



YOUTH VULNERABILITIES IN A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS JANUS N° 2023-1-RO01-KA220-YOU-000154837

NEWSLETTER NO 6

Future Directions in Applying the Autobiographical Theatre Methodology

The **Autobiographical Theatre Methodology** is an innovative pedagogical and artistic approach designed by director **Domingo Ferrandis** (Solis srls). It combines personal storytelling with creative transformation. Its aim is to support participants in exploring their own experiences, while developing critical thinking, collaboration, and artistic expression.

The methodology is structured around seven interconnected stages:

Trust – creating a safe and supportive environment that fosters openness.

Story – encouraging the sharing of personal narratives.

Transcription – transforming oral stories into written texts.

Research – connecting individual stories with broader cultural, historical, or social contexts.

Narrative-Fictionalization – reworking personal narratives into creative and performative material.

Aesthetics – shaping the artistic language through sound, movement, staging, and visual expression.

Theatre – presenting the outcome as a shared creative act, merging personal truth with collective artistic expression.

Other 2 steps are added after the performance is presented to the audience

Colloquium – after performance discussion between the actors and the participants

Dissemination – duplication of the project results in other contexts

The methodology's strength lies in its flexibility: it can be adapted to various educational, social, and artistic contexts, making it a valuable tool for teachers, educators, artists, youth workers, and cultural practitioners.

By combining autobiographical authenticity with artistic experimentation, the Janus methodology not only develops creative skills but also cultivates empathy, resilience, and critical awareness, all of which are essential competences in today's cultural and educational landscapes.

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UNIVERSITY OF ARTS OF TÂRGU-MUREȘ, ROMANIA

University of Arts integrated the methodology with teachers, educators, and artistic practitioners, examining its role in academic training, artistic experimentation, and professional development in the creative industries.

Trust

- Seen as the most essential stage.
- Nearly all respondents emphasize the need for a safe, open environment where participants feel comfortable sharing.
- Considered very achievable and highly important.

Story

- Rated lowest among stages.
- While participants value identifying personal stories, many see it as difficult or sensitive.
- Challenges: self-exposure, fear of judgment, difficulty in selecting meaningful narratives.

Transcription

- Generally viewed as necessary and achievable.
- Writing down stories helps structure experiences and prepares them for adaptation.
- Important for clarity and continuity, though some see it as a demanding step for younger students.

Research

- Strongly valued as a way to deepen stories through group discussions, case studies, and interdisciplinary insights (psychological, sociological, historical).
- Respondents consider it a powerful enrichment stage that makes personal narratives more meaningful.

Narrative-Fictionalization

- Mixed feelings: some are comfortable fictionalizing personal experiences, while others feel uneasy.
- Seen as necessary for stage adaptation, but participants express concerns about altering personal truth.
- Comfort level varies with age group and personal openness.

Aesthetics

- Considered highly important for audience impact.
- Visual and sound elements are seen as essential in making stories resonate more deeply.
- Rated as an influential stage that enhances both expression and reception.

Theatre

- Rated very positively.
- Seen as the culmination of the process, allowing autobiographical stories to connect with wider audiences.
- Respondents believe it can address contemporary, relevant themes and foster empathy.

Applicability to Age Groups

University students: The methodology was described as highly relevant, encouraging personal and professional development.

Younger groups: Some respondents noted that the complexity of transcription and research might need simplification for high school students.

Challenges

Research and transcription were described as too demanding without stronger guidance.

Performance required more time, technical resources, and rehearsal space.

Future Directions

- Explore innovative performance formats (multimedia, installations, non-verbal theatre) to reduce stage exposure concerns.
- Deepen research as collaborative analysis, linking personal stories to wider cultural and social contexts.
- Strengthen aesthetic experimentation with soundscapes, movement, and visual arts to harness students' creativity.

Recommendations

- Provide flexibility in performance: allow symbolic, video, or hybrid formats.
- Support students with emotional processing tools before performance.
- Encourage peer-led facilitation, where advanced students guide younger ones.

The methodology is highly compatible with an arts university setting, where students are open to creativity, aesthetics, and experimentation.

Application is feasible, with adaptations for performance formats that reduce emotional exposure.

Sustainability is strong if the methodology is embedded in curriculum design and linked to peer-led projects, ensuring continuity beyond one-off workshops.

SOLIS SRLS, ITALY

SOLIS SRLS implemented the Autobiographical Theatre methodology focusing on youth resilience, creativity, and digital adaptation. They engaged educators, social workers, and community facilitators in applying the methodology, highlighting its potential for social inclusion, empathy-building, and personal development.

Trust

- Rated as highly important.
- Respondents emphasize that creating emotional safety is essential for participants to share openly.
- Seen as realistic and achievable, with strong alignment across responses.

