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'Crossing the Great Divide - What can the Arts Offer Science and Science Education'

ABSTRACT

A popular meme in STEM education in the last ten years has been the idea of STEAM – the contribution of the Arts to the disciplines of, science, technology and mathematics. But what does STEAM actually mean and imply for these two areas of experience, the 'Arts' and 'Sciences' that have traditionally been separated in education systems for so long? What can the Arts contribute to STEM, especially science, in terms of widening thinking, providing and improving the economic platform and strengthening pedagogy for both areas? My central theme is that, in the world of commerce and innovation, science is collaborating with the Arts as never before, while the science curriculum, particularly in schools, lags behind and is increasingly outdated and irrelevant. The curriculum is partly moribund, based on 19th and early 20th Century notions of what science was thought to be. Science teaching in the 21st century can and should be transformed by using creative approaches from the Arts. I show examples at various levels of educational design, from curriculum policy to classroom activity, showing how the Arts improve science learning. I will draw on one area of the Arts, drama, and show some of the work of the Science and Drama Research Group at CPUT in Cape Town, exploring how drama helps learners access ideas of science. I propose an 'evolutionary' model showing how science education might progress drawing on the arts and arts-based pedagogies.

Short CV

Martin Braund is Honorary Fellow in the Department of Education at the University of York in the UK and Professor and Research Associate in the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa. He was a researcher at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff before being a biology and science teacher in secondary schools for 18 years, where he developed innovative teaching in environmental science and using arts-based methods. In 1989-1991 he completed a master's in science education, partly by research, supervised by Professor Rosalind Driver, while working as Senior Research Fellow for the Assessment of Performance Unit in Science at the University of Leeds. He was Senior Teacher Advisor for Science, Technology and Assessment for North Yorkshire County Council and then Senior Lecturer at Bretton Hall College of the University of Leeds, where he further developed his work in the Arts and drama for STEM learning. At the University of York he was Programme Leader for PGCE Science, Director of Graduate Programmes in Science Education and Deputy Director of Undergraduate Educational Studies. He holds a PhD from the University of York in transition from primary to secondary school. Much of his work relates to innovative approaches to teaching, evaluation of professional development programmes and curriculum development. Martin has over 180 publications, and his work is internationally acclaimed in the fields of transition, informal learning outside the classroom, argumentation, teacher education and drama education. His book, Performing Science (Bloomsbury, 2012), was shortlisted for education resource of the year. From 2008 -2020, Martin was Professor in the Department of Research, Faculty of Education, at Cape Peninsular University of Technology in South Africa, where he led the Drama in Science Research Group. Martin is a member of several international research organisations and editorial boards of leading journals and was editor of the ASE journal, *Science Teacher Education*. He has worked as a consultant in Brunei, Rwanda, Chile, South Africa, Norway and Finland and as a keynote and conference presenter in over 20 countries. In 2025 Martin was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology in recognition of outstanding service to biology education. These days he enjoys growing vegetables, cooking, collecting vinyl records and going to as many rock music gigs as possible.