



Reflections on Drama's Transdisciplinary in Education and Posthumanism

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Abstract

The article relies on posthuman perspectives and significantly the works of Burnard et al. (2021) and Marshall (2014) on transdisciplinarity, Braidotti (2020) and Aloid&McHugh's (2021) posthumanist theory, and Bolton's (1985) (Stinson & Ewing, 2017) drama education. The aim is to show how the posthumanist theoretical position could open up our understanding of drama education and its relationship to transdisciplinarity? The article details theoretical arguments by critically presenting within a framework focusing on the potential of drama transdisciplinarity through integr of various disciplines based on a balance of creativity and criticism. The integrality and transdisciplinary nature of drama provide drama's role as a potential source of inspiration for the learning, and its enhancement of teaching of various disciplines. This enables a more fluid exploration of multiplicities in thinking about and doing arts, sciences, and other disciplines as 'ways of being' located within learners' socio-cultural conditions. This implies a new kind transdisciplinary approach of entangling subject disciplines not simply as acquisition of knowledges and skills, but as important activities with the potential to make a social impact on one's life and one's community (Burnard et al., 2021). The posthumanistic position show a metacognitive approach of drama in transdisciplinary context. Students are not viewed as passive knowers, but learners who develop transferable learning despositions within which a playful approach to learning, knowledges and creativity are interrelated. Integration of disciplines in multiple forms through drama gives access to activities in which students may gain deeper understanding about their own thinking processes. Furthermore, posthumanism requires us to accept approach that drama is a collective experiencing, celebrating, or commenting on what we share, on what ways we are alike, and where drama is a form of group symbolism seeking universal, not individual truths.

Keywords: *transdisciplinarity, posthumanism, drama, integration, education, students.*

1. Introduction and problematic areas

The rapidly changing world and its new initiatives in education toward 2030 have led us to wonder if the current methods of education are adequate, especially the positioning of and ways in which different disciplines manifest. Furthermore the global need for student activating methods in learning in schools induces turning back to the opportunities proposed by training through drama integration.

Integrating drama into various subjects is widely used in schools, but also often critiqued. e. g. regarding the quite widespread practice of having drama as an ornament and not a substantial element of so-called integrated practices. An essential issue in understanding the role of drama integration based on transdisciplinary in education stems from semantic interpretation of crucial concepts within the field of integration. In general, the term *integration* implies the *fusion* of disciplines [24]. In drama context, the fusion means the combination of different art disciplines, for example, literature, music, dance, visual art (decorations, costumes, lights) into disciplinary integrity with a holistic vision.

The technological achievements enable us to transcend our physical and biological limitations [7, 2]. The posthuman theoretical perspective is that "technology is transforming the human into the posthuman – a being ontologically indiscrete and hybrid: a human-technology cyborg." According to [15, p.138] this view illustrates essential crucial similarities, as well as radical breaks, with that of the human, where orientation for the human subject derives from the tradition of liberal humanism. These insights require a new understanding, and reconsidering of the role of drama in transdisciplinary



context with regard to the accounting for “nonhuman” and “human” forms of implication in posthumanism [2, 7].

In relation to areas mentioned, I am interested in the role of the drama in and particularly in drama’s transdisciplinary potential. I reconsider the transdisciplinary nature of drama highlighting its potential resonance in the light of posthumanism, its enhancement and the impact drama can make on the contemporary teaching and learning process. Specifically, the need to identify a drama for transdisciplinary that can be used in teaching and learning context.

The implications of the characteristics mentioned above lead to the main research questions:

What is drama transdisciplinarity?

What is transdisciplinarity for drama in the context of posthumanism?

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how the posthumanist theoretical position could open up our understanding of drama education and its relationship to transdisciplinarity.

Methodologically, this research represents a conceptual and integrative approach aiming to bring clarity to the drama transdisciplinarity in posthumanistic context.

2. The key concepts underpinning the research questions

The lack of implementation comes from a lack of clarity about what these concepts mean, and how they translate into teaching and learning practice. The main concepts and occurrences from literature are presented below in relation to the two research questions outlined in the Introduction.