Story

- Considered achievable, but slightly less strong than Trust.
- Participants acknowledge the value of identifying personal stories, though some note it requires guidance and sensitivity.
- Rated as relatively easy overall.

Transcription

- Perceived as very useful and necessary.
- Writing stories down is seen as a key stage for clarity, reflection, and preparing for adaptation.
- Very positively rated, almost as high as Trust and Research.

Research

- One of the strongest-rated stages.
- Group discussions and contextual analyses are seen as enriching, adding depth and perspective to personal stories.
- Considered both useful and feasible.

Narrative-Fictionalization

- Viewed positively, higher than in other groups.
- Respondents are generally comfortable fictionalizing personal stories, though they acknowledge the need for sensitivity.
- Considered a creative and adaptable stage.

Aesthetics

- Rated very highly.
- Recognized as a stage that enhances impact through visuals, sound, and artistic choices.
- Seen as essential for audience engagement.

Theatre

- Rated positively.
- Participants see performance as the culmination of the process, where all prior stages come together.

Applicability to Age Groups

Young participants: Methodology considered feasible but required dynamic facilitation and adapted exercises for online engagement.

Older youth: Found it easier to engage in reflective storytelling and performance, even online.

Challenges

Trust-building online was described as difficult and time-consuming.

Improvisation and Performance stages were harder without physical interaction.

Future Directions

- Strengthen methodology as a holistic cultural and relational tool, linking stories to identity and community.
- Incorporate digital storytelling tools (audio, video, podcasts) to broaden accessibility.
- Position methodology as a resilience-building practice for vulnerable groups.

Recommendations

- Provide trauma-informed facilitator training to handle sensitive content.
- Establish ethical safeguards (anonymisation, fictionalisation) for performance.
- Pilot hybrid methods (digital + live) to engage diverse audiences.
- Encourage collective fictionalisation as a safer alternative to individual exposure.

The methodology aligns well with SOLIS's holistic, cultural, and relational mission, making application highly feasible.

Digital tools and trauma-informed approaches are essential for engaging vulnerable youth.

Sustainability is achievable when linked to community projects, European collaborations, and capacity-building for facilitators, ensuring long-term embedding into NGO practices.

FUNDATIA PROFESSIONAL, ROMANIA

Fundatia Professional integrated the Janus Autobiographical Theatre methodology in workshops designed to enhance resilience, creativity, and emotional expression. They applied the methodology with teachers, educators, and youth workers, focusing on how autobiographical theatre can strengthen resilience, creativity, and personal expression among young people.

Trust

- Seen as important but not always easy, especially with children or students with special needs.
- Respondents stress the need for adaptation and extra care in creating a safe environment.
- Slightly lower score compared to other stages, reflecting practical challenges.

Story

- Considered achievable and valuable.
- Participants highlight the interest in transforming personal experience into narrative.
- Some difficulties mentioned in guiding students to choose significant stories.

Transcription

- Seen as a necessary and useful step for clarity.
- Writing helps to structure and refine experiences before fictionalization.
- Some variation in perception (a few rated lower), but overall positive acceptance.

Research

- Valued as a way to enrich stories through discussion, analysis, and broader perspectives.
- The incorporation of psychological, sociological, and historical lenses is seen as beneficial.
- Recognized as an enrichment stage that strengthens narratives.

Narrative-Fictionalization

- Lowest-rated stage in this group.
- Respondents are divided: some find it creative and helpful for adaptation, others feel uneasy fictionalizing personal truths.
- Seen as necessary for theatre, but with emotional and ethical sensitivities.

Aesthetics

- Viewed as an important enhancer of performance.
- Visual and sound elements considered essential for audience impact.
- Respondents highlight its role in making stories engaging and expressive.

Theatre

- Rated as the most positively perceived stage.
- Believed to be effective in addressing contemporary themes and resonating with audiences.

Applicability to Age Groups

Most respondents considered the Janus methodology applicable to their age groups. However:

Older participants were generally more comfortable with deep reflection and performance.

Younger groups required more scaffolding, especially in Trust and Performance stages.

Challenges

Some stages, particularly Transcription and Research, were described as less engaging and requiring clearer facilitation.

The Performance stage was noted as emotionally heavy, sometimes intimidating.

Future Directions

- Prioritise trust-building and storytelling through play, drawing, and collective exercises to overcome resistance.
- Adapt transcription to literacy levels: visual diaries, group storytelling, collaborative writing.
- Integrate methodology into school contexts with shorter, modular sessions.

Recommendations

- Develop teacher training in trauma-informed and emotional facilitation.
- Use symbolic storytelling (images, puppetry, metaphors) to reduce vulnerability.
- Pair aesthetics and performance with low-stakes formats (class exhibitions, symbolic theatre) to build confidence gradually.

