

Education as Inter-Disciplinary Field of Study

Biswajit Saha

Assistant Professor in Education

Sponsored Teachers' Training College, Purulia

What is a Discipline?

- **Discipline refers to a branch of academic study.** For example, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Mathematics and Philosophy are all disciplines.
- These can mostly be seen in higher educational institutions such as universities.
- This, however, does not denote that disciplines cannot be seen in other educational settings such as schools.
- For example, mathematics is a school subject that is also a discipline that is found in higher educational institutions.

What is a Subject?

- **Subject refers to a branch of knowledge studied or taught.** In schools, children learn a number of subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Language, History, Religion, Music, Art, Dancing, Health, etc.
- These subjects are also branches of knowledge but are often adjusted to accommodate the goals of education. When speaking of subjects attention paid to research is rather minimal.

What is interdisciplinary study?

- This type of study allows the student to learn by making connections between ideas and concepts across different disciplinary boundaries. Students learning in this way are able to apply the knowledge gained in one discipline to another different discipline as a way to deepen the learning experience.
- The most effective approach to interdisciplinary study enables students to build their own interdisciplinary pathway by choosing courses which make sense to them. For example, it is not too difficult to find a theme which crosses over disciplinary boundaries in literature, art and history or science and mathematics. Studying topics thematically is one way to bring ideas together resulting in more meaningful learning.

Contd...

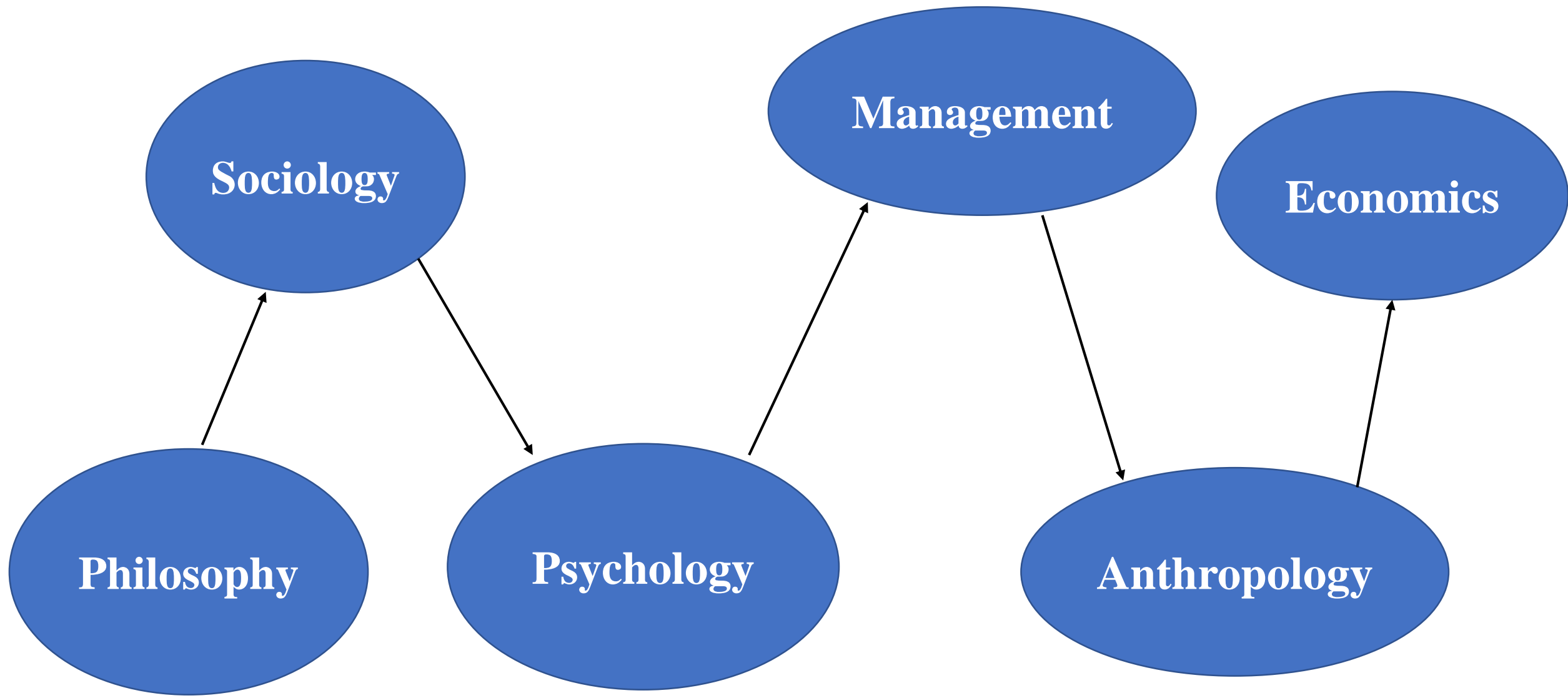
- This can occur by allowing students to choose their own subjects and their learning is deepened when they reflect on the connections between what they are learning in different disciplines.
- One of the biggest barriers to achieving true interdisciplinary study in education environments is the necessity for collaboration of educators. This can be difficult to achieve, but not impossible.
- Interdisciplinary teaching and learning is maximized when professionals from different disciplines work together to serve a common purpose and to help students make the connections between different disciplines or subject areas. Such interaction is in support of the constructivist paradigm which allows for new knowledge construction and a deeper understanding of ideas than disciplinary study.

