

*Where do drama teacher's come from?
Initial investigations into the formation of
professional identity*

Article

Accepted Version

Kempe, A. (2011) Where do drama teacher's come from?
Initial investigations into the formation of professional identity.
New Zealand Journal of Research in performing Arts and
Education : Nga Mahi a Rehia, 3. ISSN 1178-7708 Available at
<https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/26436/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

Publisher: Drama New Zealand

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Where do drama teacher's come from?

Initial investigations into the formation of professional identity

George Bernard Shaw's aphorism that 'Those who can do, those who can't teach' may justifiably be deemed offensive by many teachers. My own personal experience has illustrated that it is often assumed, usually by people who know little if anything of what either teaching or acting actually involves, that those who decide to teach drama do so because they can't get a job as an actor. Fortunately, I am now past feeling righteous indignation when confronted with such a crass challenge to my professional integrity but have nonetheless been moved to investigate just why people do choose teaching drama in schools as a career rather than pursuing work in theatre, film or television. This paper reports on the findings of a small scale research project undertaken at a university in the south of England which aimed to gain insights into what sort of candidates are attracted to becoming drama teachers, what they bring with them to the profession, what may influenced their career choice, and how they begin to formulate a unique professional identity. The project sought to investigate Schonmann's (2005) distinction between a *binary* approach to teacher training, in which an individual is trained to perform the *role* of teacher, and a *triadic* approach, which takes account of a third component in the teacher's identity, *character*. The sample group consisted of 13 trainees enlisted on to the university based Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and 6 trainees on the employment based Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) for the academic year 2008 – 2009. 12 of the drama teachers who were serving as mentors to the trainees were also involved in the enquiry. A proposal to undertake the research was submitted to and agreed by the university's ethics committee which allowed for the consent of the students and mentors to be sought at the very start of their training year.

The context of the enquiry

Competition for places on PGCE Drama courses has become particularly ferocious in England over the past five years. Such courses are allocated a number of funded places by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). The allocations have been

severely eroded with the overall target number for PGCE drama places for 2010 – 11 representing a 58% cut since 2005. In order to train through the PGCE route, candidates must normally have at least a 2nd class Honours degree in their chosen specialism. In fact, in the academic year 2008 – 09, over 92% of the trainees on the 8 specialist PGCE Drama programmes in England held an Upper Second Class degree (2.1) or better. The imposition of such high academic entry requirements inevitably narrows the field of applicants. In drama this may be seen to have a particularly pertinent manifestation in that it excludes many people who have considerable expertise and experience of the subject. For example, those who trained at recognised drama schools, were awarded a diploma, went on to work in the industry then decided to apply their knowledge and talents to teaching are often thwarted because their diplomas are not recognised as being equivalent to a degree and therefore not meeting the entry requirement for a post-graduate course. To some extent this situation is now changing as more acting courses are being validated as degree courses.

At present there remains in place, in England, a policy to create an education system in which all teachers will soon be expected to hold a Masters degree. In response, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering teacher training are increasingly introducing programmes which contain some modules at Masters level. However, while aspiring to create an all Masters profession may be regarded as a means of strengthening the profession and giving it greater credibility, the expedient growth of employment based training is, paradoxically, leading to a two tier system that is increasingly noticeable in the subject of drama.

Over the last decade the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) has evolved and been given considerable government backing as an alternative to the PGCE in the most White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE 2010). This route into teaching was initially conceived as a means of attracting older applicants to the profession (that is, over age 24). The perception was that such applicants would bring valuable experiences of adult life and employment to the classroom which would compensate for the absence of higher academic study at post-graduate level. In the subject of drama, one might see how such a scheme could be especially attractive to those with first-hand experience of the industry seeking a more reliable source of income. However, for reasons related to equal opportunities the age restriction was removed and candidates may now be recruited directly from their undergraduate courses (the average age of both PGCE and GTP trainees in this research sample was in fact exactly the same at 23.5 years at the start of the course). Essentially, the GTP scheme involves candidates finding a school willing to give them paid employment on a rate considerably lower than that afforded to qualified teachers, while undertaking to train them to the required Standards for Qualified Teacher Status. Some local education

