

Institution: University of Chester		
Unit of Assessment: 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies.		
Title of case study: Pretext Drama: Creating 'Third Spaces' for Understanding		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Shelley Piasecka	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Dr, Associate Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2011 – ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Professor Allan Owens' work focuses on the use of Pretext Drama in formal and non-formal educational settings. His work has informed curriculum content, teaching delivery and educational practices in Catalonia, Finland, Palestine, and Japan. Some have been in extremely challenging contexts, such as with returning evacuated Fukushima Daichi nuclear disaster Tsunami survivors in Japan; and in Palestine with educators from the University of Bethlehem and Alrowwad Cultural and Arts Society, Aida Refugee Camp, on the concept of non-violent resistance to the ongoing military occupation.

Through Pretext Drama, Owens has equipped educators, artists, and students with drama-enriched skills to create 'third spaces' for understanding that has led to new democratic and culturally-shared perspectives on homeland, inclusion, sustainable development, urban environments, business practices, and in the case of Palestine, practices of non-violent, beautiful resistance.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The underpinning research is the key publication of a co-authored research monograph, *Creativity and Democracy in Education: practices and politics of learning through the arts*, 2015 [3:1]. The book conceptualised the term 'critical creativity'. Following on from this publication, several practice-led research projects were instigated in four principal countries in the period 2014-2020. This was a continuation of an impact case study examining process drama in the professions (Owens, REF2014). The research was led by Owens in collaboration with scholars and practitioners from around the world. The research was supported with grants from the British Academy, the British Council and Erasmus + Key Action 2 (among others).

2.1 Research Findings. Pretext Drama is a deceptively simple dramaturgical structure that provides the opportunity for participants to reflect critically and collectively in the midst of creative action, on the assumptions and connection they make to a given subject or phenomenon. Following on from Boal's articulation of the Oneiric Dimension, Owens' research has shown that through the 'drama', an imagined world is created by its participants enabling discussion as it evolves. The aesthetic distance generated through the movement between the reality of the drama and the reality of daily life creates a 'third space' of learning possibilities as understanding shifts. The third space created through Pretext Drama is safe, but dissensual; there is no attempt to reach consensus, but rather to allow diverse voices to compete and, in doing so, to allow opportunities for democratic and culturally-shared perspectives to emerge.

2.2 Research Process. This impact case study resulted in, and built from, several publications, which have been informed through research-led drama practice. The key underpinning publication [3:1] conceptualised the term 'critical creativity'. The term privileges polyphony and dissensus in dialogue; participation and engagement is key: resolution is not the aim. The case is made that critical creativity is a necessary part of any process or organisation that values critical understanding and learning if it is to form part of a functioning democracy [3:1].

Through practice-led research (with colleagues in Finland and the UK), Owens set about theorising this further. He secured Erasmus+ Key Action 2 funding for a research project that brought collaborators together for a project called *Beyond Text*, an arts-based approach to

Impact case study (REF3)

research assessment and evaluation, designed to articulate alternatives to instrumental approaches to knowledge.

Owens' work on the *Beyond Text* project led to an invitation from the Business School, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, to reconfigure the 'Introduction to Leadership' International Annual Summer School course (2017-2018). The implications of embedding Pretext Drama within an introductory course to leadership [3:2].

The question then arose as to why arts-based research as pretexts for innovation in organisations are not more widely used. This led to a further publication, which highlighted the reasoning behind the use of arts-based methods to foster criticality and to question assumptions informing daily, localised management and organisational practices [3:3].

Owens also initiated an international research project with teacher educators in Finland and five other partner universities in Austria, Estonia, Germany, Spain, and Sweden (2014-2017). The research project was called *Inside out / Outside in - Building bridges in teacher education through encounters with diversity*, and explored the use of critical creativity in pretext form in pre- and in-service teacher education. This led to two peer-reviewed research outputs [3:4]; [3:5].

