



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO HISTORY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

Roseline Okiemute Anho¹,
Ekwevugbe, Adams Omokaro²ⁱ

¹Lecturer, Dr.,
Department of Educational Management and Foundations,
Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria
orcid.org/0009-0002-4633-9715

²Lecturer, Dr.,
Department of Educational Management and Foundations,
Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria
orcid.org/0009-0009-0265-2014

Abstract:

The study explored the impact of interdisciplinary approaches to history education in public secondary schools in Delta State. This study is a survey adopting the ex-post-facto research design. The population for this study comprised all public secondary schools in Delta State. The sample for this study comprised 275 respondents, 75 principals and 200 teachers in Delta State public secondary schools, selected from 12 local government areas. The instrument that was used for the study was a self-developed questionnaire titled 'Impact of Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education Questionnaire' (IIAHEQ). The questionnaire is a closed-ended one in the form of a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) was used in the collection of information from respondents. The researcher administered a total of 500 questionnaires to randomly selected respondents from the selected public secondary schools in the study area. Simple percentages, mean scores, standard deviation and coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark to provide answers to the research questions. Based on the findings, it therefore concluded that interdisciplinary approaches to History Education offer a powerful way to promote deeper understanding, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Thus, by integrating multiple disciplines and subjects, educators can provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of historical events and processes. However, the successful implementation of interdisciplinary approaches to History Education requires careful planning, collaboration and support. It therefore recommended that government and policy-

ⁱ Correspondence: email anho@delsu.edu.ng, adams-ekwevugbe@delsu.edu.ng

makers should develop interdisciplinary curriculum, provide professional development opportunities, foster collaboration and teamwork, provide adequate training and support, assess and evaluate interdisciplinary learning, etc.

Keywords: interdisciplinary approaches, history education, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Education is widely recognized by scholars as a key driver of knowledge transfer and societal improvement. It involves acquiring skills and knowledge while promoting critical thinking and practical application (Dean, 2020). Interdisciplinary approaches, which combine multiple disciplines or fields of study, offer a more comprehensive understanding of a subject. Through interdisciplinary approaches to history education, educators and historians can integrate various academic disciplines to uncover nuanced perspectives that enrich historical narratives and foster critical analysis (Morgan, 2023).

Interdisciplinary approaches to History Education entail integrating diverse methods, theories, and perspectives from various fields to augment the comprehension of historical events and contexts. By leveraging frameworks from social sciences, literature, geography, economics, and psychology, historians can scrutinize the intricacies of past societies. Consequently, embracing interdisciplinary methodologies enables historians to craft a more nuanced narrative of the past. For instance, applying sociological theories can uncover the social dynamics that influenced historical events. At the same time, economic perspectives can offer insights into the material conditions that shaped those events, thereby broadening the scope of historical analysis beyond traditional narratives (Maris, 2022).

In educational settings, History Education benefits from interdisciplinary approaches that promote critical thinking and encourage students to establish connections across various disciplines. This integration not only deepens students' understanding of historical events but also equips them with analytical skills applicable in multiple contexts, preparing them for a comprehensive engagement with both historical and contemporary issues. Interdisciplinary approaches to History Education are significantly enriched by the contributions of social sciences, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, and political science. These disciplines provide valuable frameworks for understanding human behavior, societal structures, and cultural dynamics throughout History Education (Adelade, 2020).

The discipline of Sociology provides historians with a valuable toolkit for analyzing the social contexts surrounding historical events. This enables historians to gain insights into group dynamics, social norms, and institutional evolution, ultimately facilitating a more nuanced understanding of past societies. Furthermore, this perspective reveals the intricate relationships between social forces and historical outcomes (Nathan, 2021). Anthropology also makes significant contributions to this field by examining cultural practices and traditions. Through the application of material

culture and ethnographic methods, historians can develop a deeper understanding of marginalized populations, thereby ensuring that historical narratives accurately represent diverse voices and experiences.

In another development, political science furnishes essential tools for examining power dynamics and governance. Thus, historians can better comprehend the motivations behind significant historical incidents by assessing political ideologies, institutions, and conflict. The integration of these social sciences ultimately enhances interdisciplinary approaches to history, leading to a more enriching educational experience (Mega, 2023). Furthermore, integrating literature into historical study enables a nuanced understanding of the past, as narratives, poems, and writings offer insight into the cultural and social contexts of various epochs. Literary works often mirror the sentiments, conflicts, and ideologies prevailing at the time of their creation.

