

DECOLONIZING EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY PEDAGOGY IN REFRAMING HAITIAN SCHOOL CURRICULA

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Abstract: This study explores how interdisciplinary pedagogy can contribute to the decolonization of Haitian school curricula. Based on a theoretical and qualitative approach, it draws from critical pedagogy and curriculum studies to argue that integrating diverse knowledge systems strengthens critical thinking and affirms cultural identity. The research highlights the potential of interdisciplinary education to transform colonial structures within Haiti's educational system.

Keywords: Decolonization; Interdisciplinary Pedagogy; Haitian Curriculum; Critical Education

INTRODUCTION

Education in Haiti remains deeply marked by colonial legacies that have shaped not only the content of school curricula but also the structure, language, and epistemological orientation of the entire system. These curricula often privilege Western knowledge systems while marginalizing Haitian culture, history, and language.

Consequently, the Haitian education system often reinforces social disparities and cultural disconnection instead of fostering critical thinking and a strong sense of national identity. In light of this, there is a pressing need to rethink educational practices through a decolonial lens—one that affirms local knowledge and centers learners' cultural contexts.

By critically analyzing the possible pathways toward an education that respects the multiple cultures, languages, and histories of the Haitian people, St Victor and Martiniak (2025a) advocated for inclusion as both an ethical and political practice. It is an efficacy way to decolonize education in Haiti.

In response to this challenge, interdisciplinary pedagogy emerges as a transformative approach that can support the decolonization of school curricula. By fostering connections between disciplines, it encourages holistic understanding, critical inquiry, and epistemological diversity.

Such an approach resists the fragmentation of knowledge imposed by colonial models of schooling and instead emphasizes interconnectedness, reflexivity, and cultural relevance. It allows for the integration of multiple perspectives—including indigenous, historical, social, and linguistic dimensions—that are often excluded in traditional curricular models.

The curriculum issue constitutes one of the main challenges to achieving educational inclusion in Haiti. The lack of curricular adaptation, accessible infrastructure, and specialized training for education professionals highlights the gap between normative frameworks and the lived reality of many students (St Victor & Martiniak, 2025b).

The central research question that guides this study is: How can interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches contribute to the decolonization of school curricula in Haiti? The main objective is to analyze the potential of interdisciplinary education to challenge colonial legacies in Haitian public education by fostering pedagogical practices that are inclusive, critical, and culturally affirming.

The hypothesis underpinning this investigation is that interdisciplinary pedagogy, when rooted in critical and decolonial frameworks, enhances students' critical thinking and strengthens their cultural identity—key factors in the process of decolonizing the curriculum. Through meaningful connections between knowledge domains and the incorporation of



lived experiences and local realities, such pedagogy can reshape the educational landscape in ways that empower learners and democratize knowledge.

This study is conducted using a qualitative, theoretical methodology, grounded in the principles of critical pedagogy and curriculum studies. It draws on the works of Paulo Freire (2005), whose notion of education as a practice of freedom emphasizes the importance of dialogue, consciousness, and agency in learning, and Walter D. Mignolo (2007), who argues for the need to delink from Eurocentric epistemologies and to embrace pluriversality in knowledge production.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a framework for analyzing how interdisciplinary practices can serve as tools for educational decolonization in the Haitian context. By exploring the intersection of interdisciplinarity and decolonial thought in education, this article contributes to a broader conversation about the future of schooling in postcolonial societies and the role of pedagogical innovation in shaping more just, inclusive, and culturally relevant educational systems.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical methodology, with the purpose of analyzing how interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches can contribute to the decolonization of school curricula in Haiti.

Rather than relying on empirical data collection, the research is grounded in critical analysis of academic literature, educational theories, and policy documents relevant to postcolonial education and curriculum transformation.

The theoretical framework is informed primarily by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (2005), which emphasizes education as a tool for liberation, and Walter Mignolo's decolonial theory (2007), which advocates for the delinking from Eurocentric knowledge systems.

