

Policy Theatre: Bringing Educational Policy Development and School Change into the Streets

Arts-based methodologies are sparse in educational administration research (Samier, Bates & Stanley, 2006). The absence is problematic because aesthetic epistemologies grounded in sensory perception, imagination, and performance may provide new and important understandings of the multiple realities and power relations embedded in educational policy and administrative practices (Bates, 2006; 2012; Samier, 2011). There is little research on the use of non-traditional methodologies such as Policy Theatre to critique leadership policy and practice and the discourses that shape them (Sloane, 2013).

What is Policy Theatre?

Policy Theatre (PT) exists within a critical theoretical framework (Apple, 2008 & 2009; Freire, 2008; Furman & Gruenwald, 2004; Giroux, 2008). The intent of PT is to open an aesthetic space that allows people to problematize the impacts of (educational) policy. A critical theoretical framework assumes: thinking is mediated by power relations; facts are never ‘neutral;’ and the relationship between a signifier and the signified is never fixed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). ‘Critical’ theatre work is designed to: ignite peoples’ capacity for critical reflection; foster human agency; honour and respond to multiple world views; and to mobilize people to make a difference in the lives of others in their communities (Boal, 1979; 1998).

PT is rooted in Augusto Boal’s arsenal called the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) (Boal, 1979). Boal’s theatre methods are designed to engage diverse actors in a series of theatrical games and techniques that problematize a community dilemma. Participants are invited to make images with their bodies that illustrate the oppressive circumstances they face. Slowly people

begin to activate the images and give language to the problems under investigation. The work is designed to culminate in Forum Theatre plays. Forum Theatre plays are created by the actors and performed more than once for the same audience. During the second performances of the plays, spect-actors (audience members) are encouraged to leave their seats and intervene. Forum Theatre becomes PT, when audience interventions, and the responses to those interventions by the actors, are used to create, inform, or resist policy. With this in mind, it is my aim in this paper to begin to interrogate how PT might be used to create or inform educational policy that is more reflective and inclusive of the diversity in school communities. I hope this question may lead us to think in more radical ways about educational policy externalities.

Limitations and Tensions

The paper is limited in its discussion of some of the methodological critiques of TO work. For example, trained TO facilitators are often white, middle-class, urban people who come from privileged backgrounds (Bharucha, 2011). There are a significant number of western trained Theatre of the Oppressed specialists (Szeman, 2005). Many TO practitioners do not live in the communities in which they do their work which can result in a less than nuanced understanding of the political contexts in which these methods are being utilized (Johansson, 2010). More research needs to be done to find out why and how people become TO facilitators so there are more diverse local school actors who can utilize TO methods. O'Sullivan (2001); Plastow, (2009); and Snyder-Young, (2011) offer several provocative critiques of some of the tensions in Boal's theory and practices.

The paper elicits some uncomfortable theoretical tensions of its own. Boal's penchant for binary oppositions such as oppressor/oppressed and his complicated relationship with Marxism

will frustrate the reader who mourns his/my slippages into postmodern terrain. The slippages are particularly evident when (*I ask*) Boal how TO might help us resist heteronormative hegemonies in order to explicate TO in the context of school administration. However, I believe these theoretical tensions may be productive because they allow some of the radical thought experiments in performance art to escape into educational administration research. For instance, Boal's exercises and other popular theatre methods are ripe for a psychoanalytic exploration of the unconscious desires that contribute to the atomization of political agendas in school communities.

Form

I constructed the (paper) in the form of an interview with Boal. Unfortunately I never had an opportunity to speak with Boal before he died in 2009. The content of the *interview* is derived from my analyses of his work. I used his texts, what other researchers have said about his praxis, and my conversations with other theatre practitioners who worked directly with Boal. The other, and possibly egregious liberty I took with the text, is that I situated the interview in 2014. The following text is intended to honour Boal's work, and the potential intersections between the Theatre of the Oppressed and educational administration. I created a tension by speaking for Boal. I hope that I have ameliorated some of the problems with "speaking for" by remaining faithful to the intent and spirit of his work. Be that as it may, I sense a little too much of my own (voice) in the sections where Boal begins to use terms like "performative" without wincing.

