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Secondary Shakespeare in the UK: Pedagogies and Practice

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ABSTRACT
In this paper, we report data from the first national survey of secondary Shakespeare teaching in the UK, conducted online in 2017–18 with a sample of 211 teachers distributed throughout Wales, England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. In this article, we outline the pedagogical practices which are dominant. Specifically, we examine the group of pedagogies known as 'Active Methods' and consider their popularity in secondary classrooms, and why teachers say they do or do not use them. The most popular activities for teaching Shakespeare plays in the UK across the key stages are as follows: reading with parts around the groups; creating scene summaries; watching a film; and historical context activities.

KEYWORDS
Shakespeare; teaching Shakespeare; Active Methods; pedagogy; drama methods

Introduction

Shakespeare is the sole compulsory curriculum author in England and Northern Ireland and historically in Wales (Shaw 2021). In Scotland, his plays are optional but widely taught. We report data from the first national survey of secondary Shakespeare teaching in the UK, conducted online in 2017–18 with a sample of teachers distributed throughout Wales, England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, focusing on pedagogies and practices.

'Active methods' comprises a wide range of expressive, creative and physical activities to teach Shakespeare in the school classroom (Gibson 1998; Stredder 2009). The approach is predicated on understanding Shakespeare's plays as texts for performance. Practices commonly involve some enactment that takes students out of their seats, into paired and group work, and value students' emotional as well as intellectual engagement with the text. Active methods have been championed by Gibson (1998), Stredder (2009), and the education teams of Shakespeare's Globe and The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), among others. The use of active methods pedagogies has generated some debate as to their value, including:

- Whether they detract from or sharpen a focus on the text, by having students physicalise and vocalise it;
- Whether they promote an unfeasible definitiveness of interpretation given their emphasis on generating a performance moment, which must choose one interpretation over others (akin to desk-bound methods in which teachers would construe a monolithic

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meaning line-by-line or passage-by-passage (Olive 2015, 62)) or promote awareness of interpretation as multiple, contingent and dynamic given their emphasis on process (akin to that of the rehearsal room), rather than a polished, final performance;

- Relatedly, whether they encourage students to treat characters as psychologically coherent, real people, rather than a fictional or fictionalised construction of the author, and the play's character types and themes as universal, rather than located in particular historical, social and political contexts;
- Whether active methods' emphasis on enjoyment is allied with, or counter to, achievement in assessment;
- Whether their effectiveness is limited to introductory work on the play, 'sugar-coated Shakespeare' (Wilson 1997, 63), or can be used throughout the course of studying Shakespeare – both in terms of working on individual plays and in progression through the key stages (Coles 2009);
- Relatedly, whether they are supplementary to literary critical methods or a replacement for them; outright reject or are underpinned by the work of literary critics (Reynolds 1991, 5).

However, this debate has largely happened in the absence of knowledge about what practices in classrooms *actually* are. This survey provides the necessary evidence about pedagogies and practices in secondary schools.

Background

The only prior survey on Shakespeare teaching in the UK was conducted by Sheppard (1993 data reported in Wade & Sheppard 1993; 1994). He invited participation from two teachers in each of the 45 English departments in Birmingham's secondary schools at the time. His reporting of outcomes divided pedagogies into 'popular', 'less popular', and 'least popular'. The most popular strategy was play-reading, closely followed by literary analysis and watching videos, with theatre visiting and writing scene summaries also categorised as 'popular'. The least popular strategies were role-play (reported as used regularly by only half the number of participants that reported using literary analysis), improvisation, and performance, with hot-seating and bringing in outside agencies, such as theatre companies, being far less popular. Of these, we characterise role-play, improvisation, hot-seating, directing, and performance as Active Methods.

