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Putting the "Inter-" in Interdisciplinary Education

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PUTTING THE “INTER-” IN INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

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Literature Review

- According to Knight and Lattuca and Kimball (2013), among professionals in the same field there is inconsistency in determining what are interdisciplinary programs (para. 145).
- There is no consistent definition for interdisciplinary education which contributes to the confusion experienced by professionals.
- In order to create successful interdisciplinary programs there has to be structure to the program (Knight et al., 2013; National Council of Teachers of English, 1995), and higher level learning outcomes (Ivanitskaya and Clark and Montgomery and Primeau, 2002).
- Nikitina (2006) proposes three different strategies (e.g., contextualizing, conceptualizing and problem-centering) that are used in interdisciplinary education by different content areas.

Research Question

What is an interdisciplinary approach to education?

Methodology

- The purpose of the study is to investigate the different approaches in interdisciplinary education at the K-postsecondary level.
- A conceptual framework was used to examine English Language Arts integration with Mathematics, Science and Social Science based on structure, learning outcomes, and types of inquiry used.

Literature Analysis

- ELA was integrated in mathematics, science, and history according to the different strategies (e.g., conceptualizing, and contextualizing) as suggested by Nikitina (2006).
- Organization and clear objectives is key to the success of students' experiences in an interdisciplinary approach.
- Collaboration and co-teaching is crucial to eliminate teachers discomfort with another discipline.
- An interdisciplinary approach is used when a discipline requires a different approach to teach students the skills needed in the original disciplinary field.
- A problem-centering approach to interdisciplinary (Nikitina, 2006) can only occur when teachers foster a learning environment where the student is supported and independent from the teacher.

Conclusion

- There has to be an emphasis on the structure, objectives, and inquiry-style in order to effectively implement an interdisciplinary program in schools.
- Measuring learning outcomes happens only after structuring the program.
- This literature review supports Knight et al.'s (2013) and the NCTE's (1995) position statement on how to structure interdisciplinary education.