The inclusion of gestures and the conversational tone in some places in the 'transcript' conveys some of my additional learning about Boal's persona. I acknowledge that it may be somewhat disruptive to the flow of the text to embed the references inside the transcript but it

seemed to be necessary in order to present the (paper) at an academic conference. You will notice in the transcript that (Boal) uses masculine pronouns most frequently. Unfortunately, this bias is evident in much of his early writing (Boal, 1979). With these cautionary notes in mind, I invite you to join Boal and I as we (discuss) TO for a while at the Liminal Cafe.

An Interview Transcript from the Liminal Cafe

February, 2014

Interviewee: Augusto Boal (AB)

Interviewer: J. Alysha Sloane (AS)

AS: I'm very honoured to meet you Augusto. Your work continues to have profound effects on me as a teacher and a researcher. [short pause] I was tempted to add theatre artist to my list but maybe I'm a little embarrassed to do so in front of you.

[laughter]

AB: Why shouldn't you say theatre artist? [waves hands] This is such a problem I see. You believe the theatre does not belong to you but you are theatre (Boal, 1979). You act upon the world while you observe yourself and others in the world (Boal, 1979). We act. We observe. We are all spect-actors capable of transforming the world! (Boal, 2002).

AS: Is *transforming the world* the essence of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO)?

AB: Yes. But this is still a dream because Aristotle's theatre of control is still very much with us. Mass society (Mills, 2000) is addicted to the purgative effects of tragedy. It is sometimes hard to

see... but even today, most traditional theatre, the government, and the 24 hour news cycle are mentally adjusting us to what pre-exists...(Boal, 1979).

AS: What do you mean when you say the “purgative effects of tragedy?”

AB: For a tragedy to enact its purgative effects on the audience, we must see the central character experience the catastrophic consequences of his constitutional flaw (Boal, 1979). And he must recognize his error...what we call, *an-a-gor-e-sis*. The tragic hero’s confession cleanses the proscenium of the pathological behaviour that conflicts with the elites’ interests. This is catharsis. Audiences are terrified by the violent spectacle that decimates the tragic hero but they leave purified. The people learn what to revile and how to behave in a way that pleases the aristocrats. Done this way, “The theatre is the most perfect artistic form of coercion” (Boal, 1979, p. 39).

AS: But isn’t it different toda-

AB: Alysha, think about television! It is the same weapon because it is all monologue (Barber, 1996; Boal, 1998). Except its a more dangerous weapon because many people have a television in every room in their home. The television does not allow us the mental space we need to fight back against its barrage of solicitous images. It is a vicious distraction! Watch *American Idol* and forget about how corporate lobbyists sing in to the ears of corrupt politicians. [leans forward and hits the table quietly with his right fist after the next three sentences] Be entertained by this week’s cooking competition as severe droughts produce thousands of starving climate change

refugees. Stay tuned for the next episode of *Big Brother* and forget about the fact that governments and corporations have you under 24 hour surveillance! "...Because the elites know *"If cows talked to each other they would not go so innocently to the slaughterhouse"* (Brecht, quoted in Boal, 1998, p. 250).

AS: You would say that TO is dialogical as opposed to monological?

AB: Yes. We believe that all relationships between people should be dialogical. But you take relationships between men and women, black and white, landowners and peasants, and you get only the white speaking, the men speaking, the landowners speaking (Goodman, 2009). Theatre of the Oppressed is concerned with the facilitation of transitive dialogue amongst the oppressed. Within each oppressed person is a submissive and a subversive. Our work dynamizes the subversive (Boal, 1990).

AS: Is *dynamizing the subversive* similar to Freire's concept of conscientização? (Freire, 2008)

AB: [four second pause] I want to say first that when Paulo died, [in a quiet voice, looking down] "I lost my last father" (Patterson, <http://ptoweb.org/aboutpto/a-brief-biography-of-augusto-boal/>, par. 7). His work continues to be an inspiration to me. Paulo understood that oppression reshapes the realities of the oppressed. [in a louder voice] In order to survive the oppression, the oppressed adopt the stories told to them by their oppressors. In my early theatre work with the peasants, I wrote and performed plays to raise the consciousness of the oppressed.

