

## Features in Constructing Drama Context for the Application of Theatre in Education (TiE)

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### *Abstract*

The author’s concept is based on sociological ideas concerning the challenges of forming personal identity in contemporary society and theatrical and drama practices that can accelerate these processes. The focus is on creating a dual drama context: the first around the central storyline and main conflict, defined as the stage context, and the second arising from group interactions, defined as the group context. In the educational environment of Theatre in Education, three different profiles of learners emerge as they reflect within the group: analysts, experience-sharers, and those seeking self-identification. Learners are examined and categorized through expert analyses in a specific qualitative study. The significance of establishing these profiles for training in the dual context of TiE and achieving personal development and identity goals is critically assessed.

*Keywords:* Context, drama, personal identity, learner profiles, reflection.

### 1. Introduction

Theatre in Education (TiE) has always been viewed as a forum for personal development within a specific group and drama (stage-oriented) context (Vasileva, 2020). In this study, the focus is on personal and social experimentation in groups that, during TiE and Drama in Education (DiE) training sessions, start through connections and relationships in an imagined context, ultimately reaching each participant on a highly personal level by the end of the training, influencing the formation of ideas about their personal identity, development potential, and self-improvement. In this article, we use the terms Theatre in Education (TiE) and Drama in Education (DiE) interchangeably, among others, to denote the varied use of techniques from theatre, such as images, scripts, dramaturgy, role-playing contexts, stage processes, and more, to present their specific application and significance in an educational setting.

This theatrical training format is explored for its potential to transform social experiences into personal experiences and group dialogue into an individual conversation with oneself. TiE can accelerate the transformation of the stage-projected position of playwrights working in the educational context of TiE into personal concepts about oneself and society, as well as into sustainable perceptions of the learners about the importance of communicating with others.

We will examine and analyze this dual process of functioning for learners – the group interaction context and the dramaturgical performance as a stage process that can stimulate conscious individualization and integrate learners into positive social values. We will not attempt to theoretically define the concept of an educational context in its numerous meanings but will apply it in its practical understanding as a dynamic network of direct and feedback interactions between learners within a group training meeting.

We offer an optimistic view of the reflective, self-aware learners who seek their identity and new behavioral solutions, which emerge in the dramatic interaction of the specific theatre-oriented educational practice that is educational drama and Theatre in Education.

## 2. Methods

The empirical study involved a total of five experts from the fields of student education in humanities and experts from the fields of theater and acting. Their original analytical texts, created as written analytical texts, form the basis of the qualitative research.

### 2.1 *Research procedure*

We tasked the experts with writing narratives about the development of interactions between learners in the groups they work with and how they assess the individual behavior and communication of students during group reflective sessions. The analysis of key words and phrases in their narratives was applied as important categories that could define the profile categories of the learners. Their expert experience will be projected into a limited number of profile components, which we will include in the study of TiE in the educational environment of bachelor's and master's programs where humanities students are trained. What will outline the different profiles of the learners will be projected from how the learners' individual narratives are substantively constructed, according to the experts during the reflections. We will be interested in what are the main themes, the main conflicts, the key images they generate, and how they relate to themselves and the culture they embrace through the thoughts, feelings, and experiences they share with other learners or project in their behavior. It will be important for us to identify several leading profiles of the learners through the characteristics of their narratives and the perspective in which they direct the analysis and reflections.

### 2.2 *Empirical analysis of data from the experts' evaluations*

For the processing and analysis of data obtained from expert evaluations, a web-based application called Taguette is used. This software tool is designed for qualitative analysis of various textual data collected in a specific way from the study participants. It is suitable for analyzing large volumes of information presented to researchers in written or spoken form, such as specialized texts, interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative data. Taguette applies an open coding process performed by the study authors, where text excerpts are marked with codes or categories created for specific purposes, resulting in a research report. The program is especially useful for identifying patterns and relationships in large datasets of texts that need to be analyzed. The goal of the research in this case is not to quantify the number of codes or organize them into specific numerical data but rather to reach the meaning and significance attributed by experts through open interpretation. The analysis aims to reveal the profiles of students as reflective learners by interpreting the subjective analyses and evaluations of the experts.