The RSC's practice in promoting Active Methods, or 'rehearsal room' techniques and 'Open Space Learning' (OSL), has been thoroughly considered by Winston (2015). Winston theorised the rehearsal room pedagogies of the RSC, drawing on John Dewey, and the value of learning through experience; he argues that much of the meaning-making in the performance of Shakespeare is non-verbal and that Active Methods develops this understanding. A quantitative evaluation of the RSC's work with teachers and its impact on children's learning experience was carried out by Winston and Strand (2015); the results show statistically significant improvements in primary and secondary students' attitudes to Shakespeare, and to schools in general, versus a control group who did not experience RSC pedagogies. The results from the pre-test showed that 'attitude to Shakespeare' was not conditional on attainment in English. The impact of which class students were in was four times greater than that of which school they attended, which suggests that individual teacher's classroom practices and pedagogies can be highly influential on how students regard Shakespeare. Pupils who reported that they did not often act out scenes from Shakespeare plays, did not often read aloud from the plays, and did not cover Shakespeare in drama classes had less-positive attitudes to Shakespeare than other students (2015, 135). There having been a whole-school production of Shakespeare or having seen a performance at a theatre was also linked to more positive attitudes.

Echoing earlier criticism of Active Methods from British critics, Thompson and Turchi (2016) have added their North American perspective to the view that engagement and positive attitudes are not sufficient goals for Shakespeare's pedagogy for more advanced learners, where close-reading and literary analysis are required for external examinations. Athanases and Sanchez (2020) reported on a programme linking practitioners from Shakespeare's Globe's with early-career teachers in California for an intensive training workshop after exposure to the Globe's practices during their preservice year. Their results showed that the teachers' valuing of these practices exceeded their confidence to use them; teachers particularly valued the use of these methods to improve student engagement; to explore social issues; and to enable students' creativity. Their greatest reservation was in their confidence in their ability to use these practices with linguistically diverse students. Qualitative data suggested that some teachers saw issues with the use of Shakespeare in linguistic and culturally diverse classrooms in relation to canonical hegemony (as our own data showed with reference to Shakespeare in Scotland; Elliott and Olive 2021). Others, however, saw the challenge of Shakespeare's language for L1 (first language) English speakers as a levelling of the playing field for students with English as an additional language. Athanases & Sanchez conclude that while teachers value Active Methods, they require intensive support to enable them to implement the approach in classroom (2020). Elliott (2016) suggests that a lack of confidence with teaching Shakespeare is also present in pre-service teachers in the UK. For an excellent and detailed case for Active Methods, which distinguishes between 'reading through drama' and the specific activities drawn from theatre rehearsal practices, please see Coles and Pitfield (2022).

While Active Methods have received a certain amount of attention in the literature on Shakespeare pedagogy in the last few years, they are by no means ubiquitous. Bloom, Toothman & Buswell link the use of 'serious games' (2021, 30) in the form of Active Methods to the adoption of digital games. Their focus is on a mixed-reality digital tool called *Play the Knave*, users of which 'created virtual productions via avatars on screen by performing physically in real life' (2021, 33). The need for students to move themselves in order to move avatars on screen makes it a crossover between the two forms. Interest in digital educational games for teaching of Shakespeare seems to be increasing, as, for example, the *WillPlay*[1] digital tool for exploring *Romeo and Juliet,* which provides computer generated interactive dialogue, including quizzes posed by a Shakespeare avatar who interpolates glossed quotation within the conversation. Professor Abigail Williams, who led the team that developed the tool, suggests avoiding the word 'game' in favour of 'learning resources', in order to avoid disappointment and disillusionment setting in among young learner-players (Williams 2021).

Close-reading activities, with their mid-twentieth century roots, continue to be championed in the new millennium, albeit sometimes inflected with newer critical theories such as feminism and postcolonialism (Francis 2003; Haddon 2009; McDonald, Nace, and Williams 2012). Their predominance is reflected in the textual apparatus of student editions of the plays, such as line-by-line glosses and critical essays introducing the edition or as appendices to it. This *status quo* was shaken up somewhat, though not undone, by the launch of the Cambridge School Shakespeare editions in the 1990s, revised for a new generation and international market in the 2010s. Along with the New Longman Shakespeare and the RSC School Shakespeare editions, this series provides a rare example of integrating active methods throughout the edition instead of locating them in a discrete section. It is worth bearing in mind that, due to financial constraints, the editions stocked by schools and distributed to students rarely reflect the latest publications and are usually made to last several generations of students. Data from the survey reported in this paper suggested that cost was a large part of the choice of text both in terms of edition and title (Elliott and Olive 2021).