I wanted to tell them a different story. So in the 1960s we made art that revealed the truth and provided solutions (Boal, 1995). How arrogant I was back then! One day we performed a play in a small village in the north-east. The play ended with a song that contained the lyrics, ‘Let us spill our blood’ (Boal, 1995). The audience clapped and yelled and we felt very good about ourselves. After the applause fell away, a peasant named Virgilio approached the stage (Boal, 1995; Davis & O’Sullivan, 2000). He invited us to take our guns and to come with him to rid the village of the landowner’s men. Humiliated, I responded that our guns were merely colourful props and that we were only artists not true freedom fighters like he was (Boal, 1979). I have been haunted by Virgilio’s response ever since. He said, “So when you *true artists* talk of the blood that must be spilt, this blood you sing about spilling - it’s our blood you mean, not your’s, isn’t that so?” (Boal, 1995, p. 3) The oppressed must work with each other to find their own solutions which is the essence of Freire’s conscientização. I am ashamed to say that back then I was more concerned with how much I had to teach the peasants than with how much they had to teach me. Pedagogy and the Theatre of the Oppressed are transitive processes.

AS: You’ve shared the story about Virgilio a number of times in your writing and in your theatre workshops (Boal, 1995; 2002; Davis & O’Sullivan, 2000). I would like us to think about dialogic versus monologic encounters and the memory of Virgilio as we begin to talk more specifically about how TO can be used in school communities to facilitate positive social change.

AB: Your transition is full of dangerous tensions Alysha. It might border on something expressly forbidden in Theatre of the Oppressed. [large smile].

AS: Which is?

AB: I've heard of occasions where school officials bring people in to do TO work to *fix* the youth and their families. It is about getting people to behave and to fulfill the government's mandate (Boal, 2002) instead of challenging the oppressions that are manufactured and circulated by the school.

AS: What you describe sounds like a toxic mixture of agitprop and honey. My interest is not in the appropriation of TO work designed to... [Alysha flips quickly to the front of her notebook]... let's see, how did you put it... "mentally adjust us to what pre-exists." I'm interested in the power of TO to disrupt normative behaviours and social constructions of reality... especially in the principal's office.

AB: But why would the school principal permit these disruptions to himself, or create the conditions where others might challenge him? It seems to me that a school principal is someone who has effectively used the current system to become the principal. Why would he be interested in challenging a system that affords him power and privilege in the community? My experience is that people with power do not share it so easily (Boal, 1979).

AS: I worry too about the dangers of a sanitized or an appropriated TO but your comments assume principals are oppressors in the school system. I do not believe people fit so easily in to binary categories. There are profound pressures placed upon administrators in their school systems.
[Boal waves the server over and orders a cup of tea]

AB: I'm sure there are real stresses and pressures but I'm not convinced we can call the school administrator an oppressed person.

AS: But if you immediately dismiss the possibility aren't all dialogic possibilities eviscerated?
[The server places Boal's tea cup on the table. She begins to pour the hot water into Boal's cup and splashes a little of the hot water on the table.]

AS: Last year, I was invited to present at a research conference on the topic of leadership standards. [Boal furrows his brow and looks out the window] ...[Alysha looks down, her cheeks flushed] Augusto I think we must challenge some of the binary constructions of oppressed/oppressor so we can imagine the ways that TO can help educators and families challenge oppression in school communities. David Diamond, the Artistic and Managing Director of Theatre for Liv-

AB: David is a dear friend.

AS: ...David, who calls you his mentor, has written about his conscious movement away from the binary oppositions of oppressor/oppressed in his theatre work (Diamond, 2007). Diamond says you vehemently disagreed with his movement towards *Theatre for Living* (personal communication, August 11, 2011) and away from the binaries of TO.

[Boal squeezes some lemon into his tea and places the lemon wedge on to Alysha's napkin. The lemon wedge causes the napkin fan to bend toward the table]

AB: This philosophical disagreement has permeated the TO community. I respect David very much but I disagree with him. TO is and will continue to be *for* and *of* the oppressed (Boal, 1979; 1990; 1995; 1998; 2002).

