

Institution: University of East London (UEL)
Unit of Assessment: 35
Title of case study: Performing Human Rights: Applied Cultural Practices for Conflict Prevention
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research at UEL has contributed to international practices of conflict prevention through applied performance practice-as-research. Initially based on the use of culture in post-genocide Rwanda, it has been extended since 2008 to applied performance practices in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The research has had wide-ranging impacts, including on international practices of conflict prevention; public awareness and understanding of conflict issues; public access to and participation in political processes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; the design and delivery of school curricula and new extra-curricula opportunities for young people (especially in Kyrgyzstan); the inspiration, creation and support of new forms of artistic and social expression (particularly in performance art); and the integration of participatory practices as a teaching and learning method in the UK and abroad. The research has also delivered local economic benefits and improvements in the welfare and quality of life of individuals involved in projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The impacts described here arise from research conducted within the University of East London's Institute for Performing Arts Development (IPAD) by Dr Ananda Breed (Senior Lecturer at UEL since 2007). Since joining UEL, Breed has worked both nationally and internationally as an applied performance practitioner and researcher, contributing to several important projects exploring the relationships between theatre/performance, conflict and artistic exchange. These have included her role as an artist facilitator in the 2007-2008 intercultural theatre project <i>Contacting the World</i>, for which she developed exchange activities and intercultural practices with youth theatre companies in Palestine, India, Nepal, Turkey and Germany.</p> <p>Her principal research focus, however, is the relationship of underlying collective or 'public transcripts' and personal (or 'hidden') transcripts to the socio-political contexts of conflict. In exploring this, she works with local communities to identify how cultural forms can be adapted for dialogic purposes and to stage possible solutions to conflict issues. Breed's development and application of these participatory methodologies to address conflict, trauma and reconstruction have been particularly informed by her work in post-genocide Rwanda. She has adapted and contextualised participatory practices including playback theatre, image and forum theatre, conflict resolution practices, and cultural forms to engage stakeholders through theatre workshops with grassroots associations, symposia with government officials and workshops with theatre artists. In line with the ethos and pedagogy of the IPAD, these approaches respond particularly to the national and international socio-political contexts surrounding performances and performatives.</p> <p>Breed's published research exists in a symbiotic relationship with her practical work; whilst the latter often forms the basis for the former, publications likewise inform practice. Research conducted between 2008 and 2010 exploring the use of the arts in post-genocide Rwanda yielded several notable publications [1-6]. Founded on interviews, workshops and participatory projects involving theatre companies and grassroots associations, this work has particularly influenced Breed's subsequent methodological application of participatory techniques in Kyrgyzstan, which in 2010 experienced violence stemming from ethnic, religious and geographic tensions. As in Rwanda, ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan has historically been traced to social status and access and these issues are salient for conflict prevention strategies.</p> <p>The impacts described below arise particularly from intercultural theatre work and conflict resolution practices developed through and applied in three related project. The first of these, <i>Promoting Tolerance and Dialogue through Interactive Theatre</i> (Indonesia), began in 2008 as a pilot project funded by the British Embassy and IREX Europe, an international non-profit development organisation. This developed into a second project (2010-2014), <i>Youth Theatre for Peace</i> (YTP) in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, funded by USAID. Both projects were contracted through IREX in collaboration with local partners including the Centre for Civic Education Indonesia (CCEI) and Kyrgyzstan's Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI). The third project, <i>Interaction of Young People: across ethnic lines and public discourse on youth's role in building peace and strengthening tolerance</i> (2012-2013), was contracted by UNICEF to improve the interaction of</p>

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youth in the Osh and Jalalabad regions of Kyrgyzstan. Breed was the lead facilitator, curriculum designer and consultant for all three. In that role she oversaw the facilitation and development of training materials and curricula for youth camps, sustainability workshops and the training of trainers in participatory practices and workshop design, and provided guidance and expert support to identify target communities and to resource people. In total, the projects involved four seven-day 'training of trainers' programmes, seven 12-week intensive youth camps, and three seven-day sustainability workshops involving more than 500 adults and young people. Additional consultants were hired to facilitate YTP work in Tajikistan using the curriculum designed by Breed. For YTP, which particularly contributed to Breed's development of the distinctive and innovative participatory methodologies outlined above, she worked in consultation with trainers and artists to adapt local games and performance traditions into applied practices. The traditional cultural forms adapted as part of this novel methodology included Kyrgyz folktales, *manas* (oral history epics), music, games, and theatre traditions. Partners included a professional theatre troupe, Sakhna, from Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 12 of whose actors supported Breed's delivery of the 'training of trainers' initiative before going on themselves to lead youth workshops.