These references serve as the foundation for understanding how interdisciplinary practices can foster critical consciousness and cultural affirmation in educational settings. The method consists of a structured literature review and analytical interpretation of key texts in curriculum studies, decolonial theory, and interdisciplinary education.

Sources include peer-reviewed articles, books, and reports addressing educational practices in Haiti and other postcolonial contexts. The analysis aims to identify conceptual convergences that support the integration of interdisciplinary approaches in Haitian public education.

This theoretical approach allows for a deep reflection on the epistemological, cultural, and political dimensions of curriculum design and supports the formulation of pedagogical strategies aligned with the decolonization of knowledge in Haiti.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that interdisciplinary pedagogy constitutes not only an instructional strategy but also a powerful decolonial tool capable of transforming the Haitian school curriculum. The persistence of colonial structures in Haitian education has generated a system that privileges imported epistemologies, marginalizes Haitian cultural and historical experiences, and maintains a linguistic and ideological gap between school knowledge and students lived realities.

To address these inequalities that characterize the Haitian education, St Victor and Martiniak (2025c, p. 1) argue that "the school must take on a broader role that goes beyond formal content and embraces diversity as both a pedagogical and political principle".

In this context, the adoption of interdisciplinary approaches provides a critical opportunity to reconfigure how knowledge is constructed, organized, and transmitted in Haitian schools. One of the key contributions of interdisciplinary pedagogy lies in its ability to challenge the epistemological fragmentation that characterizes traditional, discipline-bound education.

According to Fazenda (1994), interdisciplinarity should not be reduced to a mechanical combination of subjects but should be understood as a dialogical space that allows for the crossing of epistemic borders and the emergence of new, integrated understandings.

This is particularly relevant in Haiti, where the conventional curriculum often excludes vital local knowledge systems and instead enforces foreign educational models that are misaligned with students' cultural contexts and community needs.

In addition, the Haitian educational system tends to sideline Haitian Creole—the mother tongue of the population—by prioritizing French as the dominant language of instruction. The majority of teaching materials are in French, and all assessments are conducted in this language.

In public institutions as well, French remains predominant. Consequently, French is both the language of instruction and the institutional language in Haiti. Among the twenty-four Haitian constitutions since 1801, only the 1987 Constitution includes a Creole version. All the others are available solely in French.



However, the 1987 Constitution, which was amended in 2011, no longer has an official Creole version. This marginalization of Creole in the Haitian school curriculum has drawn the attention of several scholars who advocate for the valorization of the language within the education system.

Among them, St Victor and Martiniak (2025d) argue that valuing Creole in schools facilitates learning, strengthens cultural identity, and enhances cognitive skills. Accordingly, they propose the exclusive use of Creole in primary education, alongside a bilingual policy at higher levels. According to Govain (2014), Creole plays a significant role in knowledge acquisition both in schools and at the university level.

Likewise, DeGraff (2017) highlights the use of Creole up to the university level as a key pathway toward improving the Haitian education system, which remains heavily dominated by French. Taking into account so-called “local” languages like Creole is a necessary—though not sufficient—step toward expanding access to quality education (DeGraff, 2017, p. 178).

In a similar vein, Moreira (2004) emphasizes that interdisciplinarity is a historically situated and politically engaged approach to knowledge production, capable of questioning dominant narratives and fostering transformative educational experiences

The curriculum in Haiti has long operated under what Freire (2011) refers to as the “banking model of education,” wherein students are treated as passive recipients of information rather than active participants in the construction of meaning. Interdisciplinary pedagogy offers an alternative by fostering critical engagement, promoting inquiry, and valuing the learner’s voice as central to the educational process.

Through problem-posing education and dialogical learning, students are encouraged to question dominant narratives, examine their own experiences, and understand the broader sociopolitical forces shaping their lives.

Mignolo’s (2007) concept of “delinking” from Western epistemologies underscores the urgency of disrupting colonial logics within the Haitian educational structure. This act of delinking involves not only rejecting imposed models but actively recovering and revalorizing subaltern knowledges—those rooted in Haitian history, oral traditions, local languages, and indigenous cosmologies.