AS: I would like to share a revised version of the spoken word poem I performed at the conference. The poem is a distillation of several of the provocative and sometimes debilitating tensions in educational administration. It explains some of the reasons why TO work is needed in the context of school leadership.

AB: Go ahead. [As he smiles, he sweeps his right hand across the table]

MARGARET

J. Alysha Sloane (June, 2013)

After 3201 days of social theory sobriety
earnest school board trustees anointed me
with the largest high school in the district

...And this was no accidental act of affirmative action

I laboured in 2 inch purple heels
inside a pantheon of polyester
to strategically align my administrative creases
with each new principalship

I skewered and devoured
school improvement references
until involuntary spasms of
student success indicators
leaked relentlessly from the corners of my mouth

Central office was delighted when
last year's survey revealed that my
teachers were sufficiently inspired
...but not unduly charmed

It was impressive just how quickly
my staff swallowed the district's pills

39% of the parents had a voice in the school
student achievement scores were up 4.6%...
Hallinger et al would be proud
because I wore the instructional
leadership cape in heroic fashion

But Monday the substitute left early to
to file a grievance with the union
while the wolf PAC howled
at the principal who stole
the O Holy Nights from December

...And Thursday's spectacle
was a grotesque you tube failure
to take the soldier out of a child
who lived a maligned liminality
between a refugee camp and the school

47 stitches, four drugs busts, three suspensions,
two teachers on stress leave, plus one suicide
were the latest round of
problem posing equations to infect
my regression toward the mean

I began to worry...
Does it take more than 12 steps
to accept another's
antagonistic realities?...

Regimes of accountability erect intellectual pharmacies
Employing distributors of antibiotics
to heal leadership performances
Their quantifiable behaviours construct us as effective or ineffective
...but between you and me, I think that's
sanitized code for "normal" and "abnormal"

So tell me, what do you do
with invisible kids who bleed
from the sharp edges of curriculum...
...the ones who trouble the system's conscience?
Do you expect me to eradicate school pathologies
when the illness germinates
outside my perimeter?

My solemn vice-principal
who wore an abstract painting for a face
swallowed a lot of Percocet
as he furiously knitted arguments
to keep a sweaty grip on our question marks

We silenced the tyranny of consensus
to gaze beyond iridescent borders...

Because it's in the in-between where
you'll discover the mutable existence of
food deserts, slumlords,
bed bugs, gang colours, crystal meth,
drop out rates, reality TV, colour coded prisons,
domestic violence, evictions, and the Alberta tar sands,

Leonard Cohen says
"There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in"
But I say to hell with the light Leonard
it's oxygen we need

For we can't imagine or methodologically

perform our way into emancipatory practice
if we continue to gasp for air
and use the same
signs and objects as the ruby
referents of leadership

I could disappear inside such
a murky visuality

...

AB: Alright dear complicated Virgilio...If it's oxygen you need, take a deep breath and name your struggle. I'm willing to explore some of the opportunities and tensions TO would create inside the school.

AS: I am deeply troubled about homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in our school communities (CBC News, September, 2013; Martin, 2012). In 2011, Taylor & Peter conducted a national survey on homophobia and transphobia in Canadian high schools. There were 3607 participants in their study. Schools are not "safe nor respectful for sexual and gender minority students" (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p.275) and human rights and diversity discourses do not seem to apply to lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and queer (LGTBQ) youth. Some of their findings include: LGBTQ students are more likely than male GBQ students to have been direct targets of verbal harassment; and LGBTQ youth are also more likely to report being physically harassed at school. The authors offer several suggestions to reduce the physical and emotional torment of LGBTQ students in schools such as: the development of anti-homophobia policies (p. 295); the inclusion of LGBTQ voices in school curricula (p. 298); and the implementation of GSA clubs to increase feelings of safety amongst LGBTQ youth (p. 302). But I believe that TO may be a way

to open spaces for LGTBQ youth and their allies to challenge heteronormative policies and practices.