The research has contributed new knowledge about how embodied local discourses may inform or counter hegemonic or national constructions of post-conflict identity formation. It responds to wider international debates concerning participatory practices for conflict prevention. Breed developed this specific approach through her work considering the use of 'speech acts' in Rwanda for incrimination in the participatory gacaca courts [3, 4, 6].

3. References to the research

- [1] Breed, A. (2013) *Performing the Nation: Genocide, Justice and Reconciliation*. Chicago: Seagull Press. Available on request.
- [2] Breed, A. (2013) 'Resistant Acts in Post-Genocide Rwanda'. *Kritika Kultura*, 21/22, pp. 397-416. Submitted to REF2.
- [3] Breed, A. (2013) 'Juridical Performatives: Public versus Hidden Transcripts' in *Performative Trans-Actions: Innovation, Creativity & Enterprise in African Theatre*. (ed.) Igweonu, K. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Publishers. Available on request.
- [4] Breed, A. (2012) 'Discordant Narratives in Rwanda's Gacaca Courts' in *Rwanda Fast Forward*. (ed.) Noack, P. Hampshire: Palgrave. pp. 29-44. Submitted to REF2.
- [5] Breed, A. (2011) 'Memorialization and the Rwandan Genocide: The Use of Theater' in *Cultures and Globalization Series* (eds) Isar, Y. and Anheier, H. LA: Sage Publications. pp. 245-251. Available on request.
- [6] Breed, A. (2009) 'Participation for Liberation or Incrimination' in *The Applied Theatre Reader* (eds.) Prentki, T. and Preston, S. London: Routledge. pp. 148-154. Submitted to REF2.

4. Details of the impact

The research outlined above has contributed to international practices of conflict prevention through applied performance practice-as-research, and delivered cultural and artistic benefits through its creation, inspiration and support for these new forms of artistic and social expression [a]. It has also enhanced and improved public awareness and understanding of conflict issues and contributed to widening public access to and participation in political processes, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Cultural, artistic and social benefits in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Through her integration of local Kyrgyz cultural forms into applied performance practice-as-research and her training of Kyrgyz theatre artists, Breed has introduced applied performance as a new form of artistic expression in Kyrgyzstan. This has allowed local communities to connect with their cultural and artistic heritage through participatory practices that also negotiate contemporary conflict issues.

As part of projects described above, Breed directly trained some 144 youth and adults; many more were trained by consultants using Breed's curricula. Participants went on to form 27 drama clubs in Kyrgyzstan, which have since engaged thousands of additional beneficiaries through public performances and training. As a result, *Youth Theatre for Peace* (YTP) beneficiaries in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan total more than 47,000 people, who have engaged directly or indirectly with Breed's work through drama clubs and public performances [b]. Following her training of trainers and subsequent youth workshops for YTP in 2009, Breed

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facilitated a sustainability workshop in 2010 and 2012 for adult trainers and young people who had been promoted to the role of youth facilitators. As a direct result of this training and of the YTP programme more broadly, school drama clubs were established in Kyrgyzstan and two adult trainers were elected to paid positions with their village councils. In those roles, 'they became prominent figures in their communities, raised issues and challenges that they had in their communities, and people voted for them because they could see that they were actively trying to solve these issues' [c].

Funding obtained in 2012 through USAID Kyrgyzstan was used in 2012-2013 to extend the YTP project from the Chui and Batken oblasts to the Northern mountain oblasts of Naryn and Talas, where a further 60 trainers were instructed by Breed in participatory practices and workshop design. Her training of 10 former trainers as 'master' trainers for new participants has extended the reach of Breed's distinctive methodology – and of the cultural and artistic benefits arising from it - throughout the country. The provision by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education of salaried posts for teachers to continue theatre outreach work begun as part of YTP has not only ensured the sustainability of the benefits to programme participants in Kyrgyzstan, but also delivered a small but significant economic benefit via the creation of these new jobs.

A number of trainers and educators have initiated community projects integrating Breed's participatory performance methodology. Thus teachers trained by Breed have used her methodology to create sustainable networks and partnerships allowing government and community dialogue about, and responses to, conflict issues. One has developed ongoing participatory theatre performances in collaboration with the prosecutor's office to address justice issues, stage scenarios related to new laws, and address issues related to building tolerance in Tokmak [d]. Another has worked with the Kyzkol Village Council to address issues related to the social inclusion of orphans through theatre practices and has successfully launched campaigns through a conference of 250 social pedagogues (March 2013), leading to financial support for orphans and acknowledgement of legal agreements from local authorities [d]. The methodology has also directly influenced Foundation Tolerance International's (FTI) institutional practices, informing the integration of participatory approaches into FTI conflict analysis and prevention projects covering six oblasts and all four FTI offices [c].