Drama. Drama in education, as the subject and the method of teaching and learning is relational and complex, and situated in the conditions of each moment [9]. Drama in education provides a framework within which students have an opportunity to gain theoretical knowledge as well as lived experiences on the stage, and which allows them to develop individual capabilities and talents in drama. Author [20, p.127] refers to “drama as an art-form” as “the aesthetic/cognitive”, exploring a way of knowing that is protean and potentially truthful. Educational drama usually begins with the negotiation of a drama contract in which all of the participants (teacher and learners) agree to “work for the common good” [19]. It’s worthwhile noting that the works of researchers contain a variety of concepts defining drama such as drama in education, integrative drama, drama in school, theatre in education, et cetera). In this article I use the term Drama. Despite numerous similarities and differences between the concepts Drama in Education (DIE) and Theatre in Education (TIE) [6, 9,16, 25] both have interlacing nature and both play significant learning and teaching functions in the classroom. [6,16] both DIE and TIE are concerned with dramatic art and pedagogy.

Transdisciplinarity. Transdisciplinarity acknowledges component disciplines, highlighting the wisdom each discipline brings to the whole, seeing them in light of their commonalities and refers to the establishment of a common system of axioms for a set of disciplines. Researchers [13, p. 251] argue that “transdisciplinarity is best conceived as a cross-disciplinary methodology that organizes mutual learning and joint problem solving between science and society”. Authors [11,17] consider that a transdisciplinary approach, however, is the only one which aims to go also beyond all disciplines and understand the present world by achieving the unity of knowledge. A transdisciplinary approach would be characterized by a common orientation to transcend boundaries of disciplines, and an attempt to bring continuity to inquiry and knowledge creating a new result.

Posthumanism. Paraphrasing [7], posthumanism seeks to redefine the boundaries surrounding understanding of the human and this approach is based on new ways of perceiving and thinking the world. According to authors [1,2,4] posthumanism’s key word is “entanglement”. In a posthumanist approach, we perceive learners as “entangled” with and connected to, and responsible for themselves and habitats of all humans, non humans, the environment, and the planet. The authors mentioned [1,2] claim that humans are not distinct or autonomous from the world around them: it refers to an assemblage of entities and beings that are also part of various other assemblages. In posthumanism the focus is on what emerges when technologies, humans and nature intra-act. There are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanisms and biological organisms, robot teleology and human goals [12].



3. Reflection and Discussion

From drama to transdisciplinarity

Drama always plays an important role in education, and always brings us back to the body. In today's technological world the theoretical art basics combining a pragmatical goals establish the basis for the new approach for drama education by expressing the overarching common human expectations. The learning journey according to [18] is often driven by a creative impulse to the finished product making the processual and procedural aspects of immense importance to the students and where drama is used as a medium for cultural and social transformation, for facilitating dialogue in transdisciplinary spaces.

In the first point, the integrality [6] and transdisciplinary nature of drama [22] provide drama's role as a potential source of inspiration for phrasing the learning, and its enhancement of teaching of various disciplines. With this approach, students are not viewed as passive *knowers*, but *learners* who develop transferable learning dispositions within which a playful approach to learning, ideas and creativity are interrelated [5]. This enables a more fluid exploration of multiplicities in thinking about and doing arts, sciences, mathematics and other disciplines as *ways of being* located within learners' socio-cultural conditions. This implies a new transdisciplinary approach of entangling subject disciplines not simply as acquisition of knowledges and skills, but as important activities with the potential to make a social impact on one's life and one's community [8].

The second point presents a metacognitive vision of transdisciplinarity in drama. Obviously, artistic processes are cognitive and physical actions with which arts learning process are realized. Anderson [3] argued, that drama has been used to enhance metacognition in science education. To [9, p.28] learning is related to the feelings generated by symbols, and significant learning is aesthetic, a change in the quality of thought emphasizing the feeling quality that promotes the required value system. And as Courtney [9, p.23] states, the metaphors and symbols are charged by feelings and can be embodied in drama. Drama's transdisciplinary potential is that drama can offer a practical and embodied entrance into the development of learners' motivation and understanding through imagination and emotional responses [16]. Integration of disciplines in multiple forms through drama's transdisciplinarity gives access to activities in which students may gain deeper understanding about their own thinking processes.

From my perspective, what sets drama's transdisciplinarity apart from other pedagogical approaches and what assures its role in twenty first century education, is its focus on the inherent complexity of reality that is seen when one examines a problem or phenomenon from multiple angles and dimensions with a view toward "discovering hidden connections between different disciplines" [17, p.3]. Furthermore, drama's transdisciplinarity connotes a practice that rises above disciplines and dissolves their boundaries to create a new social and cognitive space [18, p.106].

Posthumanistic journeys of drama's transdisciplinarity

Researching the transdisciplinarity of theatre and drama as posthuman, is an activity which challenges the unknown as an action towards something uncertain Domingo stated that the theatre becomes an arena in which relationships between the human being and the world can be explored. To [10, p.51] „theatre of transdisciplinary fusion is that allows us to discover integrated, assembled with the universe". Furthermore, author [10, p.52] argues that „transdisciplinary theatre makes us live re-enchanted and in a re-enchanted world that allows us to feel that we form part of the infinite energy connected with everything that exists". Transdisciplinarity in theatre provides a possibility to create and recreate knowledge that allows the comprehension of the world through individual and collective creativity. These particularities of contemporary theatre comes to drama education in school bringing a new teaching and learning initiatives, and reshaping learning curriculum.

The changes prompted by technological and media evolution can therefore deny an essential characteristic of theatre and drama namely art located in the *here and now*. Beyond the here and now aspects of theatre, then, technological achievements can deny a further characteristic of theatre namely the fact that drama is made by humans and is what humans make of it through their feelings, thoughts, and values.

The process of distancing ourselves from nature was the moment when the mind conceived of itself as separated from the body [2, 4]. And this vacuum between mind and body has been filled in by technologies [2, 4]. The limitation of physical contact raises issues for art educators and new approaches requires students to create something using technologies. While technologies may seem



like a sensible approach to making art, systematically resorting to it indicates a misunderstanding of what art education is, narrowly understanding it as creative or playful delivery. Moreover, Bolton [6] noticed that political and economic expediency may run the *risk of a reductive effect on drama* and its teaching which can be reduced to a particularly limited form and primitive simulated role-play related to the learning of facts and practising of skills.

Transdisciplinarity in drama and for drama is an important consideration. It becomes clear that transdisciplinarity involves the act of creating an original product and at the same time it is a cognitive act which represents the greatest degree of integration. Divisions become unclear, the boundaries between disciplines disappear, rather connections are strengthened. We can make an assumption that drama's transdisciplinarity connected to cognitive and physical actions and therefore *both the process by which an individual works towards an artistic product*. It enables connection points between the art and science as a whole system „for a better comprehension between people and a better relation with nature“ [10]. If in a humanistic position drama was seen as liberal education where each student could "find himself" or use drama for „self-expression“, posthumanism requires to accept Bolton's [6] approach that drama is a collective experiencing, celebrating, or commenting on what we share, on what ways we are alike, and where drama is a form of group symbolism seeking universal, not individual truths. The relationship between individual and collective aspects of the learning need to be further researched in drama [21].

A transdisciplinary approach to school education enables engagement with different ways of knowing the world, generating new knowledge and experience: in a transdisciplinary context, disciplines reside as separate yet connected and permeable entities [18, p.107]. Transdisciplinarity provides a broader framework for education as it is well suited to create interactions between science and art, and demonstrate how these disciplines can be parts of a wholistic system. Reducing disciplinary boundaries, and blurring the lines between subject areas, increases the area of perception in the holistic human needed to collectively tackle multi-dimensional challenges. This is an opportunity to shape a new paradigm of teaching and learning built on a more dynamic, creative, organic, and realistic vision of how the world works.

Final Remarks

The integrative review of theory allowed to presuppose a wide perspective of drama in posthuman age and transdisciplinarity drawn up by the drama. Furthermore, drama's transdisciplinarity is based on the notion that the processes and the products of drama can contribute to the future of education.

In this article, the position regarding drama's transdisciplinarity future is based on 3 assumptions.

First, drama's transdisciplinarity has potential to improve the general attainment of students, and can improve cognitive and metacognitive abilities.

Second, drama's transdisciplinarity in context of posthumanism has potential to strengthen innovation, creativity, and and to build intra-action between human-nature-technologies.

Third, the argument for drama's transdisciplinarity sees as a motivator and engager of students into various subjects as the drama can enhance cooperation, intercultural communication, improve social skills and improve adaptability.

We need ongoing, critical reflection on drama's transdisciplinarity, and limitations, and, equally important, compelling examples of using drama in teaching and learning process to understand possibilities and contributions to students' knowledge and understanding. Within the area of posthumanism, I want to reflect on the kinds of skills, abilities, and values of students that need to be cultivated in the context nature-human-technologies intra-action [4].



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