theatre applied to the needs of business has provided support for bosses who need to feel better about making people redundant, as I said in the last article. While we may construe this as ugly, this should not deprive it from academic attention and analysis, like other examples that conform to the definition. It should not be excluded from what is understood by the term ‘applied theatre’. Can we really provide a coherent account of applied theatre practices and not include aspects such as drama for business training? Can some forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions be excluded from a notion of applied theatre? Geoff Davis, writer of a very popular text on primary drama, moved into business when his role as drama advisory teacher in the north of England was axed. He used all the practices of his very successful drama teaching and advising career. His work was demonstrated at National Drama’s ‘Thinking Drama’ conference in 2004. This is not inferior theatre practice, just a different application — a different audience, different intention and different non-theatrical space. He tailored his work to individual companies’ needs. It is very *specific* — a buzzword in the new discourse (Taylor 2003; Nicholson 2005). Davis probably wouldn’t describe it as work that ‘springs from a desire to change or transform human behaviour’ (but he did health and safety projects that were designed to do just that). Clearly, it doesn’t help communities deal with issues, and give voice to the views of the silent and the marginalised (Taylor 2003: back cover), but should it be excluded from a notion of applied theatre?

It is also argued that Theatre for Development isn’t actually applied theatre either (Nicholson 2005), and that a project is applied ‘where many members have no real experience in theatre form’ (Taylor 2003: xxx), bringing yet another restriction or inclusion. Those participants with theatre experience need not apply. These seemingly authoritative inclusions and exclusions trouble me. I am reminded of a poem about taking names and addresses from last year’s diary to the new one:

Who’s in, who’s out

A list to think about

when absences seem to shout

Scandal! Outrage!

(Danny Abse 1973)

There seems to be a lacuna between rhetoric and practice. Nicholson describes applied drama as ‘arguably the most democratic of theatre practices’, yet in reality it is emerging as a term used to depict only the favoured kinds of theatre practices. She suggests that the shift in terminology to ‘applied drama/theatre is significant ... because it does not announce its political allegiances, community commitments or educational intent as clearly as many forms of politically committed theatre-making which were developed in the last century’ (2005, p. 10). But this is precisely what it seems to be doing. On the previous page, two key strands of influence are identified as the Marxist Freire and progressive educational practices. These clearly indicate very specific allegiances, community commitments and educational intent. A seemingly inclusive, democratic term, applied theatre, is actually emerging as a discourse which is very clear about its allegiances and therefore, too, clear about what it wishes to keep beyond its perimeters. (Of course, there are good reasons when seeking funding not to ‘announce ... political allegiances’). So here again there is a sense of the discourse presenting a case that doesn’t fully reveal itself.

Drama in education and the new applied theatre discourse

But there is another omission in the narratives of applied theatre that bothers me: Drama in Education. Does it belong here now? Many school dramas are participatory and take place in the classroom and not a theatre, and have specific intentions. However, these intentions are tied up with the specific curricula or the school’s context. The aims may be to encourage writing in role for literacy development, or teach about the life cycle or to investigate historical phenomena. These aims are not like those attributed to the examples of applied theatre projects found in key texts (Taylor 2003; Thompson 2003; Nicholson 2005). But I had assumed that they were part of the new term ‘applied theatre’. Theatre form is applied to the context of curricular teaching.

Since I trained to be a drama teacher in 1982, I have aspired to Bolton’s aim: to bring about ‘a shift in appraisal’ (1979). It seemed so important and so difficult to achieve after a wet break on Friday afternoon. But compared to community transformation and touching people’s lives, it now appears pretty frail an aim. However, Michael Billington (2007), writing in *The Guardian*, says: ‘But theatre rarely topples governments or incites direct action.’ What, he claims, ‘theatre can do is shift attitudes ...’ Now the political apologies drama *Sins of the Fathers*, which was (as has been stated) fully interrogated in my 2000 article, seeks to explore the motives and underlying implications of the increasingly popular political apology. It was created with a thought to the curriculum of advanced level Sociology students, but has been workshopped with other groups of adults and young people. There is undoubtedly an aim to shift appraisals or attitudes about political expediency. It challenges an acceptance of apologies and invites consideration of political expediency. But would it conform to the new concept now? Since Taylor had been the editor who published the first article (which included the drama), and had indeed established the research centre for applied theatre, I emailed him to ask whether he would now see such drama as applied theatre and whether he sees O’Neill’s seal wife drama as applied theatre. Like the political apology drama, it uses teacher in role and participatory improvisation. Pondering an answer, he raises some questions: ‘Is the intention to apply theatre in a transformative manner? Is a theatrical scenario at the core, and has community had input into its

evolution — this would be contentious based on how one is defining core and evolution?’ Taylor is very aware of the issues surrounding definitions and points out that: ‘There would be some who argue that applied theatre has to be commissioned.’ (2007) (The definition gets even more exclusive.)

