

Innovating the Research Thinking in Law Students Today from the Perspective of Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Approaches

Dinh Hoang Nga*

Law Student, University of Industry and Trade, Vietnam

***Corresponding Author:** Dinh Hoang Nga, Law Student, University of Industry and Trade, Vietnam.

Citation: Hoang, D, N. (2026). Innovating the Research Thinking in Law Students Today from the Perspective of Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Approaches, *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2(1), 01-10.

Abstract

Innovating the research thinking in law students today is a crucial turning point to meet the needs of legal science in the context of globalization in our country. An interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach is a new, modern approach in legal science research that helps students eliminate passive and dogmatic thinking patterns