Fundatia Professional's experience with the Janus methodology highlights its transformative potential.

Future applications should expand the methodology with digital storytelling techniques, stronger facilitation of abstract stages, and adaptations for younger learners, ensuring that autobiographical theatre remains accessible, impactful, and sustainable.

Sustainability depends on teacher training and integration into regular school activities in shorter, accessible modules.

SHIPCON LIMASSOL LTD, CYPRUS

Shipcon piloted the Janus Autobiographical Theatre methodology as part of its intercultural and educational training programs. They explored the methodology with trainers, teachers, and adult education professionals, testing its relevance in lifelong learning and intercultural training contexts.

Trust

- Seen as very important and generally achievable.
- Emphasize on the role of a safe, open environment for authentic sharing.
- Rated highly, but some challenges when working with younger learners.

Story

- Lowest-rated stage in this group.
- While valuable, many respondents find selecting personal stories difficult or sensitive.
- Challenges include fear of exposure, difficulty choosing meaningful narratives, and emotional vulnerability.

Transcription

- Considered a necessary and helpful stage.
- Writing stories is valued for structure and clarity, preparing them for fictionalization.
- Some noted it may be harder for younger participants.

Research

- Strongly appreciated.
- Group discussions, analysis, and interdisciplinary perspectives (psychology, sociology, history) are seen as enriching stories.
- Respondents believe it makes narratives more meaningful and collective.

Narrative-Fictionalization

- Mixed responses: some find it creative and liberating, others uncomfortable fictionalizing personal truths.
- Seen as necessary for stage adaptation, but with ethical/emotional sensitivities.

Aesthetics

- One of the highest-rated stages.
- Considered crucial for impact on the audience, with visuals and sound enhancing emotional expression.
- Viewed as essential for making stories resonate on stage.

Theatre

- Positively rated as the culmination of the process.
- Seen as capable of addressing relevant and contemporary themes.
- Slightly lower than Aesthetics, Trust, and Research, but still strong overall.

Applicability to Age Groups

Participants noted the methodology was feasible with different ages, but with variations:

Adult learners found it highly relevant for self-reflection and professional growth.

Younger participants needed more facilitation and play-based elements, especially in Trust and Performance stages.

Challenges

Story selection and Narrative-Fictionalization require more support, as participants may struggle with personal vulnerability or fictionalizing their own experiences.

Future Directions

- Reinforce trust-building strategies tailored to diverse groups (empathy games, role play).
- Develop flexible approaches to fictionalisation (symbolic, metaphorical, collective).
- Expand aesthetics and performance into community and intercultural dialogue contexts.

Recommendations

- Provide alternative performance outlets (film, exhibitions, symbolic stagings) to reduce stage fright.
- Establish peer-support structures to encourage sharing and resilience.
- Link autobiographical theatre to community and social issues, increasing relevance.
- Train facilitators in adaptive methodologies to handle diverse learning needs and cultural sensitivities.

Application is possible but requires flexibility: trust-building and fictionalisation must be adapted for diverse youth groups.

The methodology's focus on aesthetics and performance connects well with Shipcon's intercultural and community orientation.

Sustainability relies on flexible formats (film, exhibitions, symbolic performance) and on building peer-support networks, ensuring that participants feel safe and empowered to continue the practice.

The four pilot implementations of the Autobiographical Theatre methodology — within the University of Arts, Solis srls, Fundatia Professional, and, Shipcon,— reveal a consistent pattern of transformative impact, adaptability, and long-term potential.

Key Dimensions of Sustainability

Pedagogical Sustainability

The methodology has been validated as age-group adaptable, from high school learners (Fundatia) to university students (University of Arts).

Teachers and trainers see value in incorporating it into curricula and extracurricular projects, ensuring continuity beyond the pilot phase.

Organisational Sustainability

Each partner has identified pathways to integrate the methodology into its long-term mission:

University of Arts: academic and artistic innovation.

Solis srls: community building and personal growth.

Fundatia Professional: youth empowerment and resilience.

Shipcon: vocational and professional training with intercultural relevance.

Community and Cultural Sustainability

The strong emphasis on personal storytelling and collective performance fosters inclusion, empathy, and intercultural understanding.

Participants recognized its role in building resilient communities and preparing students for the creative industries.

Overall Sustainability Assessment

The project demonstrates high sustainability potential.

The methodology is not a one-time intervention but a reproducible framework that can be embedded in educational systems, cultural organisations, and creative industries.

Its adaptability to diverse groups and its alignment with both personal growth and professional artistic goals ensure that the Janus Methodology can continue to thrive and expand after the conclusion of the Janus project.

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