So we have different details in the precise definitions. ‘Sins of the fathers’ was not commissioned, nor did it have a community input into its evolution though the participants’ input in the drama process. It has drama at the core, I would argue, since I am not comfortable with a distinction between theatre and drama label for such teacher role led work. But it doesn’t seem like the seal wife or political apologies dramas fit comfortably into the current notions of applied theatre. I wouldn’t have claimed that it offered ‘a theatre in which possibilities for humankind can be imagined’ (Taylor 2003: xxx), but I may well have seen it as a strategy to ‘open up dialogue’ (2003: xxix). It might not claim to ‘touch the lives of others’ (Nicholson 2005: 166), but it engages participants emotionally and cognitively, and invites them to consider different perspectives or standing in the shoes of others. It is participatory. It is not delivered in a traditional theatre setting. It has specific intentions and a desire to shift appraisals. But somehow it doesn’t sit comfortably beside projects now being described in applied theatre texts.

Drama in education doesn’t seem to get a significant stake. Taylor’s examples in his chapter ‘Implementing Applied Theatre’ include teenage vandalism, racism in a small town, and teenage pregnancy in a rural township (Taylor 2003). Nothing in the classroom. He includes an example of children improving literacy through applied theatre, but his applied theatre appears to have facilitators and actors rather than teachers working both in and out of role. Nicholson’s examples of ‘Drama and theatre in education’ (from the index) are both theatre in education projects (2005).

Does this matter? I guess I feel a bit cheated to have embraced the term because I saw it bringing a range of practices together with drama education and then find it has eased my dramatic preference out. The International Drama in Education Association and the International Drama in Education Research Institute accepted papers on applied theatre projects, I had assumed, because they were alongside drama in education practices. However, I have heard that *RIDE* is going to have a special edition on ... research in drama in education. What are we to conclude other than drama in education is no longer the regular focus of *RIDE* and, since applied theatre is, we must also conclude that drama education is not included in applied theatre. The places for focused academic debate on drama education are being usurped.

I want to use the term ‘applied theatre’ as a term, not a form or practice. I want to use it to be inclusive of a range of practices. I want it to enable analysis of those many practices, pretty or ugly. In the 2000 article, I warned that not all applied practice would be supported ethically by the majority of practitioners. The answer to this problem has been to create a discourse that excludes work that might not be deemed unethical. But who decides?

Victor Ukaegbu’s words are ringing in my ears: ‘definitions create new discourses but they also generate ... hierarchical relations’ (Ukaegbu 2004: 46).

References

- Abse, D. (1973). *Let the poet choose*. Edinburgh: Harrap.
- Ackroyd, J. (2000) Applied theatre: Problems and possibilities. *Applied Theatre Researcher*, vol. 1, www.griffith.edu.au/centre/cpci/atr/journal/article1_number1.htm.
- (2004). *Role reconsidered*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

- Billington, M. (2007). Lifting the curtain. *The Guardian*, 24 October.
- Bolitho, S (2007) Text for *The Djanogly in material gestures*. Expressionists exhibition at Tate Modern, London.
- Bolton, G. (1979). *Towards a theory of drama in education*. New York: Longman.
- Keyworth, L. (2002) Applied theatre: Three examples of practice.
www.palatine.ac.uk/development-awards/383.
- Landy, R. (2007). Drama as a means of preventing trauma within communities. Keynote address at Inspiring Transformations: Arts and Health conference, University of Northampton, 6 September.
- Neelands, J. (2007). Taming the political: The struggle over recognition in the politics of applied theatre. *Research in Drama Education*, vol. 12, no. 3.
- Nicholson, H. (2005). *Applied theatre: The gift of drama*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Toole, J. (2007) Applied theatre: New forms for new audiences. Keynote address at Drama and Theatre Education Conference, University of Taiwan, May.
- Rasmussen, B. (2000). Applied theatre and the power of play — an international viewpoint. *Applied Theatre Researcher*, no. 1,
www.griffith.edu.au/centre/cpci/atr/journal/article1_number1.htm.
- Taylor, P. (2003). *Applied theatre: Creating transformative encounters in the community*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- (2007) email, 10 October.
- Thompson, J. (2003). *Applied theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Ukaegbu, V. (2004). The problem with definitions. In J. Ackroyd and J. Neelands (eds), *Drama Research*, vol. 3.