*Discourse analysis* is one of the methods used in the research. This approach focuses on examining how students' communication is interpreted in the text.

*The object of the study* is the expert analysis provided by experts in theater and drama education after they have been introduced to the concept of a dual context in which the learners work.

*Research process.* The expert texts are imported into the Taguette program, where open codes are identified based on keywords, sentences, and phrases shared by the experts involved in the research. Through discourse analysis, the written language is examined.

*The main goal of discourse analysis* is to explore the issue of learner profiles during reflection as a component of training based on the provided expert evaluations in text format. Open coding is used, containing key elements of the specific profiles, which in this case are: analytical, sharing, and self-identifying. The table below (Table 1) presents the open codes created for each of the different profiles. The positions in the open codes related to learner profiles aim to assess the experts' evaluations.

*The research aims* to analyze the characteristics of the proposed main profiles and their potential to seek their identity through the processes taking place in Theatre in Education (TiE). It will be beneficial for education and educators to identify different learners and be prepared to accept the challenges presented in each of their profile categories as reflective learners.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1 *Constructing a dual context within Theatre in Education (TiE)*

The characteristics of constructing a dual drama context will be presented within the framework of a session in the specific format of Theatre in Education (TiE). These two processes, which outline the dynamics of relationships within the drama group, are interdependent but have their own life, characteristics, and effects on learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development.

As the first context we will present the one that is formed through the dynamics of relationships within the plot of the drama, which is developed by the authors of drama texts and scripts for TiE, with new ideas being introduced during the learners' performances. Learners can alter the stage action to achieve the educational goals. This opportunity for learners to become co-writers, actors, or set designers in drama sessions is designed not only to provide knowledge in fields taught through theatre but also to immerse them in the world of theatre and its expressive means. This context can be defined as the stage context.

The second context is formed through the dynamics of relationships that develop within the training group itself, which, by engaging in the stage context, also enters the realm of specific group interactions. This second context can be defined as the group context. It is also constructed sequentially throughout all components of the drama session, beginning with the motivation of learners for collaborative work, continuing through joint activities based on the plot and dramatic conflicts of the stage context, accelerating the frequency of direct and feedback interactions during group analysis, and individualizing participation during reflection. Young people develop their knowledge by creating "new content," building, and transforming themselves through interactions with others, immersing themselves in various symbols and social meanings. They do not merely form within the social context; they actively create the context together with other participants in the interaction (Varbanova, 2021: 48). In the search for personal identity, they create multiple narratives within a single drama session that, while constructing the group context, also generate new knowledge as a type of "discourse" (ways of constructing knowledge about the world that create their own "truths") (Atkinson, 2017: 303).

In examining this context, we will adopt the idea of a so-called flexible construct in the search for identity, which continuously evolves and changes due to the influence of new cultural trends that are increasingly distant and different from traditional sources of meaning and impact.

### *3.2 Why is individualization so significant?*

In the early and later studies of Ulrich and Elisabeth Beck, shared in their concepts of reflexive modernity, the idea of the importance of love as an emotional fulfillment in people's lives is developed. According to them, love is something irresistible as an attraction and forms the basis of a new society, with a new order emerging due to the breakdown of traditional social and gender identities. This leads to what they term the entirely normal chaos, which we understand as love. Other social researchers express ideas questioning traditional values, which, on one hand, must be upheld to prevent societal collapse (Charles & Herrnstein, 1996), but on the other hand, egalitarian relationships should be supported, with their main feature being the transformation of intimacy (Giddens, 1992). Precisely The concept of "intimacy" appears as the most appropriate term to designate personal relationships (Jamieson, 2005). It becomes clear that contemporary society creates many risks for the individual and their pursuit of happiness, but also offers many opportunities for its discovery, realization, and future development.

What specific aspects can we extrapolate from social research in the context of TiE?