Economic factors significantly shape historical narratives by providing context to societal changes, political decisions, and cultural transformations. The interplay between economic conditions and historical events can alter perspectives and interpretations, making economics a vital component in the study of history education (Adelade, 2020). Furthermore, geography, as a discipline, encompasses the study of places, spatial relationships, and human-environment interactions. Utilizing geography in historical research allows scholars to contextualize historical events within their geographical settings, revealing how physical landscapes, resources, and climate have influenced societal developments (Palmer, 2022).

According to Omena (2020), psychology makes significant contributions to historical understanding by shedding light on human motivations, behaviors, and social dynamics throughout history. By examining psychological principles, historians can gain insight into the cognitive and emotional factors that influence individuals' actions and decisions in various historical contexts.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to History Education, many History educators in Nigeria continue to teach History Education in isolation from other disciplines. This could be as a result of a lack of teacher training and support, disciplinary boundaries, curriculum constraints, assessment and evaluation challenges, resistance to change, or cognitive overload, i.e. integrating multiple disciplines can be overwhelming for students, particularly if they lack prior knowledge or experience with interdisciplinary learning.

This approach can result in a narrow and fragmented understanding of historical events and processes, failing to provide students with a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the past. Furthermore, the lack of interdisciplinary approaches to History Education can limit students' ability to think critically, solve problems and make connections between historical events and contemporary issues. Therefore, there is an

urgent need to explore the impact of interdisciplinary approaches to History Education and proffer strategies to improve interdisciplinary approaches in History Education.

2.1 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

- 1) How do interdisciplinary approaches impact History Education in public secondary schools in Delta State?
- 2) What are the challenges of interdisciplinary approaches to History Education in public secondary schools in Delta State?
- 3) What are the strategies to improve interdisciplinary approaches to History Education in public secondary schools in Delta State?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is anchored on the Interdisciplinary Learning Theory (ILT) propounded by Heidi Hayes Jacobs (1989). The theory emphasizes the importance of integrating multiple subjects and disciplines to promote a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of knowledge. Interdisciplinary Learning Theory also focuses on the connections and relationships between different subjects and disciplines, promoting a more holistic and integrated understanding of knowledge. It also emphasizes the importance of making connections between different subjects and disciplines as well as between the curriculum and real-world application. It promotes the integration of multiple subjects and disciplines as well as the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge. It aims to promote a more holistic understanding, recognizing that different subjects and disciplines are interconnected and interdependent.

3.2 Impact of Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education

According to Nelson (2022), interdisciplinary approaches to history education offer significant benefits that enhance the learning experience for students. Thus, by integrating diverse fields such as sociology, literature, and economics, students gain a more nuanced understanding of historical events. This multifaceted perspective encourages learners to draw connections across different disciplines, fostering a comprehensive grasp of complex historical narratives. One notable advantage is the development of critical thinking skills. Interdisciplinary research requires students to analyze information from multiple viewpoints, promoting analytical and evaluative abilities. As students engage with various methodologies, they cultivate the capacity to assess historical evidence critically, leading to more informed conclusions.

Omena (2020) noted that interdisciplinary approaches enhanced student engagement. For instance, by incorporating interdisciplinary approaches into history education, instructors can create dynamic lessons that captivate students' interests. For instance, analyzing a historical event through literature or art allows learners to connect

on a personal level, making the material more relatable and stimulating. Ultimately, these approaches not only enrich the educational experience but also prepare students for a world that increasingly demands interdisciplinary knowledge. As history education evolves, integrating diverse methods becomes essential for fostering well rounded, informed individuals.

According to Mayor (2021), interdisciplinary approaches to history foster the development of critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyze complex narratives and diverse viewpoints. By engaging with various disciplines, learners are encouraged to question established perspectives and assess the validity of evidence. Incorporating methodologies from social sciences, literature, and geography, students learn to evaluate historical events through multiple lenses. This multifaceted analysis cultivates the ability to synthesize information, drawing connections between disparate sources and contexts. As a result, students gain deeper insights into historical complexities. Furthermore, critical thinking is enhanced as students confront conflicting interpretations and appreciate the nuances of historical narratives. This ongoing dialogue between disciplines encourages learners to challenge assumptions and develop coherent arguments, preparing them for informed citizenship. Through interdisciplinary approaches to history education, students emerge as adept critical thinkers capable of addressing contemporary issues with historical awareness (Morgan, 2023).

Interdisciplinary approaches to history foster enhanced student engagement by connecting historical content to a variety of contextual disciplines. This engagement is achieved through diverse methods that captivate students' interests and promote active participation in the learning process. Students benefit from engaging with history in ways that resonate with their personal experiences and interests. For instance, incorporating literature allows them to explore historical narratives through character development and plot analysis, making the past more relatable. Similarly, integrating social sciences encourages discussions around societal impacts that shape historical events.