AB: This struggle rages on in many places in the world. The Olympics in Sochi brought attention to homophobic laws in Russia (CBC News, January, 2014). And on Tuesday, a “Ugandan newspaper published a list of what it called the country's "200 top" gays” (CBC, February, 2014, par. 1) after the country passed new anti-gay legislation. TO work is sometimes described negatively as being too context specific but (site) is not a fixed category. Site is a concept that is constituted through social, economic, cultural and political processes (Irwin & Springgay, 2010; Joselit, 2013). There are many people in the world who are engaged in this struggle.

AS: Your newspaper references are very important for another reason. Language is performative. If I speak, I seek to describe my reality but my speech also creates reality (Butler, 2004). When a president codifies speech acts which make it illegal and immoral to love someone of the same sex, LGTBQ people are socially constructed as deviant and criminal. A president's words produce a new reality, one where there are moral demarcations, the stripping of a previous identity, and the inscription of a new one. So how can we use TO in school systems so that the performative acts of educational administrators trouble heteronormative discourses in schools?

AB: What I have to say to that is “words are living entities and should be treated with the same tenderness as human beings” (Boal, 1998, p. 45). When your school superintendent makes an

explicit performative statement such as, “I expel you,” he manufactures an oppression. He causes the adolescent to move through the space that exists between student and non-student. One way teachers, administrators, and students can un/think, un/learn, and un/do diabolical performatives, is to notice and celebrate the moments when people refuse to play their assigned parts. Let’s use what I’ve said to talk more specifically about our struggles with heteronormativity. When people in the school perform a speech act or a movement that transgresses normative constructions of gender and sexuality, teachers and administrators must help witnesses who are in solidarity with the transgressor to amplify their collective resistance.

AS: Can you be more specific? Name a TO technique that could be used in a science class or a staff meeting that would “amplify resistance” or circulate alternative discourses that challenge heteronormativity?

AB: One way to do this effectively would be to use Newspaper Theatre (Boal, 1979; 2002) in classrooms and staff rooms. Three Newspaper Theatre techniques could be applied to a plethora of articles published this month that obscure, reify, or challenge heteronormativity. Students, teachers, and administrators could engage in the technique of *crossed reading*. In *crossed reading*, two news articles are read or viewed in an alternating format as participants identify the ways in which the pieces contrast or complement various ideologies. A second technique that could be used to challenge heteronormative discourses is called *complementary reading*. This technique asks participants to add information to the news that has been intentionally omitted by powerful interests. Participants might take an article from a local paper about the online bullying

of a gay student and add missing provocations to the text. A third Newspaper Theatre technique that could be employed is called *parallel action*. The participants are asked to mimic actions as the news is being viewed or read. The movements disrupt and amplify performatives because of their complementary placement against the text. And teachers, administrators, and students should not be afraid to use news that engages and disturbs the visual sensibilities of our ocularcentric (Rose, 2007) society.

AS: I have used Newspaper Theatre techniques as a classroom teacher, an educational consultant, and as a researcher. A significant challenge with this TO technique and with many of the others, is how to work respectfully with others so they can help themselves. How do we ensure that we do not substitute one oppressive performative act with another?

AB: Paulo said it very well when he said, “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption” (Freire, 2008, p. 54). When outsiders and insiders facilitate TO methods, they must have a desire to learn from those they consider to be *marginalized*. Helping people can be dangerous. It takes wisdom and sympathy to understand that no matter how well intentioned you are, as an outsider to an oppressed group, you are never the expert within the group. You must never offer advice if you do not have to take the same risks (Goodman, 2009). There are serious consequences to every telling. Those who have been victimized by homophobic actions or words have the most to teach about how to eliminate homophobic toxicity from school communities.

AS: TO methods are designed to make space for people to enact what they already know?

AB: Yes and no. TO facilitators must never impose their will on the participants but they must poke and prod when the participants are telling themselves stories constructed by the oppressor. We must be able to name and extract the oppressors in our minds. Your Margaret makes me believe administrators have many cops creating havoc in their heads! It sounds like your school principals could benefit from the extraction of imagined and real oppressive narratives. [Boal laughs and claps his hands together]

AS: Tell me more about the Cops in our Heads exercise.

