

Tripartite identities:

journeying with myself as
Teacher-Researcher-Playwright
and reflecting on the use of
dramatic writing as a creative
and analytic practice.

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Research Questions

What is the relationship between processes of learning and methods of assessment in the experiences of A Level Drama students and teachers within the context of Further Education?

Acknowledging enduring dichotomies, to what extent do the participants' experiences of learning and assessment relate to divisions of theory and practice?

How can the craft of drama support a creative analysis and (re)presentation of the lived experiences of the research participants?

And The Performance Speaks

A play by Beth Curtis

‘the writing of a play is an act of inquiry’

(Harris and Sinclair, 2014:5)



*As the wheelwright makes a wheel,
the playwright makes a play
The researcher has a new language to write,
and wright with*

I am a teacher

I am a drama teacher

I learn and teach about drama,

through drama,

and alongside others

I am initially afraid of my new identity as researcher

It feels 'other'

Identity/Positionality

'Tripartite identity' (Sallis, 2018)

'a boundary is more like a membrane than a wall' (Conquergood, 2002:145)

a/r/tography as an arts-based form of living inquiry that can be used to explore aspects of the artists/researcher/teacher's lives and one which brings 'the viewer/reader figures into the process of meaning making, adding layers of inter/textual dwelling' (Springgay, Irwin and Kind, 2005:899-900)