3.3 Challenges of Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education

Adeola (2023) outlines some of the challenges of interdisciplinary approaches to history education, such as:

- 1) Lack of training and support: Educators may require additional training and support to integrate multiple disciplines into their teaching practices effectively.
- 2) Disciplinary boundaries: Educators may struggle to transcend disciplinary boundaries and incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches.
- 3) Curriculum constraints: Existing curriculum frameworks and standards may not accommodate interdisciplinary approaches, making it challenging for educators to implement these methods.
- 4) Assessment and evaluation challenges: Assessing and evaluating student learning in an interdisciplinary context can be complex and time-consuming.

- 5) Resistance to change: Some educators may resist adopting interdisciplinary approaches due to concerns about losing disciplinary expertise or the perceived lack of rigor.
- 6) Cognitive overload: Integrating multiple disciplines can be overwhelming for students, particularly if they lack prior knowledge or experience with interdisciplinary learning.

Mayor (2021) argued that students might struggle to make connections between different disciplines and see the relevance of interdisciplinary approaches to historical events and processes. Also, that students may be unclear about the goals and outcomes of interdisciplinary approaches, leading to confusion and frustration. Students may feel anxious about being assessed and evaluated in an interdisciplinary context, particularly if they are unsure about what is expected of them. Students may receive limited feedback and support from educators, which can hinder their ability to succeed in an interdisciplinary learning environment.

Okoh (2020) asserted that curriculum developers may struggle to integrate multiple disciplines in a way that is coherent, logical, and effective. Curriculum developers must balance the need for breadth and depth in an interdisciplinary curriculum, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive education. Okoh (2020) noted that addressing diverse learning needs, such as those with disabilities, English language learners, and students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Interdisciplinary approaches must be rigorous and relevant, i.e. providing students with a high-quality education that prepares them for future challenges.

3.4 Strategies to Improve Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education

According to Mildred (2019) who highlighted some of the strategies to improve interdisciplinary approaches to history education as follows:

- 1) Collaborate with colleagues: Work with educators from other disciplines to develop interdisciplinary lesson plans and projects.
- 2) Integrate multiple sources: Incorporate diverse sources, such as literature, art, music, and primary sources, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of historical events.
- 3) Use interdisciplinary frameworks: Utilize frameworks, such as the C3 Framework, to integrate multiple disciplines and promote critical thinking.
- 4) Encourage student research: Provide opportunities for students to conduct interdisciplinary research projects, exploring historical topics from multiple perspectives.
- 5) Incorporate technology: Leverage technology, such as digital timelines, multimedia presentations, and online archives, to facilitate interdisciplinary learning.
- 6) Integrate disciplinary standards: Align history education standards with those from other disciplines, such as literature, geography, and economics.

- 7) Provide opportunities for student choice: Offer students choices in topics, methods, and products, allowing them to take ownership of their learning and explore historical topics in a more personalized and interdisciplinary way.
- 8) Use performance tasks: Assess student learning through performance tasks that require students to apply historical knowledge and critical thinking skills in an interdisciplinary context.
- 9) Incorporate self-assessment and peer review: Encourage students to reflect on their own learning and provide feedback to peers, promoting a growth mindset and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- 10) Provide interdisciplinary training: Offer professional development opportunities that focus on interdisciplinary approaches to history education, incorporating multiple disciplines and critical thinking skills.
- 11) Encourage collaboration and networking: Foster collaboration and networking among educators from different disciplines, promoting the sharing of ideas and best practices.
- 12) Foster a growth mindset: Encourage educators to adopt a growth mindset, embracing the idea that interdisciplinary approaches to history education are essential for promoting deep learning and critical thinking.

4. Methodology

This study is a survey adopting the ex-post-facto research design. The population for this study comprised all public secondary schools in Delta State. The sample for this study comprised 275 respondents made up of 75 principals and 200 teachers in Delta State public secondary schools selected from 12 local government areas. The instrument that was used for the study was a self-developed questionnaire titled 'Impact of Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education Questionnaire' (IIAHEQ).

The questionnaire is a closed-ended one in the form of a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) was used in the collection of information from respondents. The researcher administered a total of 500 questionnaires to randomly selected respondents from the selected public secondary schools in the study area. Simple percentages, mean scores, standard deviation and coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark to provide answers to the research questions.