The use of film and other media to support the study of literary texts has been suggested in curriculum documents. The popularity of showing Shakespeare on film is reflected by widespread attention in publications aimed at the teaching profession over the decades, from Aers & Wheale's *Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum* (1991) through Blocksidge's *Shakespeare in Education* (2003) and beyond. References to films are also well represented, along with theatre productions, in school editions of the plays. Typically, photographs will be included alongside questions encouraging students to relate performance choices to the play-text and their own interpretation. A recent, pre-pandemic, example of empirical research on students attending live theatre performance comes from Cathy Baldwin (2021). She reported qualitative data from 800 14-year-olds who had received free tickets to a production of *Much Ado About Nothing* as part of Shakespeare's Globe's Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank programme, which also incorporated workshops for teachers and students and online resources for studying the play. Before taking part in the programme, the young people reported wildly differing views of Shakespeare, despite having received reasonably similar educational experiences of his works; afterwards they reported seeing the relevance of the plays and enjoyment of the production. Baldwin suggests the contemporary production challenged views of Shakespeare as old-fashioned and enabled students to see the way themes linked between plays and real life. She also notes that the free ticket, and the timing of the production during the schoolday, enabled schools to make this trip compulsory for students and that for many young people it was their first experience of theatre. Baldwin specifically suggests linking dramatic explorations of the plays with the idea of developing multiple interpretations of any given text, which can feed into writing about it, in order to ensure that students understand the value of such activity in an assessment-dominated context.

Creative and *recreative* writing (e.g. retelling a scene from the perspective of a minoritized character) offers an attractive alternative to active methods where there are perceived spatial or behavioural constraints on movement and physicality (Saunders 1985; Gregory 2003). Contextual approaches, or a 'life and times' approach to Shakespeare, underpinned by historicist, new historicist, and cultural materialist theories popular in the 1980s and 1990s, consider how the plays were produced by their authors, theatre spaces and conventions of the day, and wider society. Unlike active methods and other creative approaches to Shakespeare, contextual approaches have been seen to flow neatly into traditional classroom and assessment practices, although they have attracted some of the same criticisms of being supplementary, introductory, or sugar-coating (Armstrong and Atkin 1998, 9; Francis 2003, 92).

Methodology

An online survey was designed with reference to the current professional and research literature on Shakespeare teaching methods, and to the only existing (limited) survey of Shakespeare teaching (Sheppard 1993). This allowed for some diachronic comparison of the findings. The survey asked teachers answer a mixture of open and closed questions with reference to their practice for the year 2017–18. Participation was anonymous. Responses to open-ended questions were coded by the two researchers jointly in discussion. We asked participants about their practices in relation to specific year groups; these groups are called slightly different things in Northern Ireland and Scotland than they are in Wales and England. In this article, we refer to Years 1–7 for simplicity: Year 1, in this case, is children of age 11–12; Year 7 is students of 17–18 years of age. External examinations are taken in all the countries at 16 years of age (National 5 in Scotland and GCSE in others) and at the end of schooling (Highers in Scotland and A level in others). There are only 6 years of secondary education in Scotland; the youngest year group in the study is therefore, in this context, a primary class (P7). We did not ask which examination specifications teachers were following.

