

Integrated Teaching In Vietnam's General Education Program - Objectives And Orientation For Primary Schools

Nguyen Thi Thu Hang

University of Education - Thai Nguyen University – Vietnam

Phan Van Thiet

Vuong Khanh Trinh - K28 Post graduate student - University of Education - Thai Nguyen University - Vietnam

Abstract: *Integrated teaching is a modern educational trend that has been implemented in many countries around the world (Desyandri et al., 2019; Lorenzo et al., 2010; Mirascieva, 2010; Petkovska et al., 2010). Integrated teaching plays an important role in educating, training and developing thinking skills, synthesizing, analyzing, generalizing, and abstracting for learners (Aziz Hussin, 2018; Bonfield et al., 2020). The rapid development of science and technology in the current period is demanding a radical and comprehensive change in the content, methods, and organization of educational and teaching activities. The concept of integrated teaching is an orientation in the fundamental and comprehensive innovation of education, a step from an approach to educational content to an approach to quality and competence, associated with solving problems in practical life. In Vietnam, the General Education Program 2018 was officially issued and implemented in December 2018 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a), in which integrated teaching is one of the emphasized points of view at the primary level. It serves as a legal basis for implementation in schools. The article approaches the analysis of the 2018 Primary Education Program at primary schools in Vietnam and the integrated teaching perspective, from which it proposes to develop goals and solutions to implement integrated teaching in primary schools.*

Keywords: *integrated, integrated teaching, primary school students, general education program, competence, Vietnam*

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I. Introduction

Integration in the sense of etymology derived from Latin (Integer = whole) means to establish and coordinate activities and different parts to ensure synchronization and harmony (WHO, 1999). Another way to understand integration is to combine parts that are related to each other in an overall relationship. According to the Encyclopedia of Educational Sciences of the Federal Republic of Germany (Enzyklopadie Erziehungswissenschaft, Bd.2, Stuttgart 1984), the general meaning of the word “integration” is expressed in two aspects: (1) The process of re-establishing the general, the whole, the unified from the individual; (2) The state in which there is the common, the whole being made of the individual. According to the 2018 General Education Program, integration is the fusion/unification of different parts to bring up a new object as a unified whole based on the essential features of the object components. It is not a simple addition of the properties of that object (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a).

Thus, integration in the usual sense is associated with the act or process of assembling, connecting the components of an object or many objects with relationships to create a unity and completeness. Integration has two basic properties which are closely related to each other: *connectivity* and *unity*. Connectivity is expressed in the harmonious combination of components and parts based on a certain approach and logical relationship. Unity asserts that components are not arranged, placed next to each other according to a mechanical relationship, but it represents a certain internal logical relationship between component objects that sometimes cannot distinguish specific boundaries between those components.

Most of the studies on integrated teaching point to the important role of integrated teaching in forming students' competencies, making learning meaningful and aiming to meet the goals of world education in the 21st century (Arnold, 2011; Lorenzo et al., 2010; Petkovska et al., 2010; Whetten & Clark, 1996). Students in the 21st century, in addition to being equipped with basic knowledge and skills as the foundation for human scientific knowledge, also need to be trained and developed their ability to practice and apply scientific knowledge to solve practical problems of daily life as well as at work. In addition, students also practice life

skills and basic life values in relation to themselves and those around them; capable of developing creative thinking to meet the trend of globalization and knowledge economy....

In integrated teaching, authentic learning takes place when students engage in meaningful activities. Learning activities are most directly related to students' interests and needs, and help to establish overall knowledge relationships, helping students approach problem-solving in a holistic relationship (Soediono, 1989; Van Bien, 2015). Learning topics in integrated teaching become a means for students to explore the world around them, to update and keep up with the current exponential trend of knowledge development. The role of integrated teaching in schools can be summarized as follows:

For teachers and schools: Integrated teaching gives teachers better access to curricula and textbooks, as well as flexibility in handling situations. Teachers need access to the overall curriculum and curriculum of subjects; cooperate with other teachers in the same grade; closely and promptly grasp real-life issues related to the subjects.... from which to build goals and plans to organize integrated teaching suitable for students. In addition, integrated teaching also promotes the process of comprehensive student assessment. The assessment is not only reflected in each subject and is not merely an assessment of academic knowledge, but it is important to emphasize the ability to apply knowledge to solve real-life problems.