We will adopt the idea that there is an increasingly acute social sense of finding a suitable individual identity for each person. This will become more important for analysis against the backdrop of the increasing unpredictability in the development of life scenarios due to dynamic changes in technology and society. There was a time when personal attitudes became prominent, imposed as insistent advertising appeals like "do it yourself" or "don't rely on others," as noted in Ulrich Beck's studies (Beck, 2013). Analyzing human maturation from this perspective, many sociologists see the increasing speed and enriching content of individualization, which seemingly offers opportunities for new forms of personal and social experimentation. The ideas of A. Giddens are adopted regarding the construction of identity as an autonomous process rather than one of socio-cultural inheritance (Giddens, 1992). In this perspective, other researchers have found that the reasons individuals enter or leave partnerships are increasingly less related to material interest or traditional social coercion, but rather to the sense of happiness they want to feel or lose, regardless of status, gender, culture, religion, or other factors.

Modern young people already view partnerships as an important content and process mechanism in the search for their own identity, not only in intimate relationships but also in professional relationships. Today's world offers much more opportunity for anyone, regardless of their status, to shape their life. The so-called "right path" in life is being sought (Beck, 2013). Individualization increasingly appears desirable due to overcoming the confusion in the chaos of numerous appealing possibilities.

### *3.3 Individualization as a life choice?*

Individualization can serve as a liberating mechanism from tradition, which continues to impose limiting rules on personal choice. It stands in opposition to the natural necessity of group cohabitation in our lives. Achieving it, however, becomes a criterion for both social well-being and a measure of personal satisfaction.

However, individualization can also be a counter-version of the modern product approach, which frames the contemporary person as a successful and marketable brand within a specific culture – that is, as an escape from the smart modernity of the fast-paced business world of buying and selling, and competition for happiness and prosperity.

According to social researchers, a new process has begun involving the search for an emotionally satisfying individualized profile and dyadic relationships. This has led therapists to consult their clients individually, while existing couples are guided in the pursuit of new emotional experiences. Young individuals experiencing personal crises are beginning to turn to therapeutic writing or intimate-romantic sharing in various role-play scenarios, which can become reality if played according to newly invented rules that continually redirect focus to the self as a supreme value.

Frequent relationship breakups continue to develop as a process of experimentation rather than a dramatic experience of final dissolution, which has the power to radically transform people's behavior or personality. They continue to analyze the broken relationships, creating new ones and accumulating what is called experiential knowledge. Nothing is considered permanent, but it is also not rejected through ritualistic ostracism. Life flows in ever-changing contexts of instability, creation and dissolution, entry and exit, shared analysis, and introspection. The labyrinth in which the modern young person finds themselves resembles an experimental field for laboratory mice, where the goal is not to find an exit, but to enjoy the process of searching for it and entering a new, more exciting labyrinth. Sociologists like Ulrich Beck join the contemporary version that the great social freedoms in today's society provide the right to one's own life or one's own ideas of how to live, but people continue to "yearn for stable, emotionally satisfying relationships" (Atkinson, 2017: 321).

#### *3.4 Theatre in Education, Edward Bond, research, and analysis of educational practice*

TiE, as an approach in education, possesses the potential to be this dramatically constructed labyrinth for experimenting with ideas that can serve as personally discovered new entrances and exits in a series of hierarchically dramatized, non-linear situations and staged events. The analysis will be based on Edward Bond's extensively varied experimental dramatic practice and theory. We will draw upon analytical studies by some of the best researchers in Bondian drama education, such as D. Davis, P. Billingham, and A. Bethlenfalvy (Davis, 2007; Billingham, 2014; Bethlenfalvy, 2013).

At the core of Bond's plays lies morality, which is why he is often described as an ethical and educational utopian. Drama in education is presented as created to help learners find their own interpretation of what it means to be human. In this sense, theatre as a performing art with educational purposes can help people confront evil. Playwright Edward Bond believes that contemporary people are confused in their search for the good because evil dominates. According to him, people are born "radically innocent," but society, through the ideologization of their imagination, causes them to lose this innocence. If there is a worthy task for playwrights and drama educators, it is to help people regain "autonomy," as Bond defines it. Without being a professional sociologist, he also raises the issue of the search for identity through individualization in the educational process, which has already been corrupted by the ideologization in which people are immersed from birth. Since "radical innocence," as he puts it, can never be completely lost, active work can be done to achieve "autonomy."

