

Reconceptualizing Teacher Education in South Africa: Interdisciplinarity in Teacher Development Programs (Pre and Inset).

Topics: Curriculum development, Professional learning

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Abstract

Interdisciplinarity plays a key role in teacher development in the 21st century. With the affordances of the fourth industrial revolution, teachers are increasingly expected to develop expertise in critical, reflective, and collaborative teaching strategies necessary for interdisciplinary approach. However, the implementation of this approach continues to be a challenge for teachers and teacher educators alike. In particular, the need to teach remotely because of the lockdown caused by COVID19 have complicated teachers' professional capacity and by implication, teacher education programs. Often the teacher education programs do not commonly incorporate models of interdisciplinary inquiry and discourse and consequently, it becomes unrealistic to expect teachers to develop interdisciplinarity in schools. Teacher development programs, both pre- and inset, therefore have a responsibility to encourage teaching across the various subjects in the different levels of education.

The aim this paper to conceptualize ways in which teacher education can be responsive by nurturing the required collaborative and inquiry-based teaching through interdisciplinary activities. The methodology consisted of literature review of articles published in relevant journal in the field of teacher education which focused on interdisciplinarity approach in education. Specifically, I reflect on teachers' competences that are likely to develop the interdisciplinarity that is required to make learners problem-solvers, innovators, inventors and self-reliant (Morrison, 2006; Klein 1990).

The thinking in this paper is influenced by the seminal ideas of Klein, 1985,1990; and Lenoir and Klein 2010 which foreground the understanding of interdisciplinarity as both theoretical and instrumental. Interdisciplinarity in this sense strives for unified knowledge as well as providing integrated solutions for complex social problems. The aim of interdisciplinarity underscores collaboration across different subject areas. Pooling together different disciplinary knowledge to develop the ability to understand and be understood within a diverse community of specialists.

Discussion questions

1. In reflecting upon the best ways to facilitate and implement interdisciplinary approach, how can we ensure greater coherence and convergence among curricula components.
2. In South Africa, interdisciplinary approach is still in the making in terms of the theoretical and practical conditions, what are the foundational problems that need to be addressed?
3. What are the collaborative opportunities and implications for teacher training programs?

Keywords: Interdisciplinarity, Teacher education, Collaboration, Integrated knowledge, Professional skills