INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND EMERGING TRENDS

PUBLISHED DATE: - 03-09-2026

PAGES: - 153-154

CONFERENCE ARTICLE

Interdisciplinary Integration As A Factor In Developing Prospective Teachers' Professional And Methodological Competence

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of interdisciplinary integration in developing prospective teachers' professional and methodological competence within higher pedagogical education. The study explores the theoretical foundations of interdisciplinary learning and its contribution to instructional planning, pedagogical decision-making, and the practical application of subject knowledge. A qualitative content analysis of scientific literature was employed to identify the relationships between interdisciplinary curriculum design, pedagogical content knowledge, and professional teacher preparation. The findings suggest that interdisciplinary integration provides a methodological foundation for strengthening prospective teachers' ability to establish meaningful connections between academic disciplines, design coherent learning activities, and evaluate integrated educational outcomes. Particular attention is given to the development of analytical thinking, instructional flexibility, and reflective competence. The study proposes an integrated approach to teacher preparation that combines theoretical knowledge, collaborative lesson design, and reflective pedagogical practice.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary integration, prospective teachers, professional competence, methodological competence, teacher education, integrated curriculum, pedagogical knowledge, instructional design.

INTRODUCTION

The modernization of higher pedagogical education requires the preparation of teachers capable of organizing educational processes in accordance with contemporary social, technological, and academic demands. Professional teaching competence increasingly involves not only comprehensive knowledge of individual subjects but also the ability to establish meaningful relationships between different disciplines and apply integrated knowledge to educational situations.

Interdisciplinary integration represents an important pedagogical approach that promotes connections between disciplinary concepts, instructional methods, and learning outcomes. Rather than presenting academic subjects as isolated systems, this approach emphasizes their interaction in explaining complex phenomena and solving practical problems.

Drake and Reid [1] emphasize the relationship between integrated curriculum and the development of twenty-first-century competencies. Their analysis demonstrates that interdisciplinary approaches have important historical foundations and can support educational objectives associated with critical thinking, collaboration, and complex problem-solving.

In teacher education, interdisciplinary integration has particular significance because prospective teachers must acquire both disciplinary knowledge and the methodological ability to transform that knowledge into meaningful learning experiences. Shulman [2] identifies pedagogical content knowledge as an essential component of teacher professionalism, emphasizing the relationship between subject understanding and instructional representation.

However, the effective implementation of interdisciplinary integration requires more than combining information from different subjects. Prospective teachers must understand conceptual relationships, establish educational objectives, select appropriate teaching strategies, and assess learning outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to examine the theoretical and methodological significance of interdisciplinary integration as a factor contributing to the development of prospective teachers' professional and methodological competence.

The research employed qualitative content analysis of scientific publications addressing interdisciplinary curriculum integration, pedagogical content knowledge, and teacher professional development.

The theoretical basis included the integrated curriculum approach presented by Drake and Reid [1], Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge framework [2], Beane's conception of curriculum integration [3], and the technological pedagogical content knowledge model proposed by Mishra and Koehler [4].

The selected sources were examined according to their relevance to professional teacher preparation and their explanations of relationships between disciplinary knowledge, instructional methods, and educational practice.

Comparative interpretation was employed to identify methodological principles that could support the development of prospective teachers' competence. Particular attention was given to interdisciplinary lesson design, educational problem-solving, instructional coherence, and reflective evaluation.

The study was theoretical and analytical. No experimental intervention, survey, or statistical assessment was conducted. Therefore, the findings represent a conceptual synthesis of existing scientific perspectives.

The analysis identified interdisciplinary integration as a pedagogical condition potentially supporting several interconnected dimensions of prospective teachers' professional and methodological competence.

The first dimension concerns the ability to establish meaningful conceptual connections between academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary competence requires prospective teachers to recognize how knowledge from different subjects can complement one another in explaining educational phenomena. Such understanding provides a foundation for developing integrated instructional content without weakening disciplinary accuracy.

The second dimension involves instructional planning and methodological decision-making. Interdisciplinary integration encourages prospective teachers to formulate learning objectives that combine subject-specific knowledge with transferable competencies. This process requires the selection of teaching methods appropriate to both the educational content and the anticipated learning outcomes.

The third dimension concerns the practical application of pedagogical knowledge. Beane [3] emphasizes the organization of integrated curricula around meaningful problems and experiences. From this perspective, interdisciplinary learning can help prospective teachers design educational situations that connect theoretical concepts with practical challenges.

The fourth dimension relates to technological and methodological flexibility. Mishra and Koehler [4] explain that effective educational technology integration requires the coordinated application of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. Their framework provides a conceptual basis for incorporating digital resources into interdisciplinary learning activities.

The synthesis suggests that these dimensions can be developed through interconnected educational experiences involving interdisciplinary curriculum analysis, collaborative lesson planning, practical instructional design, and reflective evaluation.

Accordingly, a conceptual framework can be proposed in which prospective teachers progressively develop their capacity to identify interdisciplinary relationships, transform them into integrated educational objectives, organize instructional activities, and evaluate the coherence of learning outcomes.

This framework represents an analytical interpretation of the reviewed literature rather than an empirically validated instructional model.

The findings suggest that interdisciplinary integration should be understood as a systematic component of professional teacher preparation rather than an additional instructional technique.

Its methodological significance lies in the opportunity to develop prospective teachers' ability to coordinate disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and educational objectives within a unified learning process.

Shulman's theoretical perspective [2] indicates that professional teaching requires the transformation of subject knowledge into forms accessible to learners. Interdisciplinary integration extends this responsibility by requiring prospective teachers to interpret relationships between different areas of knowledge.

However, such integration must remain conceptually justified. Mechanical combinations of unrelated topics may increase instructional complexity without improving learning quality. Therefore, the development of methodological competence requires careful evaluation of interdisciplinary connections.

Collaborative lesson planning and reflective practice enable prospective teachers to integrate disciplinary perspectives, improve methodological decisions, and ensure coherence between learning objectives, activities, and assessment.

Interdisciplinary integration contributes to the development of professional and methodological competence by strengthening instructional planning, pedagogical flexibility, and reflective thinking. Its effectiveness requires meaningful connections between subjects, appropriate teaching methods, and consistent assessment practices, which should be further examined through empirical research.

The proposed conceptual framework emphasizes the integration of disciplinary knowledge, methodological reasoning, collaborative lesson design, and reflective evaluation. Its implementation may contribute to strengthening the professional preparation of prospective teachers and improving their readiness to organize integrated learning experiences. Further empirical research is required to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in higher pedagogical education.

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