Research undertaken with educators and collaborators in Catalonia, Finland, Estonia, and Palestine led to a E-Publication of the *Beyond Text* project (2020), in open access and translated into 5 languages: Arabic, Catalan, Estonian, Finnish and Spanish. [3:6]

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Adams, J. and Owens, A. (2015) *Creativity and Democracy in Education: practices and politics of learning through the arts*. Oxon. & New York: Routledge. Hardback: ISBN: 9780415741217 (hbk) 978-1-315-81540-4 (ebk) ISBN-13: 978-1138103917 ISBN-10: 1138103918 (pbk) 2017
2. Pässilä, A., Malin, V. Owens, A. and Kuusipalo-Määttä, P. (2019) Using Kaleidoscopic Pedagogy to Foster Critically Reflective Learning in Antonocopoulos, A. & Taylor, S.S. (Eds.) *Sensuous Learning for Practical Judgment in Professional Practice: Volume 2: Arts-based Methods*. pp.277-303, London/New York: Palgrave-MacMillan.
3. Pässilä, A., Owens, A. and Pulkki, M. (2016) Learning Jam: an evaluation of the use of Arts Based Initiatives to generate polyphonic understanding in Work Based Learning. *Journal: Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*. DOI: 10.1108/HESWBL-01-2016-0006. Article
4. Hulse, B. and Owens, A. (2017) Process drama as a tool for teaching modern languages: supporting the development of creativity and innovation in early professional practice. *Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. pp. 1-14. Article
5. Moate, J., Hulse, B., Hanke, H. and Owens, A. (2019). Exploring the material mediation of dialogic space: A qualitative analysis of professional learning in initial teacher education based on sketchbooks, *Journal of Thinking Skills and Creativity: Special Issue: Dialogic Pedagogies*, Eva Vass (Ed). Volume 31, pp. 167-178.
6. Benmergui, R., Owens, A. Pässilä, A. (Eds), (2020) *Beyond Text: Arts Based Methods for Research, Assessment and Evaluation*, Erasmus + EU: Beyond Text Partnership. eBook (185 pages). ISBN 978-1-5272-4398-9 (120 pages). Translations: Arabic; CatAllan; Estonian; Finnish; Japanese; Spanish.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impacts of Owens' research are detailed by country, and evidenced in three interrelated ways. Firstly, this section will show the impact of Pretext Drama on curriculum content and teaching delivery, and the corollary benefits for organisations, students, teachers, and drama practitioners. Secondly, Owens' development of third spaces to promote democratic and culturally-shared understanding has a significance beyond academia and particularly in challenging contexts, such as those experienced by tsunami nuclear disaster survivors, and those living in occupied territories. Thirdly, this case study has enabled Owens to build on collaborative research established in the previous REF cycle in new and dynamic ways.

Japan. Between 2016-18, Pretexts were created for the Minamisoma Tsunami Disaster Committee (Fukushima Prefecture, Japan), in collaboration with Taichi-Kikaku Theatre, Tokyo. These were: (1) *Izanami and Izanagi*, 2016; (2) *Three Turtles*, 2017; and (3) *Kabutomushi*, 2018. Through Drama Pretext, third spaces were created in Odaka City – an area compulsorily evacuated after the tsunami nuclear disaster and slowly being repopulated. 109 local residents (a group of which had established a disaster committee) were equipped with pretext drama skills, which benefited the disaster committee members by giving them an alternative way of engaging with the community in a safe third space about their daily lives: “[Owens] supported reconstruction of our community. The Pretexts *Izanami and Izanagi*, *Three Turtles*, *Kabutomushi*, brought us together. We gathered before and after them, could talk and think together, we could dream together. It was a new way we could learn to be together in a special way in the *ketsu* (Evacuee Camp), in the town hall, people could hear our stories through other stories. This is a long process, and the pretexts are part of that. Memories that help carry us forward.” (Mikako Takahashi). [5:1]

Pretext drama was embedded in the introductory week for all first- and second-year students of the Voice Actor Program, Tokyo University of Technology, Kogakuin, Tokyo (2016-19). 12 staff have learned the skills to use pretexts to create third spaces. This has directly benefited 810 students by enabling them to interact with each other in third spaces in ways not possible in their traditional Japanese voice-actor training program. This facilitated a cultural shift from the traditional master/mentor conservatoire model and led to a greater sense of inclusion and belonging from the very beginning of their course. Tomoko Yoshimura refers to the impact on students: “The first week for the voice actor students (250 plus each year cohort) had pretext drama as the starting point for students to gain confidence by interacting with each other in a very different way than in their regular classes. There was a big move from *sensi* teaching to make sure everyone was included so they could create with their fellow students but within the structure of the pretext, providing safety.” (Tomoko Yoshimura). [5:2]