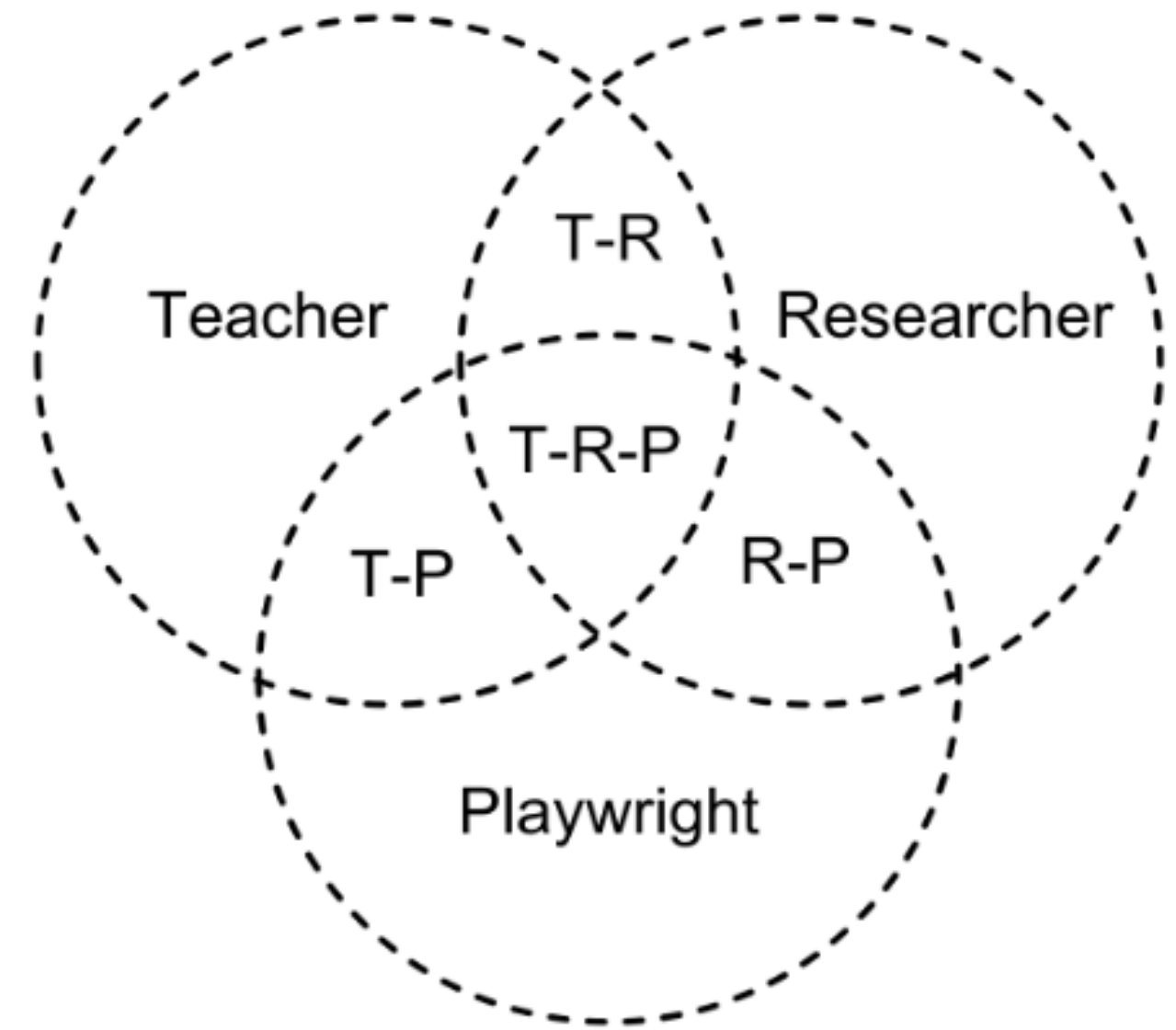


Figure 1. The intersection of the teacher, researcher, playwrights' identities.

Frameworks for practice

‘Those holding the dinosaurian belief that "creative" and "analytic" are contradictory and incompatible modes are standing in the path of a meteor’

(Richardson, 2000:930)

‘the ethnographic drama is an interesting form of postfoundational scholarship in that it is both (or neither) data and analysis’

(Petersen, 2013:293)

balancing ‘claims of truth with recognition of the intersubjective nature of all knowledge claims’

(Ellingson, 2009:14)

research-based theatre (Beck et al., 2011) -
‘a methodology that theatricalizes research data’
(Belliveau, 2015:8)