AB: All of society's morality, values, and oppressions exist in the smallest social interactions. Our desires, passions, hatreds, and loves, are propagated inside our bedrooms as well as in our institutions through repression and seduction. An individual's struggle is also the struggle of the society in which it occurs (Boal, 1990). In TO work, participants are asked to make images with their bodies of the oppressions that impact their lives. These images contain the ideologies, institutions, politics, relationships, and the normative constructions of reality that prevent people from thinking wildly or speaking radically. The sculptures also contain representations of the social and individual disciplinarians that operate as our mental cops. Cops in the Head is a theatre exercise that is particularly concerned with the oppressions that have been internalized but remain unrecognizable to the participant. Cops in the Head requires a participant to conjure a recent situation when he was confronted with an incident of oppression. The facilitator asks him

to pinpoint and name the exact moment during the incident when he was forced to make a choice. The rest of the exercise takes place inside that sliver of time.

AS: It would be instructive if one of the principal certification requirements in Manitoba was to engage with other aspiring administrators in a series of Cops in the Head exercises. Think of the assumptions that would be unearthed! Principals could become much clearer about the impact of the heteronormative constructions that act as filters when they make decisions that impact teachers, youth, and families. There would be so many rich opportunities for new administrators to dissect and enhance complex decision making processes in schools.

AB: You asked me earlier how we can respectfully help others to help themselves. I will tell you that working together to extract the cops in our heads is respectful and transformational work. Everyone has cops. One of your cops wants you to be scared of the power of TO in schools... Unfortunately many people do not see how the elites' interests have manufactured their cops. But once you dynamize your cops and permit yourself and others to battle them in the theatre, you can dismantle debilitating emotional prisons. The personal benefits are felt long after the theatre workshop is over.

AS: We'll leave my cops for now. There are too many to speak of in the time that we have left. Let's return to our struggle with heteronormativity in school communities. Do you believe that TO work can problematize our heteronormative cops?

AB: Yes. TO methods can trouble the heteronormative cops that have taken up residence in the minds of LGBTQ youth and adults. After the cops are dismissed, TO methods can effectively create space for LGBTQ youth and adults to identify heteronormative policies and practices in school communities. It is extremely important to *talk about the way the world is*. It is equally important to *discuss our dreams for a world not yet*, a world that does not oppress LGBTQ people. Once we have a better understanding of the way the world is, and a clearer vision of the world we want, we can use TO methods to build a rehearsal space for LGBTQ youth and adults to invent and try out different strategies to eliminate the oppressions. The sensory, emotional, and aesthetic components of TO increase the possibility that radical new ideas may surface in the rehearsal space (Boal, 2006). People do not come in to the theatre with these radical new ideas. The ideas surface because the participants are working in the theatre.

AS: This is similar to Badiou's (2013) assertion that the theatre is capable of producing "theatre-ideas" meaning it is capable of generating ideas that cannot be produced by any other means.

AB: Of course. The theatre allows human beings to observe themselves in action. It is a dichotomic space or a space within a space (Boal, 1995). Participants become spect-actors in their own lives and when we dynamize life, we demechanize the body and generate relief from repetitive tasks and thinking (Boal, 2006). In the theatre, actors shed their muscular masks (Boal, 2002; 2006) and once these masks are ripped away, they begin to act differently in the world. The theatre generates sensory dialogues between emotionally charged bodies that cannot be

produced under any other circumstances. Every moment we've spent here has been about the theatre's unique properties.

AS: You have spoken and written at length about the theatre's capacity to make power relations visible. Can you talk a little about theatre and power?

AB: "Society is spectacular in the aesthetic sense of the word" (Boal, 2006, p. 31) Spectacles are born from power relations but power needs to be concretized in order to be perceived and respected. Power relations require signs, symbols, and rituals. In the theatre we make these insignias of power recognizable and maybe even a little absurd. The CEO's \$5000 suit or Justin Bieber's gold chains are insignias of power that represent egregious wealth disparities under a capitalist regime. The theatre makes the crown-less heads visible. Teachers and principals who genuinely care about heteronormativity should make use of the capacity of the theatre to highlight and challenge this injustice. We all must be armed with the ability to recognize heteronormative insignias of power.