The sociological approach of Ulrich Beck and the Bondian theory, as his researchers call it, are similar in their desire to analyze and discover this eternal and idealized pursuit of a personally meaningful life within the context of society. Social researchers place happiness at the center of the search for identity, while Edward Bond focuses on the pursuit of autonomy by aligning the good, yet ideologically corrupted, individual with the good. Bond's work, according to A. Bethlenfalvy, is one of the possible ways to set new directions in education overall. Bondian drama identifies gaps for young people in which they need to analytically enter and, through a specifically constructed dramatic process, attempt to recreate themselves (Bethlenfalvy, 2013).

This is so because Bond's dramas are structured around the abyss between the established model of the surrounding environment and the acceptance and understanding of this environment in the minds of learners. Fictional dramatic situations that do not spare the learners' sensitivity are used. Bond does not fear revealing reality and confronting participants dramatically. Only in this way can young people begin to understand that the world exists outside of them and gain experience by changing their own sensations and experiences provoked from the outside. The awareness they achieve is related to penetrating and understanding the influential power of the context in which they live, which has the authority to represent them despite themselves (Billingham, 2014).

If there is any special meaning in TiE, it is that Bondian dramatic education seeks to give a new, personal meaning to things and events by recreating the images that construct it. In E. Bond's theory, misconceptions arise along the line of reality and the image of it. He defines this dependency as a fiction that we ourselves continually create. However, this imagined world of images, although fictional, forms the foundation of our connection with the world. It shapes our self and what we perceive as our actions and attitudes toward it. Since humans have the ability to anthropomorphize (in the sense of attributing human essence to things) in the material world, i.e., to perceive it as alive, this is why we create stories that imbue us with meaning. However, each of us tells a different story about the same thing. The stories we tell resemble each other, which may classify them as a shared fiction that becomes representative of the culture of a community or group of people. Alongside our stories, ideologies also offer explanations in the form of narratives, using imagination to stimulate thinking in a chosen direction and guiding people on how to understand things, what to accept as a norm, and what to reject.

The problem arises when this socially constructed fiction starts to have a significant influence and gains the authority to become increasingly resilient as social, ideological, or economic power. We begin to need individualization, which makes us distinct through our personal attitudes towards everything surrounding us. Parts of our self are our own subjective experiences that require differentiation, while other parts are based on social integration. According to Bond, the boundaries blur, and the possibility of self-manipulation through our own culture becomes immense. Culture becomes part of the imaginary production of ideas, which we use to understand our environment and ourselves.

Bond's theory and dramatic practice are, of course, much richer in ideas than their theoretical justification. They are also far more illustrative for many perspectives in understanding ourselves through a sequence of plots rather than just words and interpretations, as is the usual psychotherapeutic practice. Davis, as one of the most insightful analysts of Ed. Bond, reveals his idea of the "artificiality of human behavior" (Davis, 2007). He sees it in the fact that we, as thinking beings, accept different things as natural, which actually originate from the culture in which we live, in the sense of the described artificial human behavior. Thus, we reach the so-called dramatized human paradox – people need the narratives of the culture in which they live to feel at home, but they also need their own narrative of what is happening, which also creates rules that are part of their behavior. These two narratives come into conflict, generating dramatic sketches in which everyone is the main character.

### *3.5 Questions posed by learners during the implementation of TiE*

Learners face questions with existential and moral aspects: Does this happen to each one of us? Are we also searching for ourselves in the depths of what has happened, as if outside the visible situations in our lives? Do we need a vivid and sharp conflict to delve into the unconscious, which would give us an idea of our identity? Is it important to know it to truly reveal who we are? Can education play a role in the process of uncovering the "truth" through the revelation of everything we can know about ourselves? Important questions arise about what

problems drama lessons should focus on. The real question is, what is the purpose of these sketches in drama? Do they have the potential to create creative tension that generates ideas for the personal narrative? Can they provoke a new understanding of the human situation in the already established culture of happiness and morality? Do they allow us to observe the cultural imprint within ourselves? Will they really help the learners, and in what direction will they guide them? How do learners process what happens in the stage and group context? Do learners form a specific research profile during the TiE training, which helps them in their search?