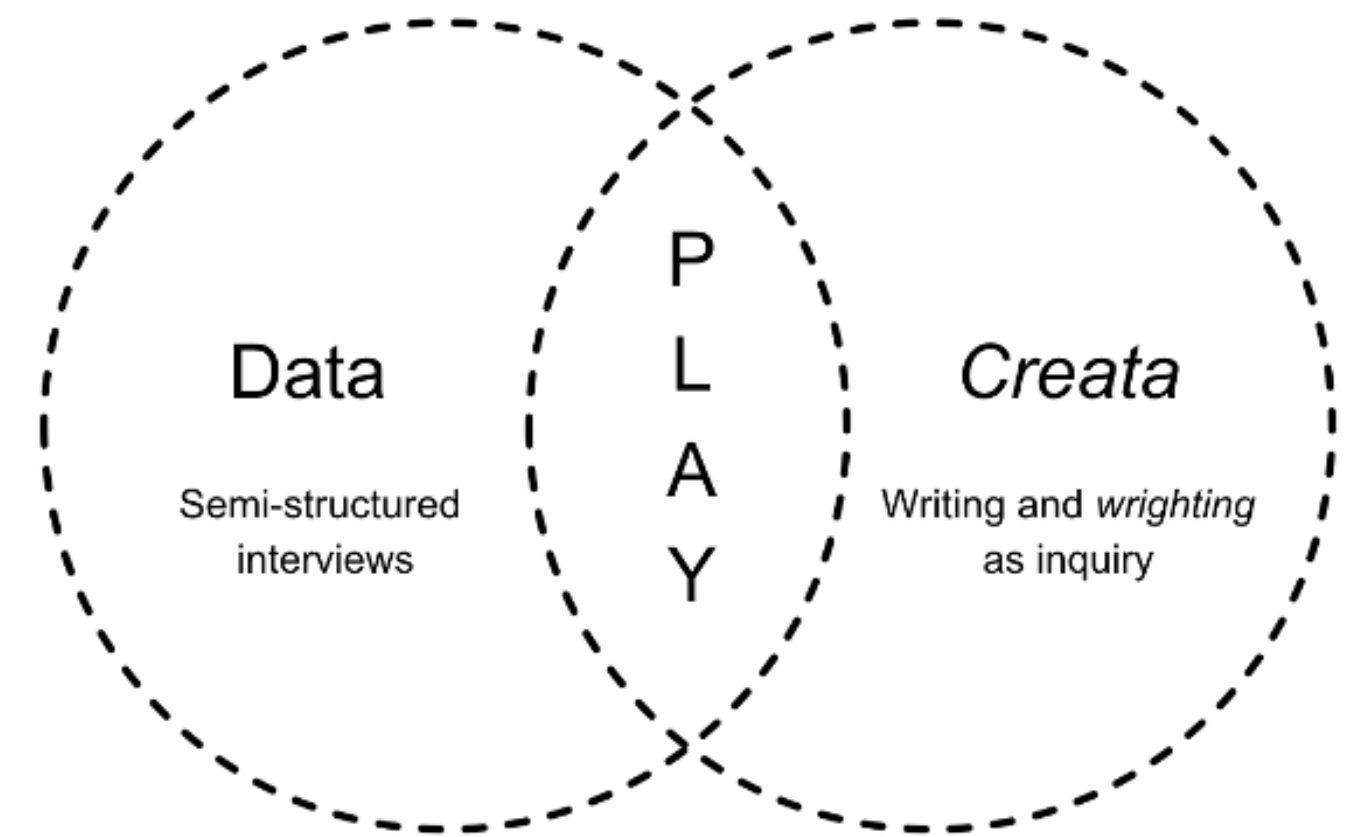


Figure 2. Data/*Creativity* as a method of collection-analysis-(re)presentation.

A four-stage approach to the creative and analytic practice of the Teacher-Researcher-Playwright

Listening and responding to what the 'data wants'
(Koro-Ljungberg, 2016:52)



- Stage 1: iterations in the transcription and creative coding of voices and bodies.
- Stage 2: identifying themes and the creation of story, structure, and character.
- Stage 3: the synthesis of data and *creata* enables initial themes to be reviewed.
- Stage 4: reflections on seeing and hearing the play as an embodied artefact.

Stage 1: iterations in the transcription and creative coding of voices and bodies.

development of the 'artist'

I kind of thought it was more based around your own work and your own performances - and like developing yourself as an artist, rather than like, studying other theatre plays

"the 'doing' of it is not valued in the same way" (as the writing about doing it)

people can go into an art gallery, and they can look at something hanging on the wall, and it's kind of tangible - but the thing about theatre is that it's ephemeral - it's there, and then it's gone, and you are there in the moment with it, and that's the experience that you have"

"it's constantly to do with the boundaries that an exam board is putting around what we are doing"

Borders + Boundaries:

freeing A-level drama from the confines of the stage, the theatre of examination

Speaks about early days as a drama teacher, where focus would be on storytelling, creating, becoming someone else - "Dorothy Heathcote way"

"when that started in drama, there was a big lot of people saying we mustn't ever examine this - what to do?"

Theatre performance is very subjective

"it's weird to do it in such a little box"

...ness point that it's same for traditional learners - the process to be justified and support evidence & research

"Process is King"

how much are you worth?

♀ = A
♀ = C
♀ = E

Would you feel that the A-level was less credible if it didn't have a written exam?

"I think, maybe I, I might enjoy it more, to be fair (laugh/smirk) but I think other people would look at and be like, that's not a proper A level because A levels are about the exams at the end of the year, in like May and June, and like, THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF THESE PAST TWO YEARS is building up to these written exams where you sit in a hall, and that's people's view of it"

EXAM HALL

exam	WRITTEN
exam	
exam	
exam	
exam	
exam	

A Levels = Exams

We've noticed as well, haven't we, that students - aren't coming up (nods in emphasis) alright? (clocks to camera)

- aren't coming up with the skills they would've had five or ten years ago"

because they've not been exposed to dramas as much, as part of the broader curric.

University-style learning: research, synthesis of ideas, creation etc.