authorities have been designated as recommending bodies (DRBs) for this purpose as have some individual 'training schools'. Other schools have organised local consortia and gained DRB status. (The official term for this route has now been changed to Employment Based Initial Teacher Training or EBITT). In some cases GTP programmes are closely allied to existing PGCE programmes. In the case of this research sample, for example, a small number of GTP places enable candidates to work alongside the PGCE trainees for one day each week for the first half of the training year. In this way they are able to further develop their subject knowledge and understanding of drama pedagogy through practical workshops / seminars, guided reading and structured tasks. To gain a place, GTP applicants must not only have already found a school to sponsor them but must undergo the same rigorous university interview procedure as their PGCE counterparts. The assumption is, therefore, that both PGCE and GTP applicants have thought carefully about their career choice and undertaken a sufficient amount of research to inform their decision. The interview procedures serve to test both the candidate's aptitude for the course as well as their motivation for applying. It is in this context that the research being discussed here sought to examine further why successful candidates regarded teaching as the best path for them.

Methodology

In the first instance, the new trainees were asked to respond to a 'cartoon test'. This involved the target group being given a simple cartoon showing two characters. Over the head of one character is a speech balloon containing a statement question *'So, you've just started the PGCE Drama course at Reading. What are you expecting the year to be like and what do you think you'll gain from the course?'* The other character has an empty speech balloon, which the respondents are asked to fill in. The results of projective techniques such as cartoon tests can offer useful alternatives to more traditional quantitative methods such as structured questionnaires that, inevitably, produce answers to questions which directly reflect the agenda of their composer. As Pearce (2003 p 158) states:

'Projective techniques can provide a useful and creative means of bypassing a respondent's defence mechanisms, thus enabling valuable insights into more accurate expressions of feelings and attitudes...The unstructured nature of the situation allows respondents to use their own frames of reference to answer the question or solve the problem. In doing so they may 'project' their own feelings, views and so on into the situation with less fear of the consequences of disclosure and less personal embarrassment.'

The responses to the cartoon test were sorted into 'affinity groups' as a means of identifying the major themes addressed and the degree of correlation between individual responses.

The second method employed for gathering data involved the trainees writing monologues. Immediately before undertaking a two week induction period into their first placement school, the trainees were asked to write a monologue by way of capturing how they were thinking and feeling at that juncture. At the end of this initial school experience, the trainees were invited to edit and polish these monologues and prepare to perform them to their peers. Both monologues were analysed using the 'Listening Guide' as composed by Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg and Bertsch (2003) which provides 'a way of systematically attending to the many voices embedded in a person's expressed experience' (Gilligan et al., p. 157).

Finally, towards the end of the autumn term, the 19 trainees and a group of 12 trained mentors were asked to complete one questionnaire regarding their decision to train to teach and a second investigating their views on the relationship between teaching and the art of drama.

Deciding to teach

The cartoon test revealed that trainees started the course knowing that they had not taken an easy option. However, while 20% of the comments referred directly to the hard work and challenge they expected to face another 25% identified specific things they expected to gain from the year suggesting that they had already reflected very carefully on why they had chosen teaching as a career. Similarly, analysis of the monologues demonstrated forcefully that the trainees, 'felt they were all in the right place, sharing a desire to teach, a love of theatre and a passion to work in drama education' (Schonmann & Kempe 2010 p 17) These results informed the questionnaire which sought to gain further insights into what had influenced both the trainees and the mentor with whom they were working to choose teaching as a career which would continue to satisfy their love of theatre.

24 of the 31 respondents (77%) reported that they had at some point considered taking up a career in the industry (for example, acting, directing, stage management, technical etc.) yet only 6 (19%) had actually acquired any substantial professional experience. This result correlated remarkably closely with research into the cohorts of the eight English providers of PGCE drama programmes undertaken in 2006 which discovered that, on average, just 20% of trainees had any professional experience of the industry (SCITED 2006). This finding would seem to support the point made above that would-be candidates whose early career

choices took them down a vocational route may later find themselves falling short of the academic requirements for entry into PGCE courses.