AS: How might the concept of theatre-ideas resonate with busy school principals who might see TO methods as external to the important business of leading a school?

AB: I would start by asking administrators how well they think their school planning and reflection processes inspire social change or profound changes in teaching and learning in their schools. One of the most beautiful things about the theatre is that when something original or

counter to normative behaviours enters the field of perception, the theatre suspends, for a moment, the inevitable coding that takes place. Evocative theatre is not easily contorted to fit previously established categories and assumptions. For administrators who seek more potent ways to ignite positive change in their schools and classrooms, the theatre has the capacity to generate more robust responses to the needs and aspirations of children and families. In the theatre we can create shared responsibility for school initiatives and community struggles. For instance, during the second performance of a Forum Theatre play, you cannot shout your interventions from the balcony. You must come on stage, insert yourself in the struggle, and try your idea out with the other actors.

AS: Let's talk about -

AB: If I may, I want to speak about another profound capacity of the theatre that leaders in schools might find compelling. Many leaders in complex organizations like schools, want to be recognized as people who can help others see the relevance and connectivity in their work. Hopefully because the work is critically important and not just a make-work project for management! [Boal smiles] The theatre is telescopic. It moves spect-actors continuously between individual stories and universal implications. Sensory unities and disunities link or uncouple an individual character's story to some kind of greater ethical imperative. Imagine if families, teachers, and administrators could move (if it was justifiable of course!) more elegantly between the individual activities in a school and the greater social good. And, in cases where school activities could not be legitimately linked to the greater good, they would be quickly changed or extracted.

AS: You have spoken passionately about the transformative potential of TO methods and named many of the attitudes and some of the processes that would need to be in place in a school for TO methods to be consistently and effectively used. What are some of the additional structures, processes, and attitudes that must be cultivated or in place?

AB: In TO, images, movement, words, and sounds, are fruits that fall to the ground and multiply the impact of TO (Boal, 2006). Schools must create a love for all four elements in their classes. TO would flourish in schools where students learn beyond antiquated disciplines. The economic struggles of oppressed families, environmental degradation, heteronormativity or other human rights violations should inform multidisciplinary inquiries. I find it absurd that schools use subject specific, fragmented curriculum guides written by government people who are far removed from the lived experiences of the teachers and families! TO would thrive in places where educators engage in problem posing education with their students (Freire, 2008). There is such a disparity between what schools preach or teach [smiles] and the struggles and dreams of the oppressed families who live in the school community. In 1990 in Porto Alegre, Brazil the Worker's Party decided to allow the citizens to allocate a significant portion of the city's budget. What do you think happened? The people built new drainage systems, democratically elected their school principals, and they decreased a great deal of the political corruption in their neighbourhoods. Serious changes! 15,000 locals take part in the "orçamento participativo" each year (Kingsley, 2012, par. 7). The school's budget, curricula, and staffing decisions should and

could be made democratically. It is possible. TO methods can make your educational praxis more democratic.

AS: Augusto, my former students have been some of the most resistant to increased decision making power and open-ended projects. Many people assume children and youth will appreciate having decision making power and that they'll gleefully accept the invitation to pursue their own lines of inquiry. My experience teaches me this is not always the case.

AB: We must not blame the children for the school system's inadequacies. How many mind, body, or spiritual experiences have trained the students before they arrived in your classroom? Of course they resist problem posing education! Their minds and bodies are mechanized. Their sensory memories tell them it is less painful to provide you with answers to innocuous questions. What I am about to say may sound counter-intuitive but teachers, students, and administrators should play more games together if they want to engage in radical pedagogy. Theatre games allow groups of people to make rules. But inside the boundaries they articulate in the game, there is an expansive space for creative freedom (Boal, 2002). Through emotional play, surprise, movement, and laughter, students and educators shatter the ideological chains that constrain their bodies.

AS: I think we should play theatre games during professional development workshops. I am so tired of group-think and large pieces of poster paper decorated with Sharpie markers.