Interdisciplinary pedagogy facilitates this process by legitimizing diverse forms of knowing and allowing curricular content to be reconstructed around themes of cultural resistance, historical agency, and social transformation.

Fanon (1968) emphasizes that colonized subjects internalize inferiority through education systems designed to alienate them from their own culture and history.

In the Haitian context, the long-standing devaluation of the Creole language and of Afro-Caribbean epistemologies has contributed to a sense of disconnect between learners and the schooling process.

Interdisciplinary strategies that integrate literature, history, anthropology, and language studies offer an effective means to restore cultural dignity and collective identity. These strategies are not just pedagogical adjustments but acts of cognitive justice, as they redefine whose knowledge matters in the classroom.

Giroux (1997) highlights the political role of educators as public intellectuals who must navigate and contest the dominant cultural codes that structure curriculum and assessment. In adopting an interdisciplinary approach, Haitian teachers are positioned not merely as transmitters of state-mandated content but as agents capable of designing learning experiences that reflect the multiplicity of students’ realities.

This shift in the teacher’s role is essential to the decolonization process, as it repositions pedagogy as a space of negotiation, resistance, and transformation. Apple (2005) and Bernstein (1996) both argue that curriculum is a site of ideological control and symbolic power.

Therefore, any attempt to reform the Haitian curriculum must recognize that it is not a neutral tool but one embedded with political interests. An interdisciplinary and decolonial reconfiguration of the curriculum challenges the hegemony of monocultural, Eurocentric knowledge and opens up possibilities for knowledge production rooted in local histories, oralities, and community struggles.

For example, history lessons can be enriched with literary testimonies, oral accounts of ancestors, and resistance narratives often omitted from textbooks, allowing students to see themselves as part of an ongoing historical project rather than passive subjects of external domination.

Quijano (2006) supports this perspective by asserting that the coloniality of power influenced not only political and economic structures but also constructed hierarchies of knowledge, elevating European frameworks and marginalizing alternative epistemologies—a pattern that remains deeply rooted in postcolonial education systems such as Haiti’s.

Macedo and Freire (1987) affirm the centrality of literacy in transforming social realities, emphasizing



that reading the word must be intrinsically connected to reading the world. In Haitian schools, literacy development can be revolutionized through interdisciplinary texts that blend critical literacy, sociolinguistics, and indigenous storytelling practices.

This creates a more inclusive pedagogical environment, particularly for students from rural and marginalized communities, who are often excluded from success within conventional academic structures.

The current educational policy framework in Haiti, as outlined by Haiti (2018), remains largely conservative and top-down, with little room for contextual adaptation. However, there is growing recognition among educators and civil society actors that local innovations and community-based educational practices can inform more responsive models.

César and Dell’Aglío (2015) emphasize the importance of intercultural education in reducing systemic inequalities. When combined with interdisciplinary pedagogy, intercultural education ensures that curriculum reforms are not only structurally inclusive but also epistemologically pluralistic.

Torres (1995) further argues that education in Latin America—and by extension, in the Caribbean—must address its historical function in maintaining ideological domination. The Haitian case, with its unique revolutionary heritage and postcolonial struggles, offers a compelling terrain for reclaiming education as a vehicle for emancipation.

Interdisciplinary pedagogy, rooted in critical and decolonial theories, provides theoretical and methodological tools to facilitate this transformation by blurring the boundaries between academic disciplines, re-centering marginalized voices, and promoting dialogic engagement.

Santomé (1998) adds that curriculum should not be reduced to a selection of content but must be understood as a cultural and ideological construction that reflects power relations and social values. From this perspective, interdisciplinary and decolonial approaches in Haiti become essential strategies for disrupting the hidden curriculum that perpetuates colonial norms and silences local identities.

Bhabha (1994) brings forward the concept of cultural hybridity, which resonates deeply in Haiti’s socio-historical landscape. Interdisciplinary curricula that incorporate this hybridity—such as by merging Haitian Vodou cosmologies with environmental education or connecting oral poetry with civic education—can generate pedagogical practices that

reflect the complexity and resilience of Haitian identity.

