Interdisciplinary Research

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“Everything is related to everything else.”

A small quote that I cannot remember where I read or hear from. A quick search on Google suggested the quote is Tobler’s first law of geography [1]. In the era of specialization, it is understandable when people hold on to a specific field that they have studied for a long time. A master’s degree takes two years, and around four more years to complete a doctorate. So even though interdisciplinary research is becoming an emerging trend, it is still skeptically scrutinized.

My undergraduate teacher completed his degrees in the 80s. I did not remember which one, either his undergraduate or master’s degree. However, he found a unique program that allowed him to find two supervisors in different fields, and they jointly supervised him on his education, which was something about music and culture. I have to reach out to him, but you can find some of his works here [2-4]. Eventually, when I entered his undergraduate seminar, I had various choices among music, education, media, and culture. I found my niche in the sports and education cinema [5].

I shared my frustration about people who insist on their attachment with a specific field only [6]. To be honest, it can appear to be biased. However, as I continue as a social researcher, the interdisciplinary nature of social research is more apparent than ever. For instance, we cannot discuss Vietnamese art without mentioning the role of an art market and the development of the economy [7]. Art is also intertwined with culture, reflecting culture as well as becoming one. So folklores and fairytales carry layers of culture [8,9]. Recently, facing the challenging problems of environmental conservation and climate change, we also look at the culture to find a new possible solution [10]

Regardless of the inscription on your degree, everything is related to everything else. The renowned physicist Freeman Dyson—a rebel without a Ph.D.—did works in mathematics, physics, engineering, and even biology [11]. Even though he was considered a physicist, he just enjoyed the puzzles in any field.

It is just the spirit that I want to follow, especially if I want to contribute real valuable science [12].

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