Comments typifying the attitudes of those surveyed in the 2008 – 09 study included these:

I started drama school. The plan was to act professionally when I had graduated. I have acted in a few professional productions (been paid for it) but during my third year of drama school I became increasingly disillusioned with the 'industry' and every preconception that goes with it. Acting is maybe something that I will return to but not for a while.

Being heavily involved in musical theatre I did audition for theatre school before going to university with the idea of going into musical theatre/acting. However I was not successful and decided to take performing arts at university instead where I took a course in directing. I found that I enjoyed this more than acting. I decided to go into a school to see if I would enjoy teaching and was given the opportunity to help with an after school production. I found myself thoroughly enjoying working with students but did not want to consider teaching as a career as both my parents are teachers. But then I could not deny my new found passion for it!

I considered it (acting) briefly...then I realised how much I'd hate the hours and the competitive environment!

I always wanted to be a drama teacher rather than an actor as I don't think I would like the lifestyle of a career in the drama industry.

95% of the sample reported that they had discovered an affinity and aptitude for drama before the age of 16 and that this had been recognised by teachers, family and peers. 74% said that their interest had been supported by their parents even though only a third reported their parents having any involvement or interest in it. One respondent reported that 'Dad liked musicals', another that 'Dad loved Shakespeare', and a third recorded 'My mum likes the theatre'. None of those surveyed reported any familial involvement with acting as a profession though five (16%) noted that their parents had been involved in amateur dramatics with one confessing that, 'Both parents have been involved in amateur dramatics for 30+ years (in fact, my parents met when they were cast as Guinevere and Lancelot in 'Camelot'! Aaaahhhh!)'. Similarly, there appeared to be minimal parental involvement to the teaching profession. Both parents of one respondent were drama teachers but only two other respondents had a parent who was a teacher. One of these made a particularly interesting comment indicating a tension between two possible career choices:

My father took me to plays once a month initially, to introduce me to “real theatre” and hopefully quell my interest in becoming a professional actor. When he realised that this was more than a passing phase he supported me unconditionally. Mum was a professional teacher and hoped that I would have a more stable career than the acting profession. Whilst this did not stop her from supporting me she was less pro active about assisting me in this choice than my father.

While parents were generally seen as being supportive of their children’s interest in drama despite having limited knowledge of or engagement with it themselves, 71% of respondents stated that their own drama teachers had been particularly influential in fostering their interest:

I wouldn’t have gone down the drama route without my drama teachers – they inspired and encouraged me.

My drama teachers were extremely influential in my interest in drama as well as my desire to go into teaching

I had a fantastic drama teacher at secondary school who put on amazing school productions which I loved being involved in and as a result loved her lessons.

I saw my drama teacher as a bit of a role model. I wanted to teach and have the same enthusiasm as he did.

One of my secondary school teachers encouraged me to audition for the part of Marc Anthony...that teacher had a profound impact on how I viewed drama teaching.

What was less clear in the questionnaire results alone was the way the respondents viewed themselves in terms of a ‘drama identity’ and how this perception appeared to change. For example, while this last quoted respondent noted how taking the part of Marc Anthony was a milestone, he also notes that it was the part his teacher played in this that had a ‘profound impact’ on his view of drama teaching, suggesting that it was recognising the facilitatory role of the teacher that affected his later career choice more than playing the part itself which may have led him to pursue a career in acting. However, the positive influence of drama teachers cannot be taken for granted though; as these comments reveal, some respondents found strength and direction through different experiences:

I didn't actually enjoy drama much at school – it was the stuff I did out of school that caught my interest and taught me what theatre was all about.

In terms of teachers developing my interest in drama it was pretty non-existent. I went to a very good school yet the drama teachers I felt let us down as an A level group. They did not turn up to all our lessons, they failed to teach us Brecht for our written exam and it wasn't until the last day they knew I was going on to do drama at degree level. They really taught me the pitfalls of being a teacher who tries to be everyone's friend and does not see it as a profession and because of this they neglected the teaching of their subject. In terms of how much they upset me during my A level they have inspired me to go on and not become a teacher like they were.