We recruited 211 voluntary participants via online means: 128 in England, 5 in Northern Ireland, 47 in Scotland, and 29 in Wales. Proportionally with the number of secondary schools, the sample was weighted most heavily towards Wales, followed by Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England. The survey asked participants to give their school postcodes to check for clustering of participants: 11 schools had two participants; one school provided 4; otherwise, there was no more than one per school. The majority of respondents (77%) worked in state comprehensive schools; others worked in grammars (4%), independent schools (12%), comprehensives in a selective area (6%), or sixth form colleges (1%). This is broadly representative of the proportions of these nationally except for independent schools which are over-represented in our sample. Our sample was weighted towards experienced teachers: almost a quarter had more than 20 years teaching experience, and 60% had more than 10 years. Fewer than 10% of the participants were in their first 2 years of teaching; the rest were divided almost equally between roles as classroom teachers, teachers with responsibilities lower than Head of Department, and Heads of Department. Sixty-six (31%) of our sample had undertaken CPD on teaching Shakespeare: they had worked with theatre companies (34), universities (10), Awarding Bodies (5), and the English and Media Centre in London (4). The sample, therefore, was broadly distributed over experience, career stage, and geographically, although, as a voluntary sample, it cannot be taken to be representative. Cross-tabulations were performed for demographic data against answers to other questions; no significant patterns were present.

Findings

Table 1 shows self-reported use of pedagogies from ages 11 to 18 years, selected from a pre-existing list. Italics indicate ‘Active Methods’. The most common pedagogy

Table 1. Pedagogical practices – Bold figures represent clear majority answers.

	11–14				15–16				16+			
	Reg	Occ	Rare	Never	Reg	Occ	Rare	Never	Reg	Occ	Rare	Never
Reading with parts around class	**162**	25	11	5	**162**	17	5	6	**109**	16	6	6
Scenes in groups	55	**105**	34	8	42	66	46	27	22	40	26	40
Improvisation	22	54	63	50	11	38	65	59	8	18	37	**61**
Role-play	38	88	50	11	23	57	55	40	10	29	37	50
Scene Summaries	**132**	45	15	6	**131**	39	11	6	**88**	23	8	14
Watching film	**153**	38	10	0	**145**	31	12	2	**96**	26	7	7
Going to theatre	32	92	52	26	46	71	45	26	58	53	14	10
Hot-seating	37	85	52	17	24	68	49	36	11	39	31	44
Literary critical analysis	87	58	33	22	**127**	37	10	11	**124**	5	2	5
Making videos	6	32	54	**93**	3	14	40	**115**	1	7	24	**91**
Outside agencies	6	52	81	50	10	45	68	54	11	29	35	52
Recreative writing	53	78	34	24	33	59	39	45	13	26	26	59
Writing in character	83	78	25	11	48	66	35	32	19	23	28	56
'Translating' into modern English	56	79	38	20	51	61	33	35	22	30	22	54
Using modern translation e.g. 'No Fear'	53	63	43	33	55	43	29	50	12	19	25	**69**
Using comic book version	32	67	64	34	14	39	61	58	3	8	22	**91**
Whoosh	27	24	19	**111**	14	12	26	**117**	3	4	6	**110**
Choral speaking	15	28	40	**102**	6	20	30	**113**	5	5	13	**100**
'Directing' the play	26	64	50	52	20	46	46	65	18	32	22	53
Shakespeare insults	67	70	39	21	28	35	57	57	6	11	31	**77**
Conscience Alley	21	35	33	**95**	9	20	34	**105**	3	12	13	**95**
Tableaux/freeze frames	40	45	55	47	15	36	38	83	6	12	25	**81**
Putting characters on trial	23	77	63	26	16	53	54	51	5	22	39	**61**
Listening to podcasts	2	24	49	**109**	9	27	42	96	13	33	14	**63**
Historical context activities	**129**	51	18	1	**121**	43	10	11	**80**	27	10	13
Craft activities, e.g Globes	23	43	63	57	4	21	45	**99**	0	7	20	**96**
Online games	3	31	58	**93**	1	20	40	**107**	1	6	16	**101**

reported as being in 'regular' use across age-phases was reading with parts around the class, closely followed by watching a film of the play. The creation of scene summaries was also a regularly used pedagogy, particularly in ages up to 16 years; traditional literary criticism was more popular with ages over 14 years. Participants reported relatively high use, either regularly or occasionally, of creative writing strategies, such as writing in character or recreative writing, with younger age groups. Regular or occasional use of 'No Fear' versions of Shakespeare in modernised English, sometimes abridged, were also relatively frequent with groups up to 16 years of age but not as popular as getting students to 'translate' Shakespeare into modern language themselves.

Outside agencies were rarely employed in teaching Shakespeare, which may reflect the financial situation in schools. The only pedagogy which we characterised as Active Methods that was reported as being in frequent use by a majority of participants was performing scenes in groups. Hot-seating and putting characters on trial were also used 'occasionally' with younger students but not by a majority of participants. Instead, Active Methods pedagogies were notably the ones most frequently reported as 'never' being used by a majority of participants. Online games are rarely used according to our data.

Responses to open answer questions on the reasons for the pedagogical choices teachers make reflect teachers' consideration of the particular needs of their classes. For example, one teacher suggested in relation to under 14s that the higher the attainment of the class, the more diverse the teaching methods could be: 'For higher ability I used a lot of role-play and dramatic methods (from The Globe, EMC, RSC etc) but lower ability it really is a case of spoonfeeding the meaning then helping them to explore Shakespeare's language'. For students between 14 and 16 more literary critical analysis and textual annotation became important but this did not always mean neglecting more active approaches: 'Critical analysis of the text is crucial at KS4 and KS5 but I still use active Drama strategies to facilitate this – for instance questioning in role during duologues, using physical actions for specific things that recur in the text to facilitate understanding of language patterns etc'. One teacher mentioned the need for attention to key quotations for examination purposes, while another mentioned practice questions as their most common pedagogy for ages 14 to 16. This trend expanded for students over 16, with teachers frequently referencing examination demands in their justification of their pedagogy, including an increased focus on language over the dramatic nature of the plays. Several teachers in Scotland stated that they did not teach Shakespeare to examination classes, either because the examination structure did not support it (2) or because in the context of a wealth of other options drawn from Scottish literature it was not attractive (1).

Active Methods

When asked if they used Active Methods, 82 respondents (41% of those who answered the question) answered that they did not know what Active Methods were, outweighing 'Yes' (64 respondents, 32%). Further, 51 respondents (25.5%) answered that they used them a bit. However, just four respondents (2%) answered that they did not use them at all. This suggests that those who are aware of Active Methods do use them, at least a little. A large number of respondents (152) reported reading RSC or Globe materials online or in print to prepare for teaching Shakespeare's plays, however. One teacher commented on Active Methods, 'Is this a newfangled term, rather like "Kagan structures" for parts of good teaching?' Interestingly, another respondent framed a specific Active Method – the Whoosh[2] – 'as a form of DI [Direct Instruction] so pupils have a clear overview and focus on key quotations', which raises the question of the relationship between pedagogic ideology and specific activities. This respondent has re-framed an activity which would seem to be very happily aligned with so-called progressive forms of teaching in order to make it acceptable within a traditionalist framework.

Thirty-one respondents had attended training with the RSC or the Globe, or with Rex Gibson directly:

> I learned under Rex Gibson and had inset years ago on The Tempest using active methods. I have repeated these approaches many times, for example creating split down lines if longer speeches which are spoken randomly as students walk around the room and then all pulled together to make semantic sense. Familiarity with language first and understanding following on.

The predominance of a handful of names – of individuals or theatres – in relation to Active Methods suggests that the pedagogy is still strongly branded rather than generic, unlike approaches such as close-reading, viewing screen adaptations, or contextual approaches. Table 2 shows the reasons that participants gave for using or not using Active Methods. Very few teachers were completely against the idea, although one gave as a reason for not using them 'they don't suit my style'. One teacher thought deeply about the place of Active Methods in the high stakes environment that secondary school has become:

Table 2. Reasons given for using Active Methods or not.

Reason yes		Reason no	
It's a play!	14	Time constraints, usually linked to exams	11
Engagement	40	Students won't/can't engage	4
Just good teaching	5	Behaviour issues	4

> Again, it depends on the teaching group. I'm finding more and more that the challenges of the new GCSEs and possibly life outside school, mean that students seem to need more support than ever before. Despite initiatives such as growth mindset, students seem to be afraid to come out of their comfort zone. They can become off-task unless student-centred teaching is done in a discreet way so that they still feel like they are having their hands held. This may be a reflection of the catchment in which I teach, but discussions with other teachers and online forums suggest this is not unique.

Engaging reluctant students

Of the 186 participants who responded to this question, 37 named using a film production as being the best way to engage reluctant students; two of these particularly suggested using subtitles to enable students to follow the language more easily. Ten teachers suggested taking students to the theatre, but most noted finding a good production that was accessible as the main bar to doing so. Active methods was the second most popular answer, with 35 teachers naming activities which we have categorised as active in Table 1. Among these, acting scenes was the most popular, but the use of whoosh, freeze frames, group readings, improvisation, choral speaking, and hot-seating were all mentioned.

Thirty-three teachers suggested making Shakespeare relevant by relating plays to contemporary issues or modern cultural icons. Two teachers utilised comparing characters to 'contemporary personalities' or celebrities, two mentioned making connections with soaps and one suggested connecting pop music to key lines. Utilising modern equivalents to develop student confidence was a strong theme: one teacher reported making students 'an expert in a specific area e.g. the student who loves TV political thrillers can see the connections'. Within this category were various suggestions of particular ways to engage: 'with all groups I find that asking students big questions/issues raised by the play before really reading helps students develop their own critical position and see the process as more active'. Another suggested producing Agony Aunt columns for students to respond to before they learned that the characters were from a Shakespeare play.

The full range of strategies can be seen below in Table 3; only strategies suggested by more than one teacher were included.

The instruction to 'win them over with enthusiasm' was given by 12 teachers, and along with avoiding telling students that Shakespeare is hard, emphasises that reluctance to engage with Shakespeare is often an affective reaction. Getting students to have a positive response to their initial encounter, such as through the use of Shakespearean insult resources, was also mentioned, along with focusing on the rude bits: 'when you start Shakespeare, find all the swear words and sexual puns you can in the text. The kids will do anything to be the first to find them'. A focus on story (10), context (7), or character (5) were also offered as ways to engage students. The use of films, filmed

Table 3. Strategies for engaging reluctant students.

Film	37
Active methods	35
Relating to contemporary life	33
Teacher enthusiasm	12
Assign roles for reading	11
Translations, modern versions, or comic versions	11
Theatre	10
Focus on story	10
Insults	7
Focus on context	7
Key scenes	5
Focus on character	5
Bawdiness	5
Arts and craft	5
Small chunks of text	2
Do not tell them its hard	2
Use of images	2

productions, and modern translations such as ‘No Fear Shakespeare’ or comic book versions was also aligned by participants with students’ positive ability to focus on the story.

Discussion and conclusions

Comparison of our results with the results of Wade and Sheppard’s (1993; 1994) survey of teachers in the Birmingham area suggests that there has been little change in the pedagogy of Shakespeare in the secondary classroom over the course of the last 30 years, at least up until the pandemic, which future research should explore. Reading the play remains the most popular pedagogy, unsurprisingly, and the use of film in the classroom has continued to be an important part of teaching Shakespeare’s plays. Despite the push given towards it by Aers and Wheale (1991) and the explosion of smartphone technology, making a film remains a rarely mentioned activity. Scene summaries and literary analysis were popular strategies in both the original survey and our own. Active methods are no more popular than they were 30 years ago. More modern translations and resources such as ‘No Fear Shakespeare’ appear to be the main change in the resources available to English teachers today, although we would argue that their use can imply a level of difficulty around Shakespeare’s language which is counterproductive.

