



# ARTS EDUCATION IN IRELAND: VISIONS OF A PERFORMATIVE TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH CULTURE

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## Abstract

In this paper we offer an overview of the arts in education in Ireland, making a case for a performative approach. We discuss theory, research and practice – situating the developments in Ireland within a multicultural context. We begin by offering our own definition of Arts (in) Education research, drawing on seminal policies and interrogating various art classifications, from a historical and etymological perspective. Next, we consider their impact at a global and regional level and we examine how policy has influenced the curriculum. Following this, we reflect on the ramifications of theatre and drama in education, highlighting the fragmentation in the field. In the main argument of the paper, we make a case for performative education, illustrating our vision for performative language teaching and research. We suggest that theory of aesthetic experience can be a useful framework, and close with remarks on our contemporary society.

**Keywords:** Arts (in) education; performative language teaching; learning; aesthetic experience; *Scenario* journal.

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## Résumé

Dans cet article, nous proposons un aperçu des arts dans l'éducation en Irlande, en plaidant pour une approche performative. Nous abordons la théorie, la recherche et la pratique, en situant leurs développements en Irlande dans un contexte multiculturel. Nous proposons d'abord notre propre définition de la recherche sur les arts dans le domaine de l'éducation en nous appuyant sur des politiques qui les sous-tendent et en interrogeant diverses classifications artistiques, dans une perspective historique et étymologique. Ensuite, nous discutons de leur impact au niveau régional et mondial et nous examinons comment la politique a influencé le curriculum. Enfin, nous réfléchissons aux ramifications du théâtre et de l'art dramatique dans l'éducation, en soulignant la fragmentation du domaine. L'idée centrale de notre contribution est de plaider en faveur d'une éducation performative à travers une vision performative de l'enseignement et de la recherche dans le domaine des langues. Nous suggérons que la théorie de l'expérience esthétique peut être un cadre utile en concluant par des remarques sur notre société contemporaine.

**Mots-clés:** Arts et éducation; enseignement et apprentissage performatif des langues; expériences esthétiques; journal *Scenario*.

## Introduction

It is a great pleasure for us to contribute to this first issue of the *Journal of Research in Arts Education*. The journal promises to play an important role in the promotion of research in Arts Education in France and Switzerland, and aims to situate the specific developments in these countries within an international context. Please note that both authors are applied theatre researchers and practitioners who are based at Irish universities, hence the emphasis in this introductory article on Arts Education in Ireland will be on theatre in third level education.

We begin with our own definition of the Arts (in) Education. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence of a distinction, in the Irish educational arena, between Arts Education and Arts *in* Education. According to the *Arts in Education Charter* report, Arts Education encompasses “mainstream teaching and learning of the arts as part of general education” (2012, p. 3). This may refer to the teaching of music composition: teaching dance; teaching visual arts; teaching acting skills, and so forth. Arts *in* Education, on the other hand, refers to “interventions from the realm of the arts into the education system, by means of artists of all disciplines visiting schools or by schools engaging with professional arts and cultural practice in the public arena” (2012, p. 3). The Charter states that

Arts-in-education practice involves skilled, professional artists of all disciplines working for and with schools in the making, receiving and interpreting of a wide range of arts experiences. Arts-in-education practice can happen within or outside the school. (2012, p. 10)

We wish to reject this polarity. We distance ourselves from such clear-cut definitions as we believe they fail to capture the richness of the field. Instead, we introduce a more encompassing definition, looking at the idea of the teacher *as* artist, and the artist *as* teacher. This may be the fruit of a formal partnership but, more often than not, it is the result of a lifelong career where teaching and the arts are intermingled. The teacher/artist model embraces the abovementioned contexts, and also includes a wide spectrum of individuals who are educators and have an inclination for the arts; who are artists and have an inclination for teaching; creatives who find themselves teaching; teachers who find themselves creating. We trust that each and every reader of this journal will have his/her unique biography as a teacher/artist – as well as a scholarly passion for research. Indeed, it is the qualitative research element that recognises these professional experiences as belonging together.

We understand Arts (in) Education research as a rich methodological tradition, informed by a widely recognised qualitative paradigm (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Eisner, 2008; Finley, 2007; Leavy, 2020; Siegesmund, 2014). We cherish the productive crossroads where teachers are artists, and artists are teachers – considering the teacher/artist as a professional identity. Thus, we propose that the phrasing Arts Education and Arts *in* Education are used interchangeably, and we refer to Arts (in) Education research as a field of inquiry related to teacher/artists engaged in creative practices to facilitate learning of any discipline, within the domain of formal and informal education.