My drama teacher at school was unfortunately very unsupportive. When I asked which drama courses would be best to take at college I was told 'I don't know it's up to you!' The careers advisor at school was also of little help, informing me that drama wasn't a very good profession and maybe I should try something else. However, I now believe this was all a blessing in disguise as it made me more determined to do it by myself without their support or help and to prove them wrong!

One particular English teacher's passion for Arthur Miller was infectious but we never worked practically with the scripts. Other than that the only experience I had of drama in secondary education was seeing occasional TIE companies (which I never enjoyed that much), the staff panto and Year 7 lessons every other week where I can only remember creating scenes to do with firework night and bullying. University lecturers were more of an influence.

This last comment may be seen as especially relevant in that, for most of those surveyed, the decision to train to teach did not happen until they were actually studying drama at university, around the age of 20. Given that only three of the 31 respondents had attended drama school rather than taking a more standard academic degree in the subject, one may detect support for the developing thesis that drama teachers do tend to make a very deliberate choice to learn more about their subject as a precursor to training to teach rather than setting out to work in the industry.

Developing an identity as a drama teacher

As noted above, the trainees were asked to complete a cartoon test at the very start of their course. One of the purposes served by this exercise is to help the trainees recognise that their personal anxieties are common in the group. Responses from the 2008 – 09 cohort were in keeping with previous year groups. There was a commonly held expectation that they would gain a knowledge and understanding of drama pedagogy through sustained and concentrated hard work. Around 40% of the comments indicated an expectation that their subject knowledge would be extended along with their practical teaching skills. No comments whatsoever made reference to acting, directing or any other aspects of drama that might be related to working in the industry. Here again, the inference is that, at the start of their course, the trainees were entirely focused on learning how to be effective drama teachers. However, this cannot be taken as evidence that the trainees did not consider themselves as dramatic artists. Rather, it signals a significant step towards the formulation of a professional identity that synthesises both teaching and dramatic art. The development of such an embryonic professional identity became more apparent when the trainees' initial monologues, written automatically on the eve of their first school placement, were compared to the re-drafted second versions written two weeks later. Analysis of the two sets of monologues revealed, in general, a marked move from reactive, highly self-conscious statements of either anxiety or bluster, to more reflective and indeed artistically viable expressions of their emotional and cognitive situation, suggesting a dawning realisation that working within the art form of drama could provide a useful framework for developing as a teacher (Schonmann, S. & Kempe, A. 2010).

Both trainees and teachers were asked whether they saw themselves as:

A teacher whose art is drama

A teacher whose art is teaching drama, or

A dramatic artist who teaches

Trainees were split equally between describing themselves as 'teachers whose art is drama' (42%) and 'teachers whose art is teaching drama' (42%). Their experienced teacher counterparts however were more inclined to see themselves in the latter category (17% v 58%) suggesting that, rather than seeing teaching as a substitute for a career in mainstream drama, teaching drama can provide a satisfying artistic experience in its own right the more experience one has of it. Three trainees (18%) and three mentors (25%) regarded themselves primarily as dramatic artists who taught. Some thought needs to be afforded to the implications of these statistics. Reflecting on his own vast experience of teaching and

teacher training, Sarason (1999) has postulated that all teaching could be considered as a performing art, a notion that has been further discussed by other teacher trainers with a particular interest in drama (see Schonmann, S. 2005, Kempe, A. 2009). Certainly, the majority of both trainee and serving teachers in the survey (73%) agreed that all teaching required some competency in performing, with 70% agreeing that drama teachers needed to be able to 'perform' more competently than their colleagues in other subject areas, given that performance was an integral part of the subject and necessary in the teaching of it. Furthermore, a number of comments revealed that this was, potentially, a particularly enjoyable part of the job:

I think that if drama teachers can perform it gives great status and earns huge respect from the students. It also furthers confidence. Performance is important as some of the younger students struggle with what drama actually is and need things to be modelled for them.

I never expect students to do something I am not prepared to do myself. They love to see teachers perform. It's the kind of scaffolding that other teachers write in exercise books – we do it practically!

