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**THE NEED FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN EDUCATION IN THE  
PRESENT ERA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The changing world scenario and the challenges we are facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need skills which can be fostered by an Interdisciplinary approach in teaching and education. The paper underlines the need for an interdisciplinary learning process. It presents the essential requirements highlighted by education researchers to study the role that an interdisciplinary approach can play in dealing with the challenges in the present era.

**Keywords** – Interdisciplinary, Critical thinking, Cognitive skills, Significant Learning and Mindfulness.

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Francis Bacon, a renowned essayist, was an English lawyer, a politician and a philosopher. He is regarded as one of the leading figures in the field of Natural Philosophy and Scientific Methodology of the Elizabethan England, from the Renaissance to Modern era. He proclaimed, "I have taken all knowledge for my province". An advocate of the Inductive method of establishing scientific hypotheses, Bacon's fame today rests on the essays he has written on subjects varying from 'relationships' and 'marriage' to 'studies' and 'truth'. His aphorisms stem from his vast knowledge and experience. Similarly, Leonardo Da Vinci, innovator, artist, scientist and musician, was a renaissance man. Education and learning underwent changes as learning became branched and moved towards specialization.

In the present day global situation, humanity is faced with the challenges in the form of terrorism, economic disparity, environmental pollution and depleting resources as the planet is being burdened with 150% exploitation of its bio capacity. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is a paradigm shift in the technological, demographic, economic, environmental and political scenario. Humanity is facing increased volatility, ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity. These changes require radical changes in the education sector. The entire teaching-learning process needs to be structured to meet these new-age challenges.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have also underlined the need for developing cognitive and problem-solving skills in young learners. An interdisciplinary approach is what is required. A student of engineering or medical sciences needs to be aware of sociology, history, anthropology and economics, if not well-versed. Tackling with any global concern needs a more multi-pronged approach based on a wide perspective of the issues at hand, may it be health, food or environment. Students who have studied the social sciences besides mathematics and sciences are better equipped to deal with situations. Too much stress on the STEM – Science, Technology,

Engineering and Mathematics – in the last few decades has certainly seen tremendous technological advancement. But the increasing rate of depression among the youth and increasing insensitivity, and the issues like racism, gender discrimination, economic disparity have shown that individuals need a more holistic approach towards learning rather than a sharply lop-sided specialized or isolated study of limited aspects. Interdisciplinarity in education is a type of study or research that draws from two or more disciplines in order to gain a more well-developed perspective. For example, women's studies involves a considerable amount of interdisciplinary approach to afford knowledge from fields such as sociology, history, psychology and literature.

Knowledge, skill building, problem solving, concept learning, self-efficacy and self-confidence are some of the goals the goals that educators bring to a classroom. The fulfilment of these goals requires an interdisciplinary approach in instruction. “Repko (2009) asserts that interdisciplinary instruction fosters advances in cognitive ability and other educational researchers (Kavaloski 1979, Newell 1990, Field et al. 1994, Vess 2009) have identified a number of distinct educational benefits of interdisciplinary learning”.(Why Teach). These educational researchers have concluded that an interdisciplinary approach is able to foster the ability to think critically, recognize and overcome bias, tolerate ambiguity, and acknowledge and appreciate ethical concerns. Bransford (2000) emphasizes that the fields of neuroscience, cognitive science, social psychology, and human development assert that interdisciplinary forms of instruction helps students to challenge pre-conceived notions. They are better equipped to identify insights from various disciplines that will enhance their understanding of any issue. Moreover, interdisciplinary learning helps them to integrate concepts and ideas from varied disciplines and to have a broader perspective.

Allen Repko (2009) has identified numerous cognitive attributes that interdisciplinary learning nurtures. He is of the firm opinion that interdisciplinary learning aids students to develop perspective – the capability to comprehend multiple viewpoints on a topic; to develop Structural Knowledge – both declarative (factual information) and procedural (process-based information). Both these forms of knowledge are significant in solving complex problems. Fink (2003) concludes that Interdisciplinary approach promotes ‘Significant Learning’. He believes that the 6 elements of the educational process that lead to significant learning are characteristic of interdisciplinary form of instruction. The Interdisciplinary learning process involves acquiring foundational knowledge – information and understanding ideas; application – acquiring an understanding of how and when to use skills; integration – the capacity to connect ideas; the ability to recognize the social and personal implications of issues; develops a caring attitude, a sensitivity born out of deep regard for ethical values; and also fosters a deep insight into the process of learning.

In the present day world when humanity is waking up to the challenges of saving the environment, reducing economic disparity, providing sustainable development, and dealing with the threat of terrorism and increasing intolerance, there is need to nurture mindfulness, critical thinking, soft skills and an all-encompassing approach in education. Interdisciplinary studies can provide the answer to many such concerns. Interdisciplinary approach helps to synthesize the characteristics and methods of multiple disciplines while developing lifelong learning skills among young learners as it nurtures them to meet the goals of a rapidly changing world.

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