For students: Integrated teaching encourages motivation in students. Integrated teaching focuses on the need to acquire knowledge in accordance with students' needs, through which students will learn what they need and love, which is called "intrinsic motivation". It is because there is a learning motivation (intrinsic motivation) that learning becomes lighter and more enjoyable for the learners themselves. Integrated teaching focuses on developing learners' competencies. The situations in integrated teaching are often associated with real life, close and attractive to learners. Learners need to explain, analyze, argue or conduct experiments, build models... to solve problems. When participating in learning activities in integrated teaching, students are provided with a better understanding of the content of subjects and areas of study in the overall relationship between subjects. Integrated learning encourages active participation in relevant real-life experiences, thereby enhancing students' ability to adapt, integrate their own ideas and experiences, and apply them to solve highly practical learning situations. Integrated learning develops high-level thinking skills for students, especially critical thinking and creative thinking skills, and enhances the spirit of collaboration and cooperation among students.

The concept of integrated teaching was generalized and applied in the General Education Program in Vietnam in 2006. In 2018, this point of view was emphasized more and affirmed the central role of primary and secondary school students, in which the primary level plays a fundamental role. Currently, Vietnamese textbooks (primary level) have also been compiled with an integrated perspective, reflected in the structure and content of lessons and topics (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a; Multiple authors, 2021). With the view that the program is open, textbooks act as references, teachers implementing the program must be flexible and develop a teaching plan suitable to school conditions and student characteristics. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to implement many contents, especially the implementation of integrated teaching.

The purpose of the article is to analyze Vietnam's new General Education Program to answer the research questions: What are the goals of integrated teaching in the Vietnamese primary school curriculum? In what ways can integrated teaching in primary school be approached? After that, a number of teaching situations built with the practical context of the Vietnam General Education Program are illustrated based on the given approaches.

II. Integrated teaching in Vietnam's General Education Program

General education program is the entire direction and plan of general education, which clearly states the goals of general education, prescribes requirements to be met in terms of quality and competence for students, scope and structure of educational content, methods and forms of organizing educational activities, ways of assessing educational results for subjects, learning topics and experiential activities in each class and each grade of general education.

Resolution 88 of the 13th National Assembly clearly defines the requirements for integration in the new general education program: "At the primary and secondary levels, it is necessary to integrate related contents of a number of educational fields, some subjects in the current program to form *integrated subjects*, avoiding overlapping of educational content..." (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2014). Decision 404 of the Prime Minister: The new curriculum and textbooks are compiled in the direction of integration in lower grades. The content is related to each other to a reasonable degree to form integrated subjects" (Prime Minister, n.d.). Vietnam's new General Education Program has chosen an appropriate integration plan to promote the effectiveness of integrated teaching, ensure the core knowledge of each science and in accordance with the requirements of the practical conditions in the initial step of implementing integrated teaching in our country, especially for primary school level.

The objective of the General Education Program 2018 has been determined: "help students master general knowledge, know how to effectively apply learned knowledge and skills in life and lifelong self-study, orient students to choose a suitable career, know how to build and develop harmoniously social relationships, have a rich personality and spiritual life, thereby having a meaningful life and making positive contributions to the development of the country and humanity. The primary education program helps students form and develop the basic elements that lay the foundation for the harmonious development of physical and mental health, quality and competence, self-worth, family, community and necessary habits and routines in the study and daily life" (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a).

The overall general education program has identified: Integrated teaching is a teaching orientation that helps students develop the ability to synthesize knowledge and skills... in many different fields to effectively deal with complex problems in study and life, develop necessary competencies, especially problem-solving abilities.

On the basis of studying the goals, orientations and viewpoints of the General Education Program 2018 and typical integrated teaching models, it is possible to generalize the basic orientations of integrated teaching and implementation in the General Education Program 2018 at the primary level are as follows:

Intra-subject/single-subject integration: subjects are taught separately but in each subject, different topics and subjects have a logical relationship to each other; integrating knowledge requirements with the training of corresponding subject skills.

Interdisciplinary integration: integrating knowledge of related subjects and sciences together to build into interdisciplinary integrated topics.

Cross-subject integration: starting from practical problems to build topics towards forging cross-disciplinary skills so that students can apply everywhere such as: communication skills, thinking skills, problem-solving skills and creativity....