While the process of making drama is important, all drama requires an audience of some sort whether conscious or not. The drama teacher must therefore have appreciation of performance and it certainly helps to have some competence.

It is the ultimate end of all drama. It is the rewarding, adrenaline giving part that makes you want to do it again!

What needs to be discussed further is the way the one word 'performance' may be attached to different modes of activity when it is applied to the fields of teaching and drama. Sarason's discussion of teaching as a 'performing art' has distinct connections to the work of Goffman and in particular his notion of 'front' which Goffman defines as, 'that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance' (1959 p 32). Goffman's analysis of 'front' has obvious parallels to dramatic characters in that front is manifest in particular settings which include scenic aspects and often the use of costume, props, speech patterns and gestures. Consider, for example, a typical classroom with its lay-out of desks and white board. Enter the figure of the be-suited teacher with briefcase in one hand, marker pen in the other issuing instructions to the pupils to sit down and prepare for the lesson and you will surely get the idea! What makes front different from a dramatic character is intentionality. When an actor plays a dramatic character he is wholly conscious that he is adopting mannerisms and

performing actions that are not his own. Front, on the other hand, 'is the expressive equipment of a standard kind of intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance' (Goffman 1959 p 32). In other words, a teacher's front may be a behaviour that has become embodied as a result of training and routine and is unconsciously switched on by the setting. I will argue that a unique part of the drama teacher's identity lies in a conscious awareness of front which is grounded in their understanding of the semiotics of performance. Furthermore, as the comments above illustrate, drama teachers not only consciously employ front but are able to switch from this mode of performance into dramatic character in order to enhance their pupils learning in the subject.

Self, role and character

The first attempt to actually train teachers in the English speaking world was through the pupil-teacher model in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This mode of training involved the pupil-teacher observing an experienced teacher at work then attempting to emulate what they did. The parameters of the role were dictated almost exclusively by the practicing teacher. What the pupil-teacher might contribute to the process from their personal experience went unrecognised and thus un-nurtured as an actual facet of induction into the profession. Such an apprenticeship model represents a stark contrast to the aim of contemporary teacher education programmes that seek to produce reflective practitioners who are independent critical thinkers capable of adapting and developing experiences in order to formulate a personalised teaching identity. The combination of results gathered from the cartoon test, questionnaires and monologues suggests that the professional identity of the drama teacher is rooted in the interplay between *self*, *role* and sense of dramatic *character*.

What the cartoon test administered to the 2008 – 09 cohort suggested was that trainees tend to share the same hopes, fears and aspirations at the start of the course. The monologues revealed more about the trainees *themselves*, giving details of their personal background, and perceptions of themselves as members of a community of learners and teachers. The re-drafted and performed versions also provided insights into their mastery of elements of the dramatic form as a vehicle for expressing thought and feeling. While teaching continues to involve inter- and intra-personal relationships, aspects of *self* must be recognised as constituting a part of the teacher's professional identity.

The consequence of increased regulation in the English education system is that many aspects of the teacher's *role* and its attendant responsibilities are externally prescribed and

thus inevitably become an imposed element of the teacher's identity. It must nonetheless be recognised that exactly how such expectations and demands are met by individual teachers is contingent on how that teacher interprets the requirements and translates them into their praxis. Thus, how drama trainees envisage fitting into the role of professional teacher and how fulfilling the role might subsequently re-shape their selves are questions to be faced in the training year and perhaps beyond. Comments gathered through the research provide insights into what type of teacher they hoped to become and what aspects of teaching behaviour they found negative.

The third element of the drama teacher's identity is particular to the subject area in that it is concerned with the concept of *character*. The underlying question here is how the drama teacher understands *character*, and perhaps how their practical ability to adopt and portray characters, might be utilised in the drama classroom. As already mentioned, 73% of respondents to a questionnaire survey in this research project suggested that *all* teaching required some competence in performing, but 70% added that drama teachers needed to be able to perform more competently than their colleagues in other subjects. 93% of respondents saw performance as integral to the subject of drama. They stated that they were aware of consciously using performance skills in the classroom and sometimes deliberately positioning the class as an audience to their performance; in other words, they were aware of employing what Goffman refers to as 'front'. However, they tended to draw a distinction between utilising performance skills in this context and performing a character as a functional teaching technique:

It isn't the place of the teacher to 'perform' at the expense of learning. However, you still need to show 'disappointment', being 'cross' etc. and this sometimes means switching on something of a performance. Kids know when you aren't being yourself but performing a role in order to have a particular effect

Employing performance skills to create drama helps keep the pupils focussed and energised.