The Japan Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (2015-19) has established pretext drama as an annual input in their program, benefiting 83 practitioners from across Japan by equipping them with skills to create their own third spaces for understanding through pretext. “Owens’...pretext based applied drama method and his practice has opened new possibility of Japanese drama education.” (Katsunari Morito). [5:3]

Finland. Owens’ research in Pretext Drama has significantly impacted on the theory and practice of Finnish drama education during this and the previous REF cycle. Owens’ work in Finland has enabled fellow practitioners, municipal organisations, and students and academics in a range of disciplines to engage with each other and the public in creating spaces of understanding for explorations of sustainability, biodiversity, and indigenous cultures. In a 2018 interview, Petäjäjärvi stated that Owens “represent[s] a guru in taking [pretext drama methods] into different groups, societies, different spaces outside the theatre.” [5:4]

The Inner Elf: Living Tale of Lapland Pretext (2015) was created for the Laplandic Spiritual Adventure Park Company Hullu Poro Oy, Levi, and has been embedded in park locations and characters. Pretext equipped company managers and workers to make explicit their implicit local knowledge of Sami culture for the visitor experience. 2,000 visitors from across Europe and Asia (2015-2019) have benefited by being introduced to the spiritual values of the Sami culture through the spaces created. [5:5]

The Three Professors Pretext (2018) was created for Lahti City Municipal Authority. QR coded ‘StoryPark’ plates were installed in Lanu Park, Lahti, for public use. 230 members of the public, the majority being children and young people have scanned the codes on their phones to take part in the pretext. Through the story, presented in a series of audio files, they meet three professors from outer space who lead them to places in the park and invite them in to exercises which make them curious and increase their understanding of the biodiversity of the park. This resulted in a greater appreciation of the park, thus enhancing civic engagement at a local level: “Owens’ pretext work has been central to the social innovative core of projects such as *The Three Professors*... between LUT University and Lahti City Municipal Authority. ‘StoryPark’ plates are in situ and now

lead park users to sites increasing their knowledge of and interest in the biodiversity of Lanu Park." (Anne Pässilä). [5.6]

Public Open Space Landscape Design (2020) is a pretext based final year module created for the Landscape Design and Construction Degree Program with the Bachelor of Natural Resources Degree at Häme University of Applied Sciences. 47 third year students benefited through learning new arts-based planning and design skills for sustainable development in future urban environments: "*In Autumn 2020 a Public Open Space Design module in the Landscape Design and Construction Degree Program were implemented on the base of Beyond Text. This implementation supported transformative learning and growth of professional skills and produced 40 x 7ECTS= 280 ECTS.*" (Sari Suomalainen). [5.7]

The *Swim Eye* (2016) Pretext and concept of critical were embedded in the 'Outside-In -Inside Out; Encounters with Cultural Diversity three-year project run at the University of Jyväskylä. 96 students and 18 academic staff benefited by learning the skills needed to create third spaces for intercultural dialogue through pretext.

The Kaleidoscopic Pedagogy Pretext approach was embedded in the University of Jyväskylä's Business Faculty to reconfigure the 'Introduction to Leadership' International Annual Summer School course (2017 & 2018) by leading through pretext and creative pedagogical practices. 46 students from 12 countries benefited by broadening their understandings of leadership and management to reconfigure the relationship between the intuitive and rational. This was part of a cultural challenge to traditional business school training.

Again, Owens' impact benefits participants directly and, in their capacity as educators or practitioners in various fields, equips them for wide-reaching, significant, and sustainable impacts beyond the period covered in this case study.

Catalonia, Spain. *La Nave Va Theatre Company* have embedded Owens' theory and practice in their work since 2015 to the benefit of children and teachers in 240 primary schools in Catalonia. Their pretext project, *Three Friends/Los-Tres-Amigos* (2015), has benefited 650 children aged 9-11 by allowing them to engage with issues of difference in a safe third space. As a result, *La Nave Va* now equip other artists in Catalonia to create spaces for understanding. For example, *The Beyond Text Multiplier Day Event* (led by Owens), at Fabra i Coats Arts Factory (February 2018), enabled 72 experienced educators and artists from across Catalonia to expand their understanding of Pretext Drama and to re-frame critical creativity for use in their own practice: "*We now use pretext drama in many projects to raise consciousness of issues that are difficult to address directly... this has involved us training other members of the company on the skills needed. Beyond Text project allowed us to develop our arts-based research strand of pretext and other work alongside the other forms we use.*" (David Martinez). [5:8]

Similarly, the Universitat de Vic (Universitat Central de Catalunya) now has a regional reputation in pretext arts-based research, evaluation, and practice; for example, they have been commissioned to evaluate the Catalonia Community Arts Festival (Spring 2021). 68 youth-work students at Vic now use the *Beyond Text* ebook (Catalan Translation), which has benefited them in broadening their repertoire of skills for youth engagement. In the North of Catalonia, 230 second-year students on the University of Girona Primary Teachers Programme have also benefited through gaining skills and theoretical understanding of critical and democratic creativity in pretext form to enrich their work with young people aged 7-12.

