

Lost in Integration? Rethinking Teacher Education for Social Studies in Germany

Since their introduction in the 1970s, interdisciplinary subjects such as social studies have sparked continuous debate, often driven more by assumptions than by solid evidence regarding their (dis-)advantages. While gaps in teachers' professional knowledge persist across all subjects and remain a challenge, this presentation aims to move beyond familiar critiques and generic solutions. Accordingly, we address pressing theoretical and empirical questions related to interdisciplinary teaching:

1. Which theoretical perspectives (e. g. educational theory, motivation, collaboration) should inform teacher education?
2. What do we know about the impact of out-of-field teaching in Social Studies?
3. What strategies can be derived from existing theory and research?

Our analysis suggests that the expectation of producing fully qualified teachers by the end of initial training is increasingly unrealistic, particularly in interdisciplinary fields. Cross-subject cooperation should be recognised as a core professional competency and further promoted in teacher education, even without implementing extensive structural reforms. However, overemphasising teacher competencies risks overlooking other factors shaping students' learning. Moreover, empirical evidence on out-of-field teaching is still sparse and inconclusive; even a consistent definition for social studies continues to be lacking. While some challenges are state-specific, many are not. We invite discussion on next steps – conceptual, empirical and practical.

Keywords

social studies • teacher education • interdisciplinary • out-of-field • competencies • lifelong learning