The common perception was that drama teachers needed to be able to model the performance skills and techniques they were trying to help their students develop:

It's not about ego, but you do need to be able to demonstrate performing.

I would expect an English teacher to be skilled at spelling, reading and comprehension and therefore I expect a Drama teacher to have competency in

performing. It seems reasonable to me that a drama teacher should display competency in the skills that are fundamental to their subject.

If 'perform' means to draw attention to one's acting or role, then drama teachers may need to perform more competently than other teachers because it is an integral part of the subject. It is useful for students to see a model of 'performance' that may be carried out by the teacher. Even if the teacher isn't an excellent performer, it is very important that they are able to identify the skills needed for performance.

Performance is integral to the teaching of drama because if the teacher cannot practice what they preach, the students will lose faith in the teacher's right/ability to direct or guide them.

In her comparison of binary and triadic approach to teacher training, Schonmann (2006) draws on Goffman's observation (1959) that when an individual undertakes an activity in his work he effectively carries out a role. In this sense John Smith as a plumber and John Gielgud as Hamlet are alike in that both are individuals performing a role as professionals. The binary approach to teacher training is directed towards teaching as a craft. In such an approach, trainees are prepared to meet a number of standards relating to different facets of the role of teacher. In the system of accrediting newly qualified teachers currently in place in England, these facets are gathered under the headings Professional Attributes, Professional Knowledge and understanding, and Professional skills (www.tda.gov.uk/trainee-teacher/qts-standards.aspx). However, Schonmann proposes that in addition to self and role there may be a third component to a teacher's professional identity and illustrates this by considering how an actor is an individual (e.g. John Gielgud), who has a professional role (e.g. an actor), which involves playing a character (e.g. Hamlet). The triadic approach to teacher training 'is a process of constant development which is formed in the tension created in the overlapping parts between person, role, and character.' (Schonmann 2006 p 304)

A practical grasp of dramatic *character* is as necessary for working in process drama (Haseman, B. 1991) as it is in the teaching of theatre skills, though I accept that the subtle distinctions between 'adopting a role' and 'acting a character' have been hotly contested (see for example Bolton, G.1999, and Ackroyd, J. 2004). There is a novelty factor implicit in the use of teacher-in-role that the teacher can capitalise on in terms of enhancing interpersonal relationships in the classroom while simultaneously seeking to deepen the unfolding drama. One might say that the self-in-role as teacher equates to Goffman's concept of front in that performative behaviour is simply adopted in order to realise certain effects on the observers (i.e. the learners) whereas the technique drama teachers refer to as teacher-in-role is a way of consciously modelling performative behaviour. If the teacher plays

a character with conviction, subtly using their own performance skills, then the students may be seen to mirror that in the way they adopt and portray a dramatic role. Sub-textually, the device also illustrates to the students that the teacher is a learner like them and regards drama as a viable means through which to learn. It is not surprising therefore that trainee drama teachers are schooled in the use and potential of TiR as a tool for teaching and learning alongside a range of other pedagogical strategies.

In the case of this research sample it was apparent that some trainees and experienced drama teachers were perplexed by the implications of the term 'performance' in the context of drama teaching. These respondents, for example, seemed to link performance directly to TiR as a phenomena associated with just some drama teachers:

It depends on the type of drama teacher you want to be. If you want to use techniques such as teacher-in-role then yes, performance is important. But if you prefer to teach in other ways then no, it isn't.

I do not believe we have to 'perform' any more than other subject teachers. We may wish to use TiR at times, but this does not require a huge performance; rather an adopted attitude. I think at times it is useful to be a competent performer so as to model things to the children, but generally I would disagree that drama teachers need to be able to perform more competently than their colleagues.