This approach helps students see themselves not as derivatives of a colonized past but as creators of a pluralistic and dynamic cultural present. Moreover, Apple (2005) warns against neoliberal influences that seek to standardize education globally, erasing local particularities in favor of market-oriented competencies.

Interdisciplinary pedagogy resists such homogenization by valuing contextual knowledge, critical consciousness, and collective learning. In the Haitian context, this resistance is particularly urgent, as external donor-driven models often shape education policy without sufficient regard for local needs, languages, or pedagogical traditions.

The findings also suggest that interdisciplinary curriculum reform should be accompanied by institutional support, including teacher training programs, participatory curriculum development, and culturally relevant assessment methods. Without structural backing, even the most progressive pedagogical innovations risk becoming isolated experiments.

In this sense, the full realization of a decolonial and interdisciplinary curriculum in Haiti requires both bottom-up innovation and top-down policy change. In summary, the results of this study affirm the hypothesis that interdisciplinary pedagogy enhances critical thinking and cultural identity—two essential dimensions for decolonizing education.

By integrating multiple disciplinary lenses and centering Haitian epistemologies, this approach enables students to understand their social reality, articulate their cultural identity, and actively participate in the transformation of their communities.

The challenge now lies in building the institutional, theoretical, and practical bridges that can support the widespread adoption of such pedagogical practices throughout the Haitian educational system. This endeavor demands not only curricular innovation but also a collective political will to reclaim education as a right, a tool of liberation, and a space of epistemic justice.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the potential of interdisciplinary pedagogy as a strategy for decolonizing the Haitian school curriculum. Anchored in a theoretical and qualitative approach, it examined how integrating diverse knowledge systems and educational perspectives can challenge the colonial legacies that persist within Haiti’s formal education structure.



The central argument was that interdisciplinary approaches—when rooted in critical and culturally responsive frameworks—can promote the development of critical thinking and the affirmation of cultural identity, thus contributing meaningfully to the transformation of school curricula.

Among the key findings of the research is the recognition that the Haitian educational system continues to reproduce epistemological hierarchies that marginalize local languages, histories, and cultural experiences.

Interdisciplinary pedagogy emerges as an effective response to this condition by offering a holistic and dialogic framework that enables students to engage with knowledge in ways that are relevant to their lived realities. It also allows for the recovery and reintegration of local epistemologies into classroom practices, creating space for cultural recognition and cognitive justice.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the role of educators as central agents in the decolonial process. By adopting interdisciplinary methods, teachers can create learning environments that are more inclusive, participatory, and critically oriented.

This approach redefines the purpose of education beyond the transmission of content, positioning it instead as a transformative act that fosters social consciousness and empowers learners to become agents of change within their communities.

The theoretical analysis also demonstrated that any meaningful curricular reform must consider the structural and political dimensions of education. Interdisciplinary pedagogy, while pedagogically innovative, cannot achieve its full potential in isolation.

It must be accompanied by institutional support, teacher training, and educational policies that promote curricular flexibility, epistemic diversity, and equity in access to learning resources.

Considering these findings, this research contributes to ongoing debates about postcolonial education and curriculum reform in the Global South, particularly in contexts marked by historical oppression and cultural erasure. It affirms the necessity of designing educational models that are contextually grounded, pedagogically inclusive, and aligned with national cultural identities.

As for future research, this study opens several avenues for further exploration. Empirical investigations could assess the implementation and impact of interdisciplinary pedagogical strategies in Haitian classrooms, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas.

Comparative studies could also be conducted to analyze how other postcolonial nations have used interdisciplinary frameworks to decolonize their education systems. Additionally, research focused on teacher training programs and the development of culturally relevant teaching materials could provide valuable insights for operationalizing the principles discussed here.

In conclusion, the integration of interdisciplinary pedagogy into the Haitian curriculum represents not merely an educational reform but a profound epistemological and cultural repositioning. It signals a movement toward an education that is rooted in the people, shaped by their histories, and directed toward liberation, justice, and national reconstruction.

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