Benefits of the concept of interdisciplinary education

- Students are highly motivated as they have a vested interest in pursuing topics that are interesting to them. As a result, the content is often rooted in life experiences, giving an authentic purpose for the learning and connecting it to a real world context. Consequently, the learning becomes meaningful, purposeful and deeper resulting in learning experiences that stay with the student for a lifetime.
- Students cover topics in more depth because they are considering the many and varied perspectives from which a topic can be explored.
- Critical thinking skills are used and developed as students look across disciplinary boundaries to consider other viewpoints and also begin to compare and contrast concepts across subject areas

Contd...

- Students begin to consolidate learning by synthesizing ideas from many perspectives and consider an alternative way of acquiring knowledge.
- Exploring topics across a range of subject boundaries motivates students to pursue new knowledge in different subject areas.
- Transferable skills of critical thinking, synthesis and research are developed and are applicable to future learning experiences.
- Interdisciplinary knowledge and application of different disciplines can lead to greater creativity.
- Worthwhile topics of research can fall in the spaces between the traditional disciplines.



Interdisciplinary Nature of Education

Relationship between interdisciplinary education and these specific disciplines

- **Philosophy**

Philosophy provides a foundation for interdisciplinary education by encouraging critical thinking, reflection, and the exploration of fundamental questions. It helps students develop a deeper understanding of knowledge, ethics, and epistemology, which are relevant across disciplines. Interdisciplinary education often draws on philosophical concepts and methodologies to analyze complex issues and foster a broader perspective.

Psychology

Psychology contributes to interdisciplinary education by offering insights into human behavior, cognition, and learning processes. Understanding psychological principles helps educators tailor instructional strategies, consider individual differences, and promote effective teaching and learning environments. Interdisciplinary approaches also leverage psychological research to examine social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of various disciplines.

Sociology

Sociology plays a crucial role in interdisciplinary education as it explores social structures, institutions, and processes. It provides a lens to understand how societies function, how individuals are influenced by social factors, and how power dynamics shape relationships. Interdisciplinary education may incorporate sociological perspectives to examine social issues, inequalities, cultural norms, and the impact of social change on different disciplines.

Management

Management principles and practices are relevant to interdisciplinary education, particularly in relation to collaboration, decision-making, and leadership. Interdisciplinary projects often require effective management of resources, coordination of team members from diverse backgrounds, and the ability to navigate complex organizational structures. Management concepts contribute to interdisciplinary education by fostering skills in project management, negotiation, and strategic planning.

Economics

Economics offers insights into resource allocation, incentives, and decision-making at individual, organizational, and societal levels. Understanding economic principles is valuable in interdisciplinary education when considering policy issues, sustainability, and the impact of economic forces on various disciplines. Economic analysis can inform interdisciplinary approaches by examining the costs, benefits, and trade-offs associated with different solutions.

Anthropology

Anthropology provides a rich understanding of human societies, cultures, and their historical development. It examines social structures, beliefs, and practices across different communities. Interdisciplinary education benefits from anthropological perspectives by fostering cultural competence, promoting understanding of diverse perspectives, and exploring the social and cultural context of different disciplines.

Thank you