## 1. The Arts : historical and intercultural Perspectives

Before we look at culturally-specific contexts, let us begin with a global perspective by reminding the readers of two Unesco World Congresses that explicitly focused on the Arts *in* Education. The Congress in Lisbon (2006) resulted in a *Roadmap for Arts Education*, and the Congress in Seoul (2010) in the *Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education*.

Both documents continue to be an important point of reference for anyone wishing to situate arts education in a broader international context.

In the *Roadmap for Arts Education* (Unesco, 2007), for example, it states:

People in all cultures have always, and will always, seek answers to questions related to their existence. Every culture develops means through which the insights obtained through the search for understanding are shared and communicated. Basic elements of communication are words, movements, touch, sounds, rhythms and images. In many cultures, the expressions which communicate insights and open up room for reflection in people’s minds are called “art”. Throughout history labels have been put on various types of art expressions. It is important to acknowledge the fact that even if terms such as “dance”, “music”, “drama” and “poetry” are used world-wide, the deeper meanings of such words differ between cultures. Thus, any list of arts fields must be seen as a pragmatic categorization, ever evolving and never exclusive. (p. 7)

In the medieval Western world, the following counted among the respected *septem artes liberales*: rhetorics, grammar, dialectics, arithmetics, geometry, astronomy and music.

Figure 1 *Septem Artes* – © The Trustees of the British Museum



What this drawing reveals is that, in the Middle Ages, there was no neat separation between science and art. An obvious example is the work of inventor Leonardo Da Vinci, operating seamlessly across disciplines like botany, life drawing, cartography, engineering, painting and beyond. However, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, art and science had become distinct – as it is evident in Descartes' (1641/1999) *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*. From there on, we have grown to consider art and science at the opposite sides of the spectrum of knowledge – a rather unproductive affair.

The schism of the *Septem Artes* did not stop with art and science. Even within the arts, the 19<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed a meticulous dissection of art forms, styles and genres culminating in a myriad of clusters and specialisms. What was considered to constitute the 'canonical arts' in Medieval times underwent several changes and transformation in the centuries that followed. The question is, what kind of 'pragmatic categorizations' have we arrived at in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? And are they really useful for us today, as Arts (in) Education research practitioners?

If we take our own institutions as an example, it seems that universities arrive at their very own categorizations, the rationale for grouping subjects under the umbrella term Arts can be quite different. An undergraduate student at University College Cork who wishes to study Arts in the *Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences* can combine subjects from a list of thirty very different subjects.<sup>1</sup> S/he will find

1 For the full list go to:  
[www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/courses/#arts-subjects](http://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/courses/#arts-subjects)

that the list of Arts subjects in the *Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* at Trinity College Dublin looks quite different.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, some universities distinguish between practical and theoretical approaches to the arts. Here, going back to Descartes' dualism can be helpful. In his *Treatise of Man* (1633/1972), Descartes differentiated between matter and mind, feeling and thinking, in an unproductive dichotomy which, down the line, led to a separation between feeling and cognition, practice and theory. While we reject Cartesian dualism, aligning ourselves with an embodied stance to cognition (Varela, Thompson et al., 2017), we acknowledge that Descartes' legacy is still palpable in our contemporary education system.

As a matter of fact, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed classifications emerging within the Arts not only in terms of art form but also in terms of art forms being applied or theoretical. Thus, nowadays, undergraduate students can choose to enrol in a degree in Applied Theatre or Theatre Studies, resulting in very different conceptualisations within the same art form, as we explore in Section 3.

The picture is even more confusing when the range of Arts subjects in these universities are compared with the categorizations of universities in other countries. In the case of French universities, the term arts might also figure prominently in the name of a faculty, for example, the *Faculté des Arts, Lettres, Langues, Sciences humaines* at the University

2 [www.tcd.ie/courses/undergraduate/faculty/#F01](http://www.tcd.ie/courses/undergraduate/faculty/#F01)

of Aix-Marseille.<sup>3</sup> The *Département des Arts* is divided into five *Secteurs*: *Arts plastiques et sciences de l'art*, *Musique et sciences de la musique*, *Cinéma et audiovisuel*, *Théâtre*, *Médiation culturelle*. It seems that the emphasis here is on what we might provisionally refer to as the 'Creative Arts'.<sup>4</sup>

However, subdividing the Arts in this way is by no means common practice in other cultural contexts. A quick glance at the homepage of a German university, Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, reveals that there is no equivalent *Department of Arts* (or in German: *Fachbereich Künste*), the only two creative arts subjects that are on offer (Music and Visual Art) are based in the *Institute of Art and Visual Culture*, which is one of seven institutes in the *Faculty of Languages and Cultures* (*Fakultät Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaften*).<sup>5</sup>

What this brief virtual excursion into the higher education landscape of different countries clearly shows is that what is understood by the 'Arts', 'Applied Arts' or 'Creative Arts', and how they are positioned within a university's spectrum of subjects, differs considerably. While in medieval times the *septem artes* seem to have represented a university's core curriculum, what are the shifts that have taken place since? To what extent is there national or international agreement on what constitutes a university's core curriculum? Are the Arts, the Applied Arts and Creative Arts regarded as core subjects, or do they play a rather marginal role? And what about the inclusion/exclusion of arts subjects in secondary and primary schools? This cannot be explored in more detail here, but the following extract from Fleming's (2012) *The Arts in Education* is indicative of the difficulty anyone faces who wishes to promote the Arts in Education:

Deciding what counts as an arts subject is just one challenge for curriculum designers. [...] It is not the intention of this chapter to make recommendations about how the arts curriculum should be organised. This is a question for particular local contexts. Instead the emphasis will be on examining the key arts subjects and their importance as well as the key contentious issues that have surfaced in their history. [...] The categorisation adopted in this chapter is therefore fairly arbitrary. (p. 97)

3 <https://allsh.univ-amu.fr/departement-arts>

4 However, representatives of other Arts subjects, for example History or Psychology, might justifiably claim that creativity is an essential feature also of their subjects.

5 <https://uol.de/fk3>

Fleming's 'arbitrary list' of key arts subjects includes *Visual Art*, *Fiction*, *Drama*, *Music*, *Dance*, *Poetry*. Some readers might wonder why fiction and poetry are included, whereas film is not.

However, Fleming's implication that arts curriculum-related decisions are best taken at local level, serves as a reminder that as researchers, teachers or practitioners, we operate within specific institutional structures and constraints. The new *Journal of Research in Arts Education* gives us an opportunity to discuss these with colleagues from other institutional, disciplinary and cultural backgrounds, and to enter into an intercultural dialogue about different understandings of and approaches to Arts (in) Education research and practice.

## 2. Arts Education in Ireland

In what follows, we will give a brief overview of arts education in Ireland. While both of us share an interest in a range of art forms, our main point of reference will be the art form of theatre. As our world urgently needs *creative* solutions to the very challenging problems we are facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for example, in the context of migration and climate change, it is reassuring that the current Irish government aspires to strengthen the creative arts at all levels of society:

The Creative Ireland Programme is guided by a vision that every person in Ireland will have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential. It is a five year all-of-Government initiative, from 2017 to 2022, to place creativity at the centre of public policy.<sup>6</sup>

The Irish government's aspiration is also reflected in the Strategic Plans of universities. UCC's Strategic Plan (2017-2022), for example, lists creativity as a core value that guides and underpins the institution's actions and processes (p. 22).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, TCD mentions creativity as embedded in one of its goals in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.<sup>8</sup> To what extent official acknowledgment of the importance of creativity has translated into actions that benefit the Arts (in) Education sector, still needs to be assessed. According to O'Halloran's (2016) article, *Shameful gap in arts spending between state and Europe*, Ireland at the time lagged far behind in terms of spending for the arts (merely 1/6 of the

6 <https://creativeireland.ie/en>

7 <https://www.ucc.ie/en/strategicplanning/2017/>

8 <https://www.tcd.ie/strategy/trinity-strategy.pdf?v=1>

European average). However, the hope that with the current government's policy-driven promotion of the arts will lead to increased spending for the arts, has been dashed by the feared negative economic consequences of the COVID 19 crisis.