In addition to training described above as part of the IREX YTP project, Breed trained an additional 30 adult trainers and 30 youth trainers for the UNICEF Interaction of Young People (IYP) project, which involved 15 schools in the Osh and Jalalabad regions of Kyrgyzstan. Drama clubs subsequently developed from the initial training expanded to include 251 youth members, and performances developed from theatre tours related to local conflict issues have benefitted an estimated 6,000 community members [e].

Raising public awareness of and changing attitudes to conflict: The YTP project has had demonstrable impacts on the adults and youths involved directly in it in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. An independent 2011 evaluation analysis of the YTP programme in Kyrgyzstan involved an overall sampling frame of 144 project participants and, more widely, of 15,000 people in 93 communities. The evaluation showed marked and positive attitudinal and behavioural changes among both youth and adult program participants towards people of other ethnicities, religions and nationalities compared to a matched control group. 12 focus group discussions were conducted to assess the programme's effects on community members (the 'audience' of the performances organised by participants), who weren't involved directly in the programme training events. The evaluation found that in Kyrgyzstan:

- Nearly 98% of program participants reported confidence in their ability to positively influence conflict situations in their community, compared with 31% of the control.
- Respondents in every focus group expressed their belief that the programme methodology could positively affect community cohesion in relation to conflict.
- 94% of youth participants reported a perceived increase in personal agency in conflict situations.
- 90% of youth participants reported a perception that they could speak more openly and in a more balanced way about conflict issues; 91% of those were assessed by their local adult mentors as being actually able to do so.

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- 85% of youth participants reported increased empathy for ‘other’ groups (‘empathy’ conceptualised as understanding the situation, feelings, motives, and ideas of people of other ethnicities, religions, or national origin.)
- 88% of youth participants reported more positive interactions with those from other ethnic or religious backgrounds [f].

The benefits to programme participants of this enhanced awareness and understanding of conflict issues - and of the ensuing changes in attitude - are further evidenced by some of the successes they have enjoyed since the programme. Young participants have become leaders among their peers and in their schools, and to hold positions of responsibility among, and garner the respect of, adult community members. For example, in 2011 one youth participant became the first female in her school’s history to hold the title of school President [g].

Improving understanding of and increasing participation in political processes: Breed’s work has contributed to widening public access to and participation in political processes in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where the new drama clubs and theatre tours have engaged (in total) more than 53,000 community members between 2010 and 2013 through the staging of conflict issues in partnership with local government officials [b, e]. Several of the performances were devised during youth workshops facilitated by Breed in collaboration with local artists and partner organisations. Applied performance is new to this region, and individuals claimed that its techniques provided the additional benefit of extending the ethos and practice of participatory approaches to the classroom environment. Performance topics included human rights issues concerning domestic violence, bride kidnapping, water and land disputes, and girls’ education. The participatory techniques allowed audiences to actively engage with the dialogic performances and to express their thoughts and feelings on conflict and suggest potential solutions to the staged conflict scenarios. Those myriad proposed solutions did, in fact, inform policy-makers’ discussion and debate both informally, through the theatre performances themselves, and formally, through meetings conducted with government officials before and after performances [b].

Impacts on education and training: Breed’s participatory performance workshops have appeared in course syllabi for theatre and performance studies programmes at the School of Theatre and Dance UC Santa Barbara (USA) and Dartmouth College of Arts (UK). Since 2010, Breed has also provided consultancy to the British Museum (BM) to facilitate its *The Tree of Life Talking Objects* project (March-April 2009) and to train staff, partners and museum personnel in the use of participatory techniques to enrich user-based approaches to objects (June 2011). The Museum’s dissemination of participatory approaches via its *Talking Objects* project and peripheral public engagement activities has enhanced public awareness of the utility of such approaches. These activities included the *Museums and Participation: Unlocking the Potential of Things* conference (20 March 2012), at which Breed facilitated an experiential workshop with BM youth panel members, demonstrating the *Talking Objects* methodology to over 300 participants [h].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] Many of the broad benefits of the research are described in an ArtTengri documentary about the impact of Breed’s methodology in Kyrgyzstan. Available on request.

[b] The impacts of the YTP project, including the number of drama clubs set up and total figure of 47,000 participants in or beneficiaries of the project, are corroborated in a written testimonial from former IREX senior programme officer. Available on request.

[c] Written testimonial: Director of Foundation Tolerance International. Available on request.

[d] Written testimonials from teachers trained by Breed as part of YTP. Available on request.

[e] Written testimonial: Youth and Development Officer, UNICEF. Corroborates figure of 6,000 wider participants in or beneficiaries of the project (additional to 47,000). Available on request.

[f] For results of the 2011 YTP Final Evaluation Report: bit.ly/1bfKRqr especially p. 4.

[g] For examples of individual YTP programme success stories: <http://bit.ly/18TrQA1>

[h] Testimonial letter from former *Talking Objects* project director corroborating the impacts of Breed’s work with the British Museum on its on education and training. Available on request.