AB: Yes, educators must challenge the neoliberal professional development industry. It is a ludicrous practice to spend thousands of dollars to fly in consultants and motivational speakers to teach your teachers. There is a great deal of untapped wisdom inside the school and in the wider community. Are school staff meetings public in Manitoba?

AS: [smiles] No. Parents and students have their own councils.

AB: I would advocate for integrated, monthly, school meetings that are open to the public. At these meetings, administrators, teachers, students, and community members could engage in Newspaper, Image, or Forum Theatre to identify topics for teacher and administrator professional development. The teachers' and the principals' professional development would become directly linked to community development goals. Standardized professional development is just as dangerous as standardized tests and curricula for students. I would argue for complete teacher and principal autonomy in terms of how they want to engage in their *problem posing professional development*.

AS: Many administrators already engage teachers in reflective conversations about what needs to be improved in the schoo-

AB: Yes, but consensus building is centred around what administrators, the school board, or the province thinks needs to be changed! How could we determine more equitable priorities and policies? I would make the case for a new version of Legislative Theatre (Boal, 1998) -

something we might call Policy Theatre (PT). Members of the community would create short Forum Theatre plays throughout the school year. Audience interventions during the second performances of the plays would be used to create, inform, or resist school policy. Citizens could use PT to deconstruct the evolution of harmful policies and use PT as a tool to generate policy alternatives. PT could be used by citizens in a school community to resist policy decisions made at the school or at the provincial level. The people could demand policy makers in schools, divisions and the government answer questions that were generated by the PT and hold them accountable for their answers. It would be extraordinary if schools cultivated critical reflection in their respective communities about educational policy externalities! PT could become a viable means for school community members to see how power and policy exacerbate inequities in a democracy.

AS: It would be a dream if all schools were places where young people could...

AB: Education is an opportunity for teachers, administrators, children, and parents to see themselves as artists in the world. An artist claims a unique perspective because he or she sees the world as it is and the way the world ought to be. We must all learn to share our perspectives so people in our community can encounter the world through our eyes. "The human being is the only animal capable of creating metaphors. The more it 'metaphorises', the more human it becomes" (Boal, 2006, p. 26). Schools should be places where children, families and educators make their lives personifications of love, justice, and radical hope.

AS: A principal is expected to articulate a vision for the school and to continuously make decisions about practices, policies, and problems that impact teachers, students, and families. Is it possible for educational administrators to participate in, or to facilitate TO work, or does their positional power mean we must tell our dear Virgilio that TO methods are merely props?

AB: When I was a vereador or councilman in Sao Paulo, it felt as though my body's cells would reorganize as I walked through the chamber doors (Boal, 1998). It was more difficult to access my emotions and it became much easier to say things like, "I did the best I could. There was nothing left to do." I clung to laws and policies when I was unable to fulfill my promises to the people who had elected me. Administrators and vereadores become mechanized by the regulations, policies, and administrative responsibilities that construct their bodies and identities (Boal, 1998). Administrators should selfishly adopt TO in order to humanize themselves in their work. The moral imperative of TO work in the context of leadership has to do with humility and honesty. Leaders must put down their capes to catch a glimpse of their position within the web of interdependence that connects them with the people they purport to lead. Policy and administrative responsibilities must not be used to obfuscate corrupt decision making processes. Administrators must protect themselves from their own corruption. How do they accomplish this? They make space for processes that hold them accountable for the promises they make. Newspaper, Forum, Image, and Legislative/Policy Theatre can create the conditions for ethical, moral, and transformative leadership work.

AS: Sometimes I believe that artists can see the connections or the webs before others...

AB: Excellent administrators should think like artists because artists reveal the ideological relationships hidden by the simplification of the language which describes people and ideas (Boal, 2006). Many labels you use in schools such as, refugee, at-risk, and special needs, simplify the complexity of the lived realities of those who labour under the weight of these essentializing terms.

[pause... The server brings some more hot water for Boal but he refuses because it is time to go.]

AB: There are many liberating possibilities and perils enmeshed in TO work. Will school administrators respond to your challenge to experiment with TO in school communities?

{End of transcript.}

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