In integrated teaching in primary schools, the above integration methods are not completely separated from each other. In many teaching plans, it has a close relationship with each other and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between interdisciplinary and cross-subject integration. Single-subject, interdisciplinary and cross-subject integrated teaching are integrated teaching methods that are being implemented in primary schools, in which interdisciplinary teaching is an integrated method that has many advantages and is receiving great attention in primary schools in Vietnam today.

III. Objectives and orientations for organizing integrated teaching in primary schools: some preliminary samples

In the General Education Program 2018, the integrated perspective is an educational perspective that is focused at the primary level, aiming at the selection and arrangement of content and teaching methods for maximum development of competence for students. Therefore, it is possible to identify integrated teaching in primary schools to help students:

- Establish relationships between concepts and problems in the same subject or between different subjects. Thereby forming general scientific knowledge, with close connections between fields and sub-disciplines in the same subject or different subjects, towards the connection and synthesis of knowledge and systems thinking.
- Be able to apply learned knowledge into practice, mobilize life experiences, regularly update problems to participate in learning activities.
- Be able to self-study, explore and solve complex learning tasks. Since then, developing students' comprehensive competencies, especially the ability to apply knowledge to solve problems in life.

On the basis of the above objectives, when organizing integrated teaching in primary schools, it can be implemented on the basis of approaching the following basic viewpoints:

If based on the scope of implementation and the method of building and organizing integrated teaching, it is possible to distinguish single-subject, interdisciplinary or cross-subject views in the process of integrated teaching in primary schools as follows:

3.1. Single-subject integrated teaching in primary school

In the single-subject approach, the scope of implementation is within a subject. The teaching process focuses on the following basic objectives:

- + Meet the requirements of an integrated implementation course.
- + Integrate relevant educational issues (environmental protection education, life skills education, life value education, financial education ...)
- + Demonstrate competence development teaching associated with solving practical problems.

Example: When organizing a single-subject integrated teaching program for the lesson "My hometown" (Ethics Grade 2) (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018b), in addition to helping students achieve the requirements of the subject, such as *State the address of the hometown; Initially recognize the beauty of nature and people in*

the hometown; Realize practical, age-appropriate jobs, show love for the hometown: love for family; take care of and protect the natural beauty of the hometown (the ability to regulate the behavior of the Ethics subject). Teachers can exploit the lesson content to meet the goals of integrating environmental protection education such as: do things to preserve the environment and protect the natural landscape in the hometown. In addition to those goals, when organizing lessons, teachers need to aim to help students develop other common competencies such as self-control and self-study, communication and cooperation, problem-solving and creativity.

In some cases, when the course lesson itself coincides completely with the integrated educational content, the lesson objectives coincide completely with the educational objective of the integrated issues, such as: Consumption saving and protecting the environment (Nature and society grade 3, scientific competence is demonstrated through the content on integrating environmental protection education and financial education) (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018c). At that time, the process of organizing integrated teaching needs to focus on exploiting more methods and forms of organizing teaching in the direction of both developing the specific competencies of the subject and towards the formation and development of the common competencies and key qualities.

3.2. Interdisciplinary integrated teaching in primary school

Interdisciplinary integrated teaching in primary schools can be implemented in two different formats:

Firstly, interdisciplinary topics are covered in many subjects, aiming to meet the requirements of two or more different subjects.

For example, the topic of my loving family (Grade 1) which can be built and implemented within a week's time associated with many different subjects is shown in the following diagram:

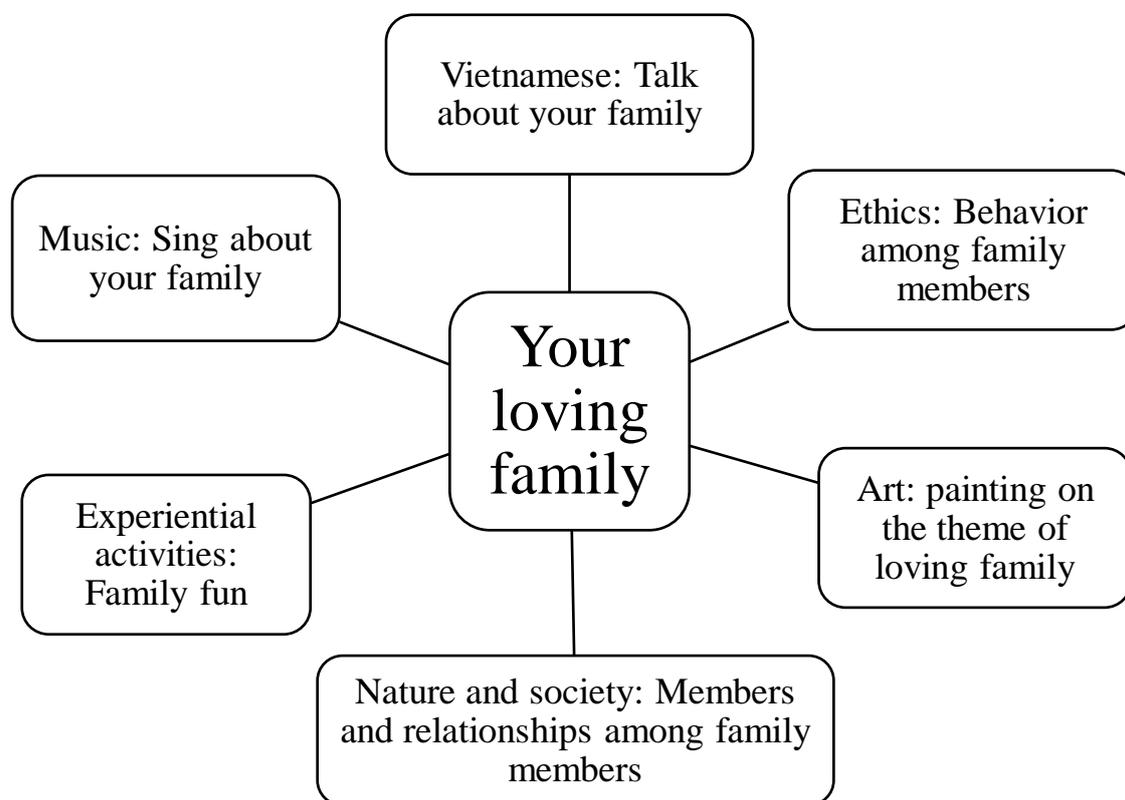


Diagram 1. Interdisciplinary topic: My loving family (Grade 1)

Second, the interdisciplinary topic is associated with a particular subject, other subjects are combined in the subject in the sense that they are instrumental to assist in meeting the requirements of the subject.

Example: When teaching students about the topic: *Using a combination of nutrients in daily meals* (Science 4), teachers can conduct the following activities:

Activity 1: Why it is important to use a combination of nutrients in daily meals?

Activity 2: How should the combination of nutrients in the meal be used in a reasonable proportion?

Activity 3: Investigate, collect data and make a statistical table of dishes and evaluate the combination of nutrients in school lunches.

3.3. Cross-subject integrated teaching in primary school

In the cross-subject approach, the integrated topics are mainly associated with projects suitable for primary school students' ages such as environmental protection project, traffic safety project, love and share project

For example: Faced with the increasing school violence, there are some situations where upper-class students bully lower-class students at school. Teachers develop the topic of *Saying "No" to school violence*. This topic is launched throughout the school, students voluntarily register to participate in project groups and together with teachers build a series of specific activities associated with the main orientations, such as propaganda to students of all grades to jointly prevent school violence through making books, newspapers, posters, drawing pictures; organize exchanges, talks, plays, join and conduct clubs.... When participating in this topic, students not only have a deep awareness of social issues but also apply knowledge and skills of many different subjects, especially practicing self-recognition skills, communication skills, cooperation skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, creative thinking which not only support the learning process of subjects at primary school but also necessary for the all-round development of students.

IV. Conclusion

The integrated single-subject, interdisciplinary and cross-subject approaches in primary school teaching are not separate but they have close relationships and interactions with each other. In some cases of teaching, it is difficult to distinguish whether it is interdisciplinary or cross-subject. This article mainly studies from the perspective of program analysis and the relationship between integrated teaching in primary schools in Vietnam. From there, it helps teachers distinguish and identify integrated approaches in primary schools, study illustrative examples so that they can have a clearer and more overall view of integrated teaching. There is a basic orientation in implementing an effective integrated teaching organization in primary schools.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors

Nguyen Thi Thu Hang is working at University of Education, Thai Nguyen University – Vietnam. She conducts research on primary education and the application of the approach of learning through playing into primary education.

Phan Van Thiet and **Vuong Khanh Trinh** are currently post graduate students at University of Education, Thai Nguyen University – Vietnam. They are researching the application of the approach of learning through playing into primary education.

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