Despite the problematic underfunding of the arts, the good news is that, generally speaking, the arts seem to be well respected among the Irish population. Finneran (2016) refers to a report stating

that attendance at theatre is above the European average but it remains a minority pursuit with 45% of the adult population (15+) having attended theatre/opera/musical/comedy events in 2014, with only 24% of them having done so more than once. The report cites a significant correlation between participation in the arts and attendance in the arts. (p. 110)

With specific reference to the art form of theatre, Finneran (2016) concludes that theatre attendance seems to be healthy and he hypothesizes

that in Ireland there exists for many people a broader embodiment and engagement with drama which lies beyond the theatre walls. There also clearly exists in Ireland a belief in the importance of engagement with the arts, possibly in pursuit of a broad and balanced education, or perhaps for reasons of acquisition of the social capital that is associated with participation in the arts. (p. 111)

More recently, both of us became involved in a project that aims to develop an international glossary in the field of *Performative Arts & Pedagogy*. Together with three other theatre/applied theatre researchers and practitioners, we put together a report on *Performative Arts & Pedagogy* in Ireland. The report (Ó Breacháin et al., 2019) is accessible on line and contains sections that focus on

- performative arts in the community;
- professional theatre and theatre in education;
- performative arts in primary, secondary and third level education.

Many of the aspects covered in these sections deserve further discussion. To give just one example, in the section on arts education at secondary level, it is pointed out that «Music and Visual Art have existed as subjects in second level since the formation of a national curriculum, however Drama/Theatre has not featured» (p. 33). Even though

committed individuals, professional organisations and the *National Campaign for the Arts* have spent a lot of time and effort on this issue, in Ireland, the introduction of Theatre as a subject in secondary schools is, unfortunately, not within reach yet.

For arts educators in most other countries, the situation is equally disappointing. However, recent developments in Germany might give some hope. In an increasing number of German states, theatre/drama is being introduced as a third 'aesthetic' subject (a term which we will come back to later) alongside music and art. In the meantime, most federal states have implemented the 2006 recommendation of the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (Conference of State Cultural Ministers)

to also offer a university-track examination (Abitur) in this subject. In Hamburg, an education plan has been passed that makes drama a regular subject from primary school to secondary school. Theatre also continues to exist at school in the traditional form of free working groups or an (ungraded) optional subject, but is increasingly entering normal curricula and school structures as a full subject of its own, with the accompanying grading and examination. (Hentschel et al., 2019, p. 4)

The introduction of Theatre as a school subject is one of the topics that, we believe, deserves more focused attention in the Arts Education subject debate. What we discuss next is one of the causes for the neglect of theatre as a school subject: a systemic fragmentation within the domains of Drama and Theatre in education. In the section below we offer a brief overview of the current state of affairs.

### 3. Drama and Theatre in Education

Drama and theatre in education might be explored in three ways: the study of theatre, the development of acting skills, and drama used as a teaching approach. Historically, there has been a heated debate between these orientations, leading to echo chambers and filter bubbles whereby these cognate branches have either ignored, snubbed or (at the very worst) rejected each other. We feel it is important to understand those differences, as we stand for a more pragmatic perspective in what we call a 'performative' experience in education.

The so-called theatre/drama divide originated in the United Kingdom, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and had a ripple effect in Ireland and other English-speaking countries. Ad-

vocates of theatre studies in the 1970s and 1980s accused drama practitioners of being too loose, or unstructured. Advocates of drama education recognised the legacy of symbolic play, and accused theatre practitioners of promoting a mood of “exhibitionism, staginess or artificiality” (Fleming, 2016, p. 192). While we do not indulge in the details, the divide faded out in the 1990s but established distinct traditions in the field.

In languages other than English, the difference between ‘drama’ and ‘theatre’ may not be as clear cut, especially in languages where the terms are interchangeable. In French, for example, the noun *théâtre* can translate as both ‘drama’ and ‘theatre’. To make things more complicated, an ‘actor training’ academy or conservatoire can issue a *diplôme d’art dramatique*, while *jeux dramatiques* refers to drama games in improvisational theatre. Moreover, the English word ‘drama’ (intended as a subject) translates as both *pratique théâtrale* and *théâtre*, leaving us back at square one.

It is also interesting to note that in the German language, *Drama* refers to one of the three literary genres (drama, poetry, prose), whereas the term *Theater* is associated with performance, most often of a ‘Drama’ (in the sense of a written text), before an audience.<sup>9</sup> Since the 1970s, the discipline of *Theaterpädagogik* has been the main bridge builder between the art form of theatre and pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> However, since the 1990s, increasingly reference is also made to the term *Dramapädagogik* by German researchers and practitioners whose performative research and practice is inspired by the British Drama in Education tradition.

A closer examination of their etymology shows that the terms theatre and drama do have distinct roots. In Greek, ‘drama’ comes from *dran*, to do, act; ‘theatre’ comes from *theatron*, as well as *theasthai*, to behold, from *théa*, to gaze, and *théama* ‘spectacle’, and *theatès*, ‘spectator’. Besides ‘theatre’, from Latin *teatrum*, also signifies the site where plays take place. Following these traits, it may be easier to appreciate how drama and theatre have come to represent different practices in English-speaking countries. Additionally, beyond theatre studies (the study of literary texts) and actor training (the development of acting skills) drama as a teaching method is a wide-ranging term, referring to several traditions.

<sup>9</sup> In this context note that a project is underway to develop an international digital glossary in the field of *Performative Arts, Drama & Theatre in Education*; for further details go to: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/scenario/scenarioforum/glossaryperformativeartsdramatheatreineducation/>

<sup>10</sup> Regarding historical and current developments of ‘Theaterpädagogik’ see, for example, Hentschel et al. 2019.

On the one hand, the Drama in Education (DiE) tradition uses drama-based strategies in the classroom to facilitate the curriculum. Teacher-in-Role, a cornerstone strategy of DiE, refers to a teacher taking on a role and improvising with the students in a fictional frame. The roots of the discipline can be traced back to the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are associated with practitioners Finlay-Johnson, Heathcote and Bolton. As early as 1912, Finley-Johnson’s *The Drama Method of Teaching* positioned that teaching through drama resulted in more engaging lessons. She advocated for the use of dramatic play in the classroom.

In 1979, Bolton conceptualised these notions in *Towards a theory of drama in education*, and Heathcote (1991) acted as a catalyst to ignite the field. The two worked together (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994), creating the foundations for Drama in Education as an established discipline. The legacy of DiE is strong in Ireland: Trinity College Dublin, for example, offers a Masters in Drama in Education, founded more than 20 years ago by O’Sullivan, in consultation with O’Neill – an international authority on a form known as process drama.

On the other hand, Theatre in Education (TiE) has followed a different curve and implies very different experiences for students. Also originated in the UK, the term was coined by the Belgrade Theatre in the 1960s, and involves “using theatre and performance with small cohorts of children in schools, and involving these audiences as participants within the drama” (Wooster, 2007, p. 1).

Theatre in Education is a specific practice, whereby a group of actors perform plays in schools. The actors’ practice involves formulating a Programme for teachers to use before and after the show to explore certain themes (often commissioned by government funding bodies). TiE programmes also include a pack of resources that can be linked to a wide spectrum of educational areas. While some TiE programmes were still being funded in Ireland (before the Covid-19 pandemic), the form has suffered from some major funding cuts in the last few decades.

TiE differs substantially from children’s theatre, a genre where age-appropriate plays are performed in theatres or libraries – with children accompanied by parents. While both forms have an educational purpose, the difference between Theatre in Education and children’s theatre is that the former takes place in a school and involves a Programme (pre/post workshops and a resource pack); the latter takes place outside schools and does not necessarily

provide workshops with the actors. A notable exception is children cultural centre The Ark,<sup>11</sup> a historical institution in Ireland, halfway between children's theatre and TiE.

In the last two decades the term 'Applied Theatre' has gained popularity. It considers theatre, drama and performance research, theory and practice. Applied Theatre has established itself internationally and has become respected through a series of events, symposia, conferences and international publication (Freebody et al., 2018; Prentki & Preston, 2020; Prendergast & Saxton, 2016), as well as the journal *Applied Theatre Research*, first published in 2007 and edited by O'Connor and Freebody. Several institutions worldwide offer degrees in Applied Theatre, including third level institutions in Ireland.<sup>12</sup>

Within this realm, Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR) has recently emerged as a methodology that draws on the practice of applied theatre as a research method (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013; O'Connor & Anderson, 2015). Applied Theatre research practitioners carry out their work in schools, hospitals and libraries, as well as businesses, prisons, hospices, psychiatric wards, veteran centres, developing countries, refugees' organisations and – closer to our own research, second/foreign language teaching settings.

We are now better positioned to appreciate our own niche of expertise, that is, the Arts (in) Education and Applied Theatre research and practice, particularly in the area of language education. In an effort to encapsulate the interdisciplinarity between the arts, theatre and language education, with attention to the above-mentioned nuances and (last but not least) the multicultural element brought by our different languages (*Dramapädagogik*, *Theaterpädagogik* and *Jeux dramatique*), we introduce a field known as performative language teaching, learning and research.

#### 4. The Performative Turn

Performative language teaching and learning refers to a community of practice and research at the cusp of the Arts (in) education, Drama in Education and Second Language education. The term has established itself internationally

since its first use in 2013 (Schewe, 2013) through the scholarly contributions of Even and Schewe (2016), Crutchfield and Schewe (2017), Piazzoli (2018), Mentz and Fleiner (2018) and others. As an umbrella term, the performative turn encompasses the productive tensions between theatre and drama – within the domain of language education, that is Second Language Acquisition (SLA), linguistics, applied linguistics and translation studies.

In using the adjective 'performative', we are reminded of its roots 'form' (*performance*) and 'formative' (*performative*), preceded by the Latin suffix *per* meaning 'through' and 'by means of'. 'Performative' in this sense implies education through form, with 'form' to be intended as art, language, and the body. In this sense, a 'performative' approach to language can be defined as an embodied approach. Embodiment here refers to an orientation to teaching and learning that bypasses Cartesian dualism of mind and body. In this sense, it considers the body and the senses to be as important as the mind, in line with embodied cognition (Varela et al., 2017).

Jogschies, Schewe and Stöver-Blahak (2018) further suggest that the adjective performative can be conceived of as offering a transformative experience, as it implies "a reference to the FORMative, i.e. potential for personal development, as well as to the transFORMative, i.e. the potentially behavioural and attitude-changing dimension of teaching and learning" (p. 53).

The concept of 'performative' also echoes Austin's (1962) concept of 'performatives' in linguistics, later developed by Searle's (1969) theory of communication units as speech acts. According to Austin's famous theory, performatives are those utterances that do not just describe but actually trigger an action: "The uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even the, leading incident in the performance of the act" (p. 8).

Arguably, the adjective 'performative' is imbued with many layers of meaning. It is connected to concepts like teacher/artist, embodiment, and aesthetic experience. We have asked ourselves, how do these meanings co-exist? And what does performative mean, in practice? Table 1 attempts to capture some relevant concepts. Extracted from Schewe (2020), the table represents a synthesis of key elements associated with the construct of performative, as we understand it: an educational encounter that may generate an aesthetic experience in both the teacher/artist and students as co-artists.

<sup>11</sup> <https://ark.ie/>

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the BA in Contemporary and Applied Theatre Studies at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

**Table 1** *What does Performative stand for?*

<b>P</b>	<b>PRESENCE.</b> A state of heightened receptivity, enabling someone to think on his/her feet and act spontaneously.	<b>AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>EMBODIMENT.</b> A kind of learning experience grounded in the mind, senses, body, imagination, reflection and social sphere.	
<b>R</b>	<b>REFLECTION.</b> The quintessential element of practice, what turns experience into insight.	
<b>F</b>	<b>FEELING.</b> The feeling dimension is activated when operating in a performative mode.	
<b>O</b>	<b>OPENNESS</b> – towards other students' cultures and ideas, as well as ourselves as reflective practitioners.	
<b>R</b>	<b>RISK.</b> Risk of losing face, risk of appearing foolish, but also risk of letting go of the illusion of control, as we create with our students.	
<b>M</b>	<b>METAXIS,</b> a unique tension of dramatic form generated by playing a role while being ourselves, and the insights this may bring.	
<b>A</b>	<b>AS IF.</b> The realm of Imagination.	
<b>T</b>	<b>TEACHER/ARTIST.</b> A model for all artists who teach and all teachers who engage in creative doing.	
<b>I</b>	<b>IMPROVISATION.</b> The set of values underpinning our responses and interactions in the classroom.	
<b>V</b>	<b>VISION.</b> A vision of performative education	
<b>E</b>	<b>EMERGENCE</b> – of aesthetic meaning.	

P for PRESENCE refers to a state of heightened awareness often noted in performers, teachers, and young children engaged in deep play. It is an active state of receptivity where ideas can flow into action. As Barba (1995) described it, presence is informed by “the body-in-life able to make perceptible that which is invisible: the intention” (p. 7). This leads to the second letter, E for EMBODIMENT: a kind of learning experience grounded in the body, senses, imagination, as well as in the brain. By embodying language in action (Piazzoli, 2018) learners experience language, rather than just witnessing it. Crucially though, an embodied experience is not enough, unless it is processed through reflection. Hence, R for REFLECTION, the quintessential element of practice, what turns live experience into insight.