"Needing to have it nailed down"

A-level Study Resistance to Uncertainty

"You do this, you get that tick, or that mark"

"Your whole grade, or like part of your grade, just depends on what you can produce in 2 hours"

Seeing the world through someone else's eyes - does drama nurture empathy?

lots of students have struggled to this

TIME

creative process/thinking takes time

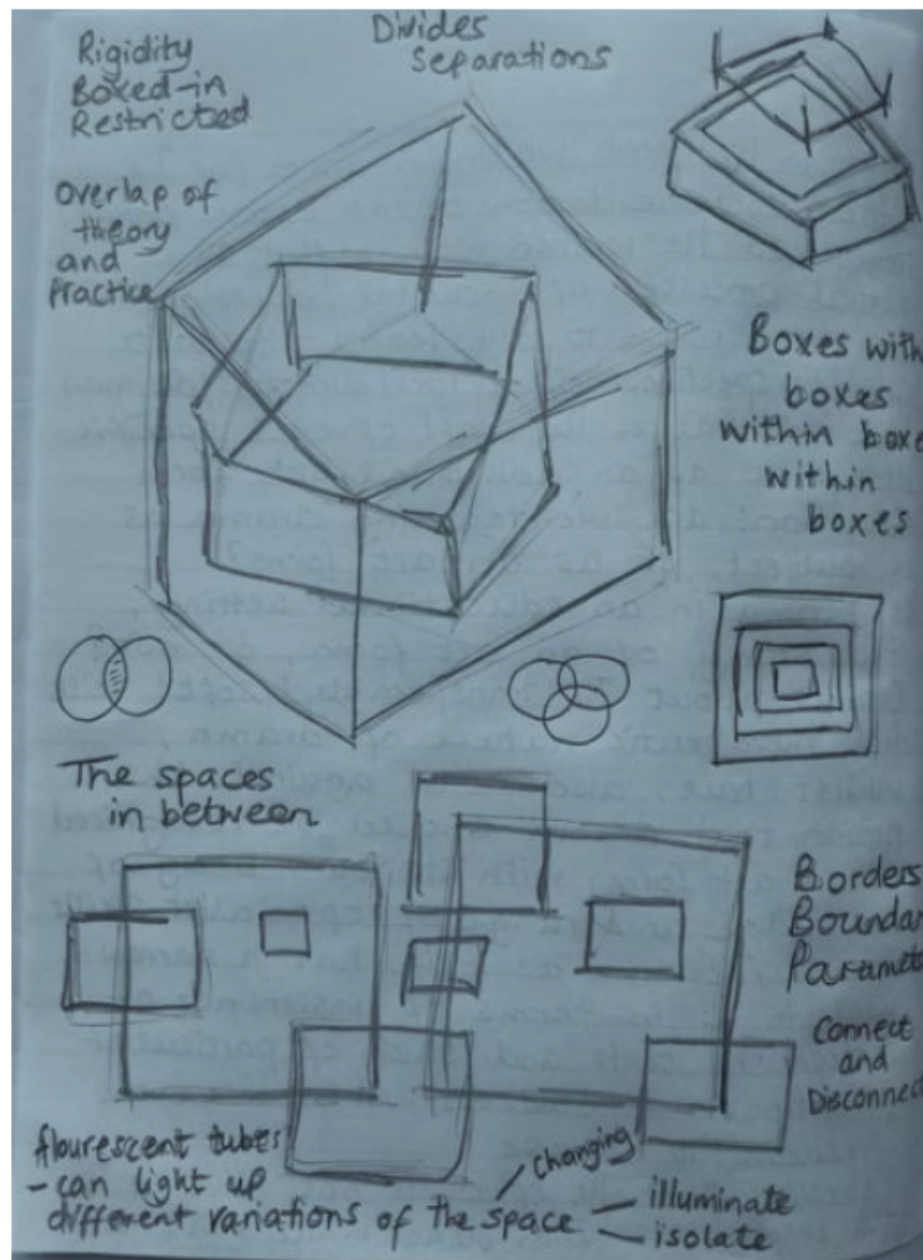
Stage 2: identifying themes and the creation of story, structure, and character.

‘conceptual themes that emerged from the data were to become the play’s initial broad scene and plotline elements’ (Sallis, 2008:10).

- *Episode 1 - What other people think: defining ‘academic’.*
- *Episode 2 - Divisions are discussed: debates about theory and practice.*
- *Episode 3 - How do we measure creativity?: the omnipresent examiner.*
- *Episode 4 - Moments of connection: doing and being.*
- *Episode 5 - Reimagining: process over product and lessons from Covid-19.*

‘Characters in the script can be constructed as composites so that the themes that emerged during data collection— which in interviews, for example, may have come forth in multiple interviews— can be used to create character “types.”’ (Leavy, 2015:185).