Another respondent hinted at the value of considering the concept of performance in a broader way more akin to how it is discussed by, for example, Schechner (1977) and Turner (1988):

Performance is not the defining characteristic of teaching drama. However, I do agree that it is an integral part of teaching drama as we are dealing with a social subject which requires human interaction.

A model of identity for the drama teacher

At the end of the 2008 – 09 training year the trainees produced a third monologue. These were used as the bases for group performances which reflected on the trainees' journeys through the course and led on to a SWOT exercise in order to review what they perceived as being their strengths and weaknesses and what opportunities and threats they anticipated facing in their first few years as professional drama teachers. Once again, there was no evidence of frustrated ambition, but rather a consensus that teaching would offer

opportunities to engage with and express themselves through the art form of drama. It was, however, also recognised that there were aspects of the drama teacher's identity that could be destructive. That is to say that some 70% of trainees made statements suggesting that while they were looking forward to becoming immersed in the job and taking artistic and professional nourishment from it, they were also wary of the intensity of it and the danger of burning out.

Nine months on from the end of the course a number of the then newly qualified teachers were contacted and invited to review and comment on the monologues they had written. Here is one example that may be seen to illustrate something of the process involved in forming an identity as a drama teacher:

I loved doing the monologue task - intriguing stuff!! So, what does the monologue mean to me? Well when I first wrote it, I must admit I was a little wary about the purpose of the exercise, but with time it became clear. The earliest piece was all about what 'I' believed it took to be an outstanding drama teacher, but I quickly came to realise that you can have all the enthusiasm in the world, but it doesn't essentially lead to you being the best teacher. Idealism is great in theory, but not always in practice as I often found out in my PGCE year. I think this becomes apparent as the 'pieces' progressed with more talk of standards and protocols and actually applying my subject knowledge and skills. This isn't evident in my early work.

The research reported upon in this paper aimed at gaining insight into how the love of theatre and desire to teach that trainees brought with them to the training course may be shaped into a professional identity. By analysing the relationship between *self*, *role* and the performative behaviours of front and *character* it is now possible to represent a model of the drama teacher's identity in which drama teachers may come to regard themselves as artists whose art is teaching drama. In this sense, it is not so much the case of those who can do while those who can't teach, as those who can teach do so it because for them teaching is the optimum way of doing it.