Next, we come to F for the FEELING dimension, activated when operating in a performative mode. As Courtney put it, “it is in and through the embodiment that we achieve felt-meaning and gain knowledge. This kind of knowledge is homologous with feeling, doing and acting” (1995, p. 51).

We all feel, as human beings. In the classroom, however, it is tempting to turn on auto-pilot in order to shield off emotions. As convenient as that may be, it is detrimental to performative practice – as presence will be compromised. O is for OPENNESS towards other students' ideas and cultures, as well as openness to scrutinise ourselves as reflective practitioners. This openness can be daunting, as it implies risk. R then, stands for RISK. Risk of losing face; risk of appearing foolish; unprepared. Risk to step into the unknown; risk to not know the answer. To lose control, as we engage in creative doing.

Once we embrace presence, embodiment, reflection, feeling, openness and risk, performative practice may generate M for METAXIS: a unique tension of dramatic form, resulting in a heightened awareness, or aesthetic engagement. It refers to being moved by the double consciousness of simultaneously playing a role, and being ourselves; being shaken by the insights this dual state can bring to us. It can emerge when we operate in the dual plane of the AS IF. A stands for AS IF that is, the realm of imagination.



T is for TEACHER/ARTIST. A model and a *modus vivendi* that encompasses all artists who teach and all teachers who engage in creative doing. A community of practitioners that believes in a common set of values – and in the potential of the arts to inspire and to spark curiosity. I is for IMPROVISATION, intended as a philosophy and set of values underpinning our responses and interactions, in role and out of role. Within this paradigm, V is for VISION. A vision of education as per/form/ative; a vision that requires a degree of tenacity when we feel isolated or unsupported by funding bodies and institutions. A vision that is fulfilling, when we see our students thrive, when we feel alive and thriving. E is for EMERGENCE – of aesthetic meaning, in our students and ourselves.

Teacher/artists need this vision to allow for the emergence of meaning. Once these parameters are activated in an exchange of teaching and learning, we may witness various degrees of aesthetic engagement. Clearly, the aesthetic experience is central to our understanding of performative education as, from a performative perspective, “emphasis is placed on forms of aesthetic expression” (Schewe, 2013, p. 16). In the next section, we attempt to examine this statement more in depth.

## 5. The Aesthetic Experience in Education

Before we part it is important, we believe, to examine the aesthetic experience in education. A proper conceptualisation of the aesthetic would require more attention span than what we suspect the reader may have left at this point in the paper. Here, we simply wish to draw the readers’ attention to the work of three key theorists: Abbs, Dewey, Fischer-Lichte, Greene, and their contribution to the field.

The late Peter Abbs (1942-2020), a poet and academic, devoted much of his career to the creation of a manifesto for the teaching of the arts in education. He argued that “The teacher has the task of both inviting immediate aesthetic response to works of art and, also, of progressively inviting the student into the whole field of the art form” (1994, p. 52). In *The Symbolic Order*, Abbs (1989) defined the aesthetic as a form of understanding; “a mode of intelligence working not through concepts but through percepts, the structural elements of sensory experience” (p. 4).

After interviewing Arts Education teachers on their understanding of aesthetic experience, Abbs (1994) advanced a series of points:

- Aesthetic experience is overwhelming.
- Aesthetic experience engages powerful sensations.
- Aesthetic experience involves feeling.
- Aesthetic experience brings a heightened sense of significance.
- Aesthetic experience cannot be communicated adequately in words.
- Aesthetic experience can include a desire for others to share it.

Abbs stressed over and over again that, while all the arts have been insulated from each other, as a matter of fact, they all share an aesthetic field (1987, p. 3). We adopt Abbs’ contribution as a theoretical frame that underpins our vision in the Arts (in) Education, and we hope this can become a shared value in the readership of the *Journal of Research in Arts Education*.

John Dewey’s (1859-1952) *Art as Experience* is also an insightful reference point for us to define the aesthetic experience in education.

What most of us lack in order to be artists is not the inceptive emotion, nor yet merely technical skill in execution. It is capacity to work a vague idea and emotion over into terms of some definite medium [...]. Between conception and bringing to birth there lies a long period of gestation. During this period the inner material of emotion and idea is as much transformed through acting and being acted upon by objective material as the latter undergoes modification when it becomes a medium of expression. (Dewey, 1934, p. 75)

Dewey’s point is simple. We need to harness emotion through reflection, so that it can bear meaning. He goes on to say: “It is precisely this transformation that changes the character of the original emotion, altering its quality so that it becomes distinctively [A]esthetic in nature” (p. 76).

In her seminal publication *Ästhetik des Performativen*<sup>13</sup>, German Theatre Studies scholar Erika Fischer Lichte (2004) focuses especially on the kind of aesthetic experiences that can be facilitated by the performative arts. Her publication continues to be a rich source of inspiration for researchers and practitioners who are associated with the *Scenario Project* and share the vision of a performative teaching, learning and research culture at all levels of education.

<sup>13</sup> The book was translated into English under the title *The transformative power of performance: A new aesthetics* (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

Finally, Maxine Greene (1917-2014)'s discourse on aesthetic experience is an invaluable contribution to the field, particularly as she situates aesthetics within the field of education.

'Aesthetic', of course, is an adjective used to describe or single out the mode of experience brought into being by encounters with works of art. 'Education', as I view it, is a process of enabling persons to become different, to enter the multiple provinces of meaning. (Greene, 2001, p. 5)

In this regard, Greene's emphasis on "wide-awakeness brought about by aesthetic education" (2001, p. 11) is a cornerstone for a performative vision of educational practice and research.

## 6. The Scenario Project

The journal *Scenario* was launched in 2007 by Professor Manfred Schewe (University College Cork) and Professor Susanne Even (Indiana University). The idea was conceived in 2003, during the *Drama and Theatre in the Teaching and Learning of Languages and Culture* in Cork (Ireland). In the foreword to the first issue of the journal, Schewe and Even (2007) pitch *Scenario* as "the starting point for an engaged, and committed debate" (p. 1), referring to a growing interest worldwide in drama and theatre pedagogy.

The *Scenario Project* has grown and significantly increased its impact over the last 16 years. Hundreds of research papers by authors from over 20 different countries have been published in the journal, and what started out as a journal now encompasses a book series, a series of conferences, symposia, and more recently an online colloquium series. The *Scenario* lifespan and sheer volume of activities is evidence of engagement not only in practice but also in research and contemporary debate.<sup>14</sup>

During the 6th *Scenario* Forum Symposium in Hanover, for example, democratic participation in a social media-driven performative society was discussed and arts educators were urged to conduct a

critical examination of the role of, and individual interaction with, (social) media in our performative societies (such as forms of self-portrayal on political stages and social media platforms) needs to be an integral part of 'performative literacy'. In this respect, a performative

teaching, learning, and research culture aspires to democratic (intercultural / transnational) participation. (Jogschies et al., 2018, p. 53-54)

This statement rings more relevant than ever in post-Covid-19 society. The development of performative literacy and regulation of self-portrayal of political and social media platforms, are now a priority in a post-normal, digital pedagogy. What does this entail today?

In the same publication, the authors report a set of recommendations, as formulated by the participants of the 6th Scenario Forum Symposium in Hanover (Jogschies et al., 2018). The six recommendations encapsulated the efforts to create a shared understanding of the discipline, spanning from policy, theory, practice and research. The sixth point suggests that

'Performative research' should be encouraged in various university disciplines. From a performative research perspective, the extent to which discipline-specific practice can be recognized as research should be examined. Furthermore, the extent to which research results can be presented in a non-discursive way should be studied. (Jogschies et al., 2018, p. 54)

It is hoped that these considerations, informing our practice and research, may inspire the readership of *The Journal of Research in Arts Education* to engage in a productive dialogue.

## Conclusion

The performative turn is a paradigmatic shift in the humanities and social sciences that has affected many disciplines, including the discipline of education. We aimed to diversify rather than simplify the concept of Arts (in) Education in Ireland. The reader who was hoping to find straightforward answers may be given a systematic overview may be left adrift. Our purpose aligns with Eisner's preface to his classic *The Educational Imagination*: "This book is designed to complicate your professional life. If you want simple answers to educational questions it would be better to stop reading and to look elsewhere" (1994, p. 3).

If we have complicated the reader's understanding of the topic, we shall not apologise. Instead, what we hope that the reader will be inspired by the constellation of meanings that performative research in education has to offer, and that the *Journal of Research in Arts Education* may pave the way to an exchange of international perspectives on these topics.

<sup>14</sup> For further details go to the Scenario Project homepage. <http://scenario.ucc.ie>

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