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INTEReD

**Interdisciplinary approaches
for Innovative Education**

A2.3 Roundtable Discussions



Organized By:



Introduction:

As part of the Erasmus+ project "InterEd – Interdisciplinary Approaches for Innovative Education," the Uninettuno team hosted a roundtable bringing together academics, educational experts, and secondary school teachers to explore the potential of interdisciplinarity in education. The discussion focused on the impact of this approach for both teachers and students, the main challenges that hinder its effective implementation, and potential strategies to overcome these barriers.

The speakers at the event included:

- Prof. Giorgio Asquini, pedagogist at La Sapienza University in Rome
- Prof. Francesca Bardella, teacher of Italian, History and Geography at the Acorn International School
- Prof. Vanessa Bilancetti, political sociologist and teacher in High Schools
- Prof. Michaela Diena, headmaster of Acorn International School
- Prof. Luciano Di Mele, moderator

The audience actively engaged in the discussion with questions and reflections.

The conversation focused on how interdisciplinarity can be applied in secondary education to integrate various subjects, addressing the evolving demands of modern learning. The speakers drew on their diverse experiences in teaching, school leadership, and educational psychology, emphasizing that interdisciplinarity is not just a method but a crucial mindset for fostering collaborative approaches and enriching students' overall educational experience.



Roundtable Discussion Findings:

After a short introduction to the project and its goals, the discussion started with the participants' reflections on the meaning of the word "*interdisciplinarity*".

They all agree that Interdisciplinarity starts with the **teacher's mindset**, the teacher has to feel interdisciplinary in order to use it efficiently as method in its teaching. In the Italian primary school system, for example, interdisciplinarity comes naturally because one teacher covers multiple subjects and stays with the same group of students for five years. However, in secondary education, things become much more fragmented, making it harder to maintain this approach.

To overcome the fragmentation of the secondary education system, a method that exemplifies how teachers can bring interdisciplinarity into the classroom is "**problem-based learning**". With this approach, educators collaborate on themes that cannot be confined to a single subject and encourages teachers to go beyond just delivering content and instead helps students develop creative problem-solving skills. To achieve this, teachers must be flexible and have a broad understanding of how their subject relates to others and the wider world. **Technology** also plays a vital role in supporting interdisciplinary education, offering new tools and methods to connect subjects in ways that were previously more challenging.

Despite these possibilities, implementing interdisciplinarity in secondary education faces several **institutional challenges**. Although in Italy it's mandated by law, its practical application often falls short due to a lack of investment in teacher training and limited opportunities for collaboration. A possible solution would be to create more opportunities for co-teaching and provide better teacher preparation to truly foster an interdisciplinary environment.

This need for better teacher training was a recurring theme throughout the discussion. It was emphasized that professional development for teachers should not only focus on improving subject knowledge but also on enhancing their psychological understanding of students. Findings from an international project by the American Psychological Association identified 20 key psychological principles that teachers should understand to improve learning outcomes. These principles cover areas like cognitive and motivational strategies, as well as classroom management techniques.

More broadly, systemic issues such as limited resources and a lack of recognition for teachers' contributions continue to hinder the wider adoption of interdisciplinary practices. Teachers are often forced to work in isolation, largely due to organizational constraints and insufficient institutional support.

In the end, while there are significant obstacles to making interdisciplinarity a reality in schools, there are also clear opportunities for improvement, particularly if institutions invest more in teacher development and collaboration.



Conclusion:

The roundtable underscored that while interdisciplinarity is an essential component of modern education, there are significant structural and cultural barriers to its full realization. Teachers must be supported through better training, increased collaborative opportunities, and technological tools to help integrate various disciplines. Additionally, institutional changes are necessary to align policies with the practical realities of teaching in today's schools.

The discussion ended with a call for more systemic support and ongoing research into how interdisciplinary teaching can be more effectively implemented in schools.





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UNIVERSITY
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