#### 4. Results

Presentation and analysis of the results of the empirical study

Participants in the study and scope of the research

##### 4.1 Data analysis and formation of profile categories

To construct the learner profiles during reflection, open codes registered as a result of the discourse analysis of the experts' texts are used, with the number of mentions recorded against each (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Open codes of reflective learner profile categories

<b>Rationality, Cognitive Orientation, Achievements</b>	<b>Affective Orientation, Integration, Belonging</b>	<b>Intimacy, Individualization, Self-Identification</b>
Discovery 6 Expression, Presentation 8 Reflection 9 Realism 4 Experience 2 Rationality 3 Analysis 3 Categorization 2 Definition 8  Comprehension 7  Knowledge 3 Acquisition 6 Evaluation 7 Responses 6 Logic 2	Sharing 5 Confidence 2 Participation 5 Excitement 7 Friends 6 Family 5 Communication 8 Group 5 Interaction 7	Feeling 3 Grandeur 5 Growth 3 New Abilities 5 Fear 2 Pleasure 4 Emotions 3 Experience 3 Depth 3 Confession 5 (personal, intimacy) Insecurity 3 Individuality 3 Independence 3 Memory 4 Personal History 5 Detachment 3 Timidity 3 Appearance 5 Self-Reflection 7 Self-Anger 3 Sadness 4

In the separate profiles, experts comment on various cognitive, affective, and highly individualized verbal and non-verbal communicative judgments that learners use during reflection in theater and drama education. More than 76 cognitively oriented judgments used by learners during the reflection circle are identified. Judgments identified as affective aspects in learners' reflections number 50, while 79 individualized judgments fall under the self-identification profile category. The research also discusses sensations and perceptions related to

participants' emotional states, level of interest, satisfaction, and enjoyment, though these are not the main focus of the study.

These data provided the basis for creating three distinct learner profiles during reflection:

1. *Analytical Learners* - Focused on analyzing the context of stage action and group interaction. They concentrate on understanding central elements in the dramatic context, identifying main characters and conflicts, and seeking solutions. In group settings, they define occurrences to gain knowledge about the process.

○ Expert Quotes:

- M. "They attempt to distance themselves from previous experiences through rational analysis." (realism, knowledge)
- E. "Sharing is combined with rational analysis and emotional reflection." (experience, rationality)
- S.C. "Evaluating events is important to students." (evaluation, meaning)
- P. "The process always starts with analysis." (analysis, categorization)
- S.B. "Curiosity, discovery, expression, and communication are fostered." (discovery, expression)

2. *Sharing Learners* - Defined by their integration with the group, sharing experiences and feelings associated with group interaction. Communication and sharing are highly emphasized by experts. They make efforts to identify with the central theme in the drama and recognize shared conflicts.

○ Expert Quotes:

- M. "Participation frequency gradually increases." (participation, communication)
- E. "Reflection is significant because it is a group process." (group, sharing)
- S.C. "Students are concerned about how they performed." (concern, sharing)
- P. "Trust in the group is crucial for theater in education." (trust, engagement)
- S.B. "End-of-session reflections always include freedom, cooperation, and self-knowledge." (confidence, friends)

3. *Self-Identifying Learners* - Reveal personal thoughts, feelings, or behaviors for the therapeutic effect of expression. They seek unknown truths about themselves through deep analysis of dramatic details.

○ Expert Quotes:

- M. "They share personal memories and experiences." (personal story, confession)
- E. "Recurring themes involve insecurity and anxiety." (individuality, sadness)
- S.C. "Expressions like 'I felt sad' are common." (confession, self-reflection)

- P. “They analyze but often end up moralizing.” (morality, satisfaction)
- S.B. “Initially scared, then discovered new abilities.” (new skills, fear)

## 5. Conclusions and summaries

The theoretical-research approach allows for the following conclusions:

1. Three main learner profiles are identified: analytical, sharing, and self-identifying learners.
2. Learners analyze cultural components they belong to, which experts recognize as cultural resemblance.
3. Learners aim to create a unique culture that allows for different actions. Experts note highly individualized reflections.
4. Different reflection profiles in TiE formats can help educators refine reflective components in education.
5. Stimulating students from various profiles to engage in comprehensive analysis can enrich their development.
6. Learners may not reach cultural attitude changes but start awareness of issues due to the dual context in training and real-life situations.

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