One feature that emerged through asking for teachers’ best strategies for engaging reluctant students in Shakespeare was the need to draw parallels between Shakespeare’s plays and modern life, whether that be in the form of individual people, problems, themes, or issues from the play. This was not offered as a pedagogy either in Wade and Sheppard’s survey or in our own; it would be interesting to see the results in a future survey.

There has been a vast increase, particularly over the last 10 years, in the number of filmed stage productions of Shakespeare’s plays available for use in schools, as opposed to film adaptations. The RSC has made many of these available through its free, live, Schools’ Broadcasts and some via the BBC, while Shakespeare’s Globe established the on-demand platform, Globe Player, in 2014. There is an emphasis from many teachers in our data on the concept of a play as a staged event (as primarily a performance, rather than a literary, text – an emphasis which is part of Active Methods). The focus on film as a pedagogical tool is consistent with that emphasis. Theatre is sometimes acknowledged by these teachers as preferable, but it is hard to find the right play, in the right location, at the right time, despite programmes by the RSC (First Encounters, previously Young People's Shakespeare) and The Globe (Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank) to produce specifically young-people-focused and affordably priced productions. In the case of the RSC, these productions go on a national tour, while the Globe's are free for schools in particular areas. Involving external agencies in classroom provision of Shakespeare, beyond watching their productions on stage or screen, has gone from being least popular in Wade and Sheppard's (1993) classification to extremely rare in our data, in terms of what teachers regularly do. We have suggested that financial constraints are relevant here, and this trend is in parallel to the movement from external paid-for continuing professional development for teachers towards internal school-based CPD (Hood 2016). Such constraints are likely to apply not only to the physical attendance of live theatre productions of the plays but also to the uptake of online platforms that offer schools institutional subscriptions to a back catalogue of performance films, accompanied by additional resources (e.g. Digital Theatre Plus). However, it should be noted that the Globe Player offers a pay-per-view or pay-per-download model for individually filmed performances, rather than subscription, which may make it within the budgetary reach of more teachers.

We conducted this survey before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education significantly for more than 18 months, with less acute but ongoing impacts still felt. It was notable that during the pandemic many British people turned to streamed and filmed theatre for entertainment during lockdowns. Various productions were made available for free at various times, including Shakespeare's Globe and RSC productions, through the BBC and elsewhere. These productions increased access to what has been seen as an elite activity, similar to the experience of young people who participated in Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank at Shakespeare's Globe (Baldwin 2021). The impact of the pandemic, and the availability of full productions (as opposed to the usual trailers of or clips from the production), is an emerging research topic. However, a guest issue of *Teaching Shakespeare*, edited by Ronan Hatfull, demonstrates the diverse ways in which lecturers and theatre practitioners involved in higher education in the UK and the USA translated some of the strategies featured in our survey into online-only or blended learning environments (2021). Whether these activities can be transposed to delivering Shakespeare in the school classroom, blended-learning, or post-pandemic environment remains to be seen. Similarly, without a longitudinal repeated survey, it is not possible to see if there are trends in recent years following the increase in focus on canonical literature, ever higher stakes in assessment, and the greater levels of control exerted by central multi-academy trust curricula. What can be said is that teachers draw on varied pedagogies when teaching Shakespeare, but that the pre-eminence of reading around the class remains. The survey method has its limitations but is useful for establishing a broad view of practices around the country. Further research is needed and in particular to examine further student experience of particular Shakespeare pedagogies.

Notes

1. https://www.english.ox.ac.uk/willplay.
2. A 'Whoosh' is a rapid fire summary of the play, delivered by the teacher while students stand in a circle, coming in as directed and taking up either moving or freeze frame parts (characters, scenery, etc) to enact that summary, sometimes also delivering key lines at appropriate points. The 'Whoosh' comes as the instruction for everyone in the scene to return to the circle, clearing the stage to begin again.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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