Table 1: Response to Impact of Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	STD
1	Students gain a more nuanced understanding of historical events.	116 (42.2%)	42 (15.3%)	88 (32%)	29 (10.5%)	3.62	.98
2	Encourages learners to draw connections across different disciplines	156 (56.7%)	61 (22.2%)	34 (12.4%)	24 (8.7%)	2.71	.82
3	Fostering a comprehensive grasp of complex historical narratives	120 (43.6%)	77 (28%)	50 (18.2%)	28 (10.2%)	3.21	.88
4	Development of critical thinking skills	118 (42.9%)	78 (28.4%)	59 (21.5%)	20 (7.3%)	2.68	.75
5	Interdisciplinary approaches enhanced student engagement	66 (24%)	71 (25.8%)	83 (30.2%)	55 (20%)	2.52	.85
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation						3.56	.93

Table 1 shows the grand Mean score of 3.56, which is greater than the coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark. This implies that students gain a more nuanced understanding of historical events, interdisciplinary approaches encourage learners to draw connections across different disciplines, it also fosters a comprehensive grasp of complex historical narratives, development of critical thinking skills and interdisciplinary approaches enhance student engagement.

Table 2: Response to Challenges of Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	STD
1	Lack of training and support	71 (25.8%)	66 (24%)	83 (30.2%)	55 (20%)	2.76	.77
2	Educators may struggle to transcend disciplinary boundaries and incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches.	156 (56.7%)	61 (22.2%)	34 (12.4%)	24 (8.7%)	3.05	.91
3	Curriculum constraints	120 (43.6%)	77 (28%)	50 (18.2%)	28 (10.2%)	3.20	.85
4	Cognitive overload	118 (42.9%)	78 (28.4%)	59 (21.5%)	20 (7.3%)	2.90	.81
5	Resistance to change	42 (15.3%)	116 (42.2%)	88 (32%)	29 (10.5%)	2.88	.82
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation						3.24	.91

Table 2 shows the grand Mean score of 3.24, which is greater than the coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark. This implies that due to a lack of training and support, educators may struggle to transcend disciplinary boundaries and incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches, curriculum constraints, cognitive overload, and resistance to change are challenges of interdisciplinary approaches to history education.

Table 2: Response to Strategies to Improve Interdisciplinary Approaches to History Education

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	STD
1	Collaborate with colleagues	104 (37.8%)	66 (24%)	79 (28.7%)	26 (9.5%)	2.60	.81
2	Use interdisciplinary frameworks	90 (33.7%)	60 (21.8%)	56 (20.4%)	69 (25.1%)	3.11	.77
3	Encourage student research	60 (21.8%)	89 (32.4%)	56 (20.3%)	70 (25.5%)	3.50	.79
4	Provide interdisciplinary training	103 (37.5%)	52 (18.9%)	44 (16%)	76 (27.6%)	3.83	.74
5	Integrate disciplinary standards	100 (36.4%)	85 (30.9%)	56 (20.4%)	34 (12.4%)	2.82	.78
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation						3.65	.94

Table 3 shows the grand mean score of 3.24, which is greater than the coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark. This implies that collaborating with colleagues, using interdisciplinary frameworks, encouraging student research, providing interdisciplinary training and integrating disciplinary standards are strategies to improve interdisciplinary approaches to history education.

5. Discussion of Finding

The result of the analyzed data showed that interdisciplinary approaches impact History Education such as students gain a more nuanced understanding of historical events, interdisciplinary approaches encourage learners to draw connections across different disciplines, foster a comprehensive grasp of complex historical narratives, develop critical thinking skills and interdisciplinary approaches enhanced student engagement.

It also revealed some of the challenges of interdisciplinary approaches to History Education, such as lack of training and support, educators may struggle to transcend disciplinary boundaries and incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches, curriculum constraints, cognitive overload and resistance to change are challenges of interdisciplinary approaches to history education. More so, it established some strategies to improve interdisciplinary approaches to History Education, such as collaborating with colleagues, using interdisciplinary frameworks, encouraging student research, providing interdisciplinary training and integrating disciplinary standards.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it therefore concluded that interdisciplinary approaches to History Education offer a powerful way to promote deeper understanding, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Thus, by integrating multiple disciplines and subjects, educators can provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of historical events and processes. However, successfully implementing interdisciplinary approaches to History Education requires careful planning, collaboration and support. It therefore

recommended that government and policy-makers should develop an interdisciplinary curriculum, provide professional development opportunities, foster collaboration and teamwork, provide adequate training and support, assess and evaluate interdisciplinary learning, etc.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Roseline Okiemute Anho is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. She has an M.Ed Degree and a Ph.D. in history of education.

Ekwevugbe, Adams Omokaro is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. He has an M.Ed degree in educational management and educational technology and a Ph.D. in educational administration.

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