# Chapter 6
# Integrated and Corporate Learning in Higher Education: Challenges and Strategies

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## ABSTRACT

*Since the advent of globalization, interdisciplinary learning has gained wide currency against the orthodox systems of mono-discipline or specialized learning and research. The emergence of the knowledge society demands a person to be able to integrate the various disciplines of knowledge for innovation and effectiveness in learning, application and research. The real integrated learning would be achieved only when educational institutions such as universities are not confined to the walls of their campuses but maintain an interface with the society and social groups. One of the objectives of the chapter is to highlight that integrated approach is not merely a methodology and process but is a concept, a way of knowing and understanding and a philosophy. There are misnomers about Interdisciplinary approach. It has been generally misunderstood as rejection of the disciplines. On the contrary it is not only firmly rooted in the disciplines but also offers a corrective to the dominance of disciplinary ways of knowing and specialization. This chapter is an attempt to address these problems. Integrated and corporate approach can have several dimensions and purposes including to serve societal or employment needs, facilitate innovation, new thinking and ideas, and to create humane entrepreneurs. The chapter looks into various approaches and dimensions of integrated learning as also various outcomes and situations of integration and learning. There are various challenges in the teaching learning process in an interdisciplinary environment which the faculty and students face but there are ways to tackle these challenges. The quality of higher education in India would greatly benefit from a symbiotic link amongst the society, university, and industry.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1990s, when globalization was making significant change in the world order and also in the people's perspective, the educators realized that interdisciplinary approaches are essential for meeting the challenges arising due to these developments. Educators began to experiment with interdisciplinary approaches, which laid the groundwork for inter-disciplinary learning as it exists today. (Heidi Jacobs, 1989) David Ackerman and D.N. Perkins'(1989) research focuses on the integration of thinking and learning skills across the curriculum. The importance of this kind of integration is very well recognized in the context of India in what Yashpal committee on higher education (2009) says. They recognized the need for treating knowledge in a holistic manner so as to create exciting opportunities for different kinds of interfaces between the disciplines. As pointed out by Narasimharao (2009) the needs of the society in general and the needs of industries or corporate in particular cannot be bounded by disciplinary boundaries. The chapter is placed in this context and suggests different ways that can be adopted for developing integrative approach.

One of the important aspects of corporate education and corporate learning is the ability to use knowledge in real life. In a project on Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo), OECD identified the individual competencies required for a well functioning organization. If we take this as a base, the corporate learning may include developing the abilities to use cognitive, socio-cultural and physical tools interactively; learning to develop social capital or ability to interact in heterogeneous groups. (Narasimharao and Nair, 2010)

### Approaches and Dimensions of Integrated Learning

Integrated learning is the synthesis of disciplines. Here scholars work together to pool their interests, insights, and methods, usually with the hope of gaining and presenting new understandings. (Davis, 1995) Integrated approach can have several dimensions and purposes. (Klein, 1990)

The term integrated approach is a methodology and process for integration of knowledge and perspectives. In recent years there is growing importance for the integrated approach. For instance University of Melbourne in 2008 phased out 96 old undergraduate courses in favour of six new broad first programmes. Similarly University of Australia is set to reduce the number of undergraduate courses from more than 70 to six. Yashpal Committee, (2009) in its report emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. It has pointed on the cubicalization of knowledge in higher education.

The universities with the knowledge capital at their disposal should develop curricula that combine good science with the complexities of business, intellectual property protection, social sciences and a regulatory environment that is largely political (the real interface between science and liberal arts). The Noble Laureate Cech emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge states that scientists need the same skills as humanists to cut through misleading observations and arrive at a defensible interpretation, and intellectual cross-training in the humanities exercises the relevant portions of the brain.'(Cech, 1999). As Narasimharao et al., (2011) states in the transition towards a knowledge economy and knowledge society, universities need to produce more knowledge, relevant knowledge, and also become responsible for the transfer of that knowledge to those parties who need it.

Multiple intelligence theory by Howard Gardner says that intelligence is not a unitary phenomenon but contained several elements, each of which could predominate in a given individual depending on a variety of factors, more related to nature than nurture. This is an important aspect for corporate organizations as they can benefit by bringing out the natural talent hidden in each individual and integrating it with the knowledge available.