Stage 3: the synthesis of data and *creata* enables initial themes to be reviewed.



TIGHTROPE

Somebody balances on a tightrope that divides the stage.

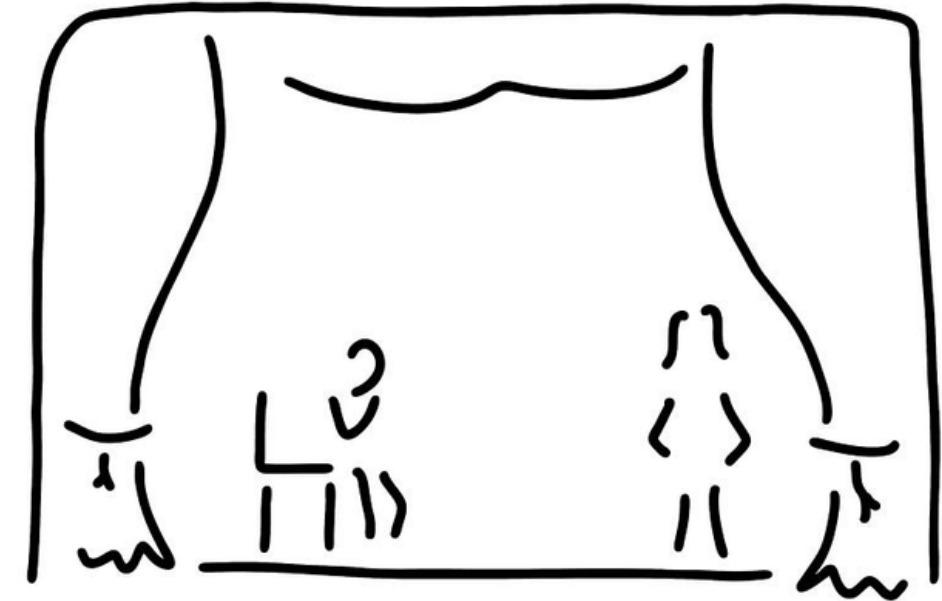
"The tightrope is really effective as is the performance element throughout that I feel really works and transforms the dialogue and creates an unwritten theatrical language that highlights the actual work created. I would just encourage you to be bigger and bolder with it!"

Peer Reviewer 2

Stage 4: reflections on seeing and hearing the play as an embodied artefact.

As an audience to the data, but participant in the play I was able to embody the data myself, which provided a deeper understanding and was a meaningful experience.

Delegate-Actor 1



The play has good structure, it makes its main message concisely with strong arguments to back it. It also gives both sides of the "debate" a decent amount of time to provide the audience with a balanced view... It captures the feelings of both students' and teachers' opinions surrounding the flaws in the educational system, specifically looking at Drama, without sounding whingey or whiney. As a drama student too, I certainly feel like my frustrations and criticisms have been voiced. There's a sense of anticipation and enthusiasm, and it's made clear that Drama certainly isn't a dying subject, so long as the higher-ups are able to take a step back and rethink how they've been running things. It feels like there's a productive reform on the horizon.

Student participant/reviewer.

And The Performance Speaks

The researchers task:

‘[t]hey are there to hear the world and make sure that it can speak back’

(Thrift, 2008:18 in Østern et al, 2023:277)

T2: / sure, but at the end of the day, it's what speaks to an audience, and whether or not it hits, and does it work, or not?

T1: absolutely: our art form, it's live - you have to smell, and breathe it, and taste it, and hear it

T2: what you are fundamentally wanting them to do at the end is to *make the play!* - and to make the performance – AND THE PERFORMANCE SPEAKS – that's the whole point! ...

The Performance Speaks.

The teachers begin to join with the students in the movement.

They work as if solving a puzzle. It is intricate, complex, methodical.

It builds to a crescendo:

*the lights grow brighter, glowing neon
the movement becomes intense,
the space grows,
the parameters are dismantled, and the Examiner is left alone.*

Shifting identities

borders not boundaries

that are malleable and permeable

flex and shift

like sand

leaving indentations of form

reminders of the body

overlapping

facets of self

come in

and out

of focus



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