Palestine. Building upon Owens' collaborations in the previous REF cycle, the MA Creative Pedagogies and Community Practices at the University of Bethlehem (Palestinian Ministry of Education approval 2021) is the first MA in the West Bank in which Palestinian educators, artists, and community workers study through radical pedagogical approaches such as pretext drama. Dean of Education Al Yamani based this programme on research-led practice with Owens from the period 2014-2020, which has benefited 185 teacher education students, and serving teachers who can now use arts-based practices: "*This experience has enabled us to work at the University*

of Bethlehem with students and teachers in participative engaging ways that challenge the traditional teaching and learning approach. This new approach is at the heart of the MA in Creative Pedagogies and Community Practices that we have submitted to the Ministry of Higher Education.” (Hala Rashed Al-Yamani). [5:9]

The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CETL) at Bethlehem University runs courses for academics in creative critical pedagogy. These have benefited 41 staff across the faculties by equipping them with the ability to use Pretexts as a form of Arts-Based Research, and to employ new methods of data collection and dissemination. This influence on teachers’ critical research practice amplifies the reach and sustainability of Owens’ impact: *“During my tenure at CETL, I have held workshops relating to Beyond Text, where staff started exploring ideas, methods to incorporate in their courses.” (Hala Nassar). [5:10]*

Two Palestinian academics from West Bank (Alsawayfa) and Gaza (El Waheidi) obtained their doctorates (2015-2019) with Owens as Supervisor, and have broadened the range of research methodologies and methods available to students. As a direct result of this, in 2019-2020, 120 Palestinian early years’ teachers have used methods for the benefit of their pupils in state schools using the Beyond Text E-Book Arabic translation: *“Since returning to Palestine I have been using drama education in my practice with teacher education students in the university and out in school classrooms as an active form of learning, as a radical alternative to teaching that encourages passivity and reproduction of existing knowledge” (Fadel Jobran Alsawayfa). [5:11]*

Since Owens’ impact in the previous REF cycle, Alrowwad Theatre and Culture Centre, Aida Refugee Camp, is now using Pretext Drama and other arts-based research methods to represent key strands of their work. The first of these was the framing ‘Life in the Camp’ theatre production as ethnographic performance (2018) – a form of non-violent, beautiful resistance to military occupation of the West Bank.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Director of NGO Manabiai, Minamisoma. **Testimonial.**
2. Head of Drama Voice Acting, Tokyo University of Technology, Kogakuin Campus. **Testimonial.**
3. Director General of Japan Children’s and Youth’s Japanese drama education. **Testimonial.**
4. http://taidetutka.fi/2018/podcast-keskustelu-muutoksesta-ja-taiteen-merkityksesta-tassa-ajassa/?fbclid=IwAR3WdFFv3KaiPGQf2awsK_F0NeNKRJUM2ezP2xH_Na54eTbbR-_wj0lfbJ0. **Interview**
5. Owens, A. and Pässilä, A. (2016) Inner Elf: Living fairy Tale of Lapland Hullo Porro Ltd. Pretext Story <https://elvesvillage.fi/en/info/stories/elf-in-a-yellowdress-story/> YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqeXhQWTfDI> (Owens min.1.50). **YouTube.**
6. Senior Researcher, LUT University, School of Engineering & Science. **Testimonial.**
7. Senior Lecturer in Landscape Design and Construction Programme. **Testimonial.**
8. Director La Nave Va Teatro, Fabra i Coats, Barcelona. **Testimonial.**
9. Associate Professor, Chairperson of the Department of Early Childhood, Bethlehem University, Dean of Faculty of Education. **Testimonial.**
10. Associate Professor, Academic Office, Department of Education. **Testimonial.**
11. Assistant Professor, Practicum Coordinator, Faculty of Education, Bethlehem University. **Testimonial**