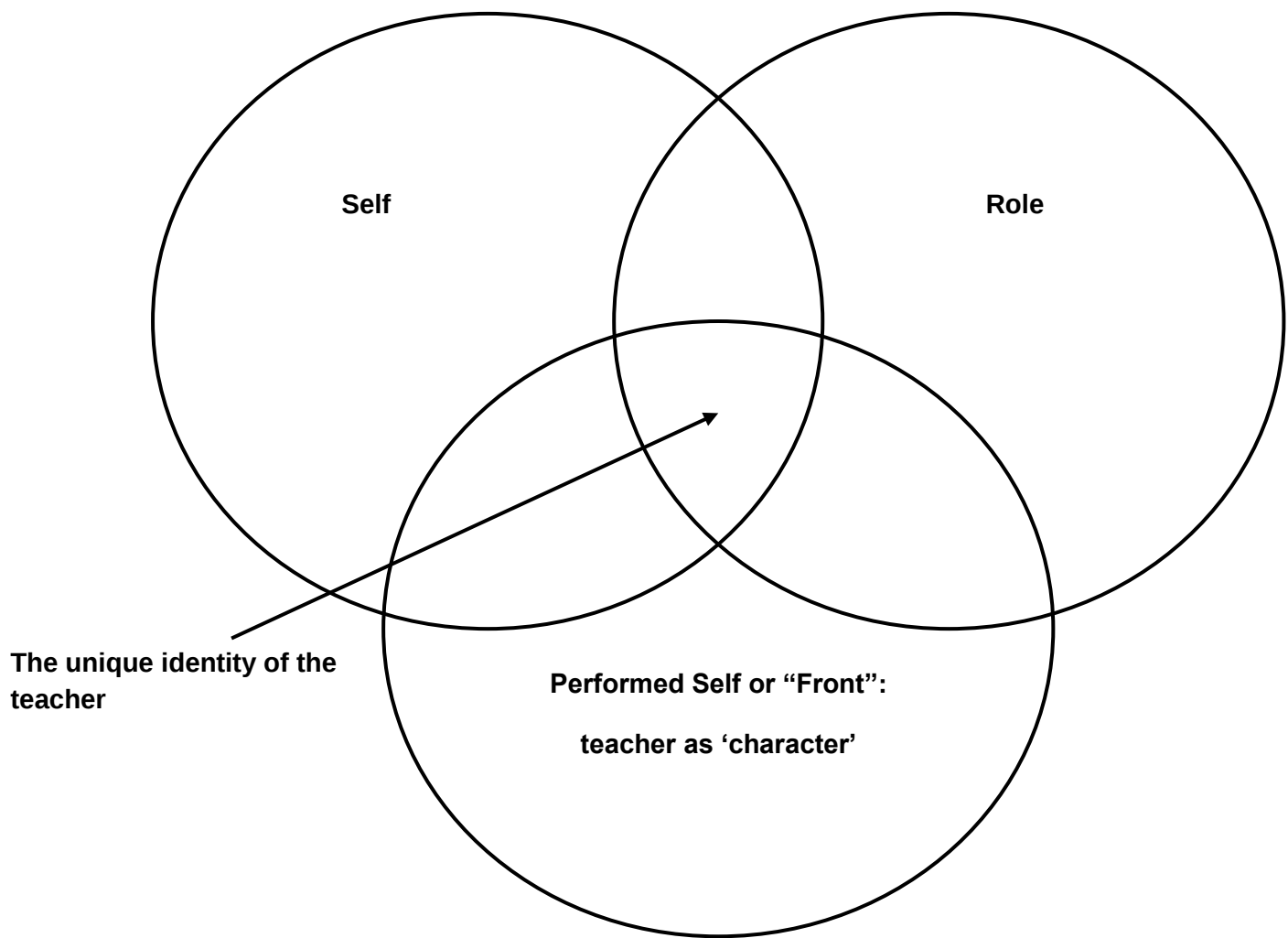


Fig 1: The unique identity of the teacher

References

- Ackroyd, J. (2004) *Role reconsidered: a re-evaluation of the relationship between teacher-in-role and acting*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.
- Bolton, G. (1999) *Acting in the classroom*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood.
- DfE (2010) *The Importance of Teaching: the Schools’ White Paper*, Department for Education
- Gilligan, C., Spencer, R., Weinberg, M. K., & Bertsch, T. (2003). On the Listening Guide: A Voice-Centered Relational Model. In P. M. Camic, J. E. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Ed.), *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, (157-172).

- Goffman, E. (1950) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Penguin, London
- Haseman, B. (1991). 'Improvisation, Process Drama and Dramatic Art', *Drama - The Journal of National Drama*, July 1991 (19 – 21)
- Kempe, A. (2009) Training drama teachers: a perspective from England, in *Teaching Theatre Today 2nd Ed.* Flitsos, Anne L., & Medford, Gail S., Palgrave, New York, (221 – 240)
- Pearce, G. (2003) "Ehrr... What's Up Doc?": using cartoon tests to evaluate educational drama programmes' *Research in Drama Education* 8 (2),(157 – 170)
- Schechner, R (1977) *Essays on Performance Theory 1970-1976*. New York: Drama Book Specialists
- Schonmann, S. (2006) Theatrical representations of teaching as performance, in Brophy, J & Pinnegar, S. (Eds) *Learning from research on teaching: perspective, methodology, and representation (Advances in research theory)*, Volume 11, Elsevier, Oxford (287 – 316),
- Schonmann, S. & Kempe, A. (2010) An Anthology of Voices: An Analysis of Trainee Drama Teachers' Monologues, *British Journal of Educational Studies* 58.2, (1 – 19)
- SCITED (2006) unpublished survey conducted by members of the Standing Conference of Initial Teacher Educators in Drama
- Sarason, S. (1999) *Teaching as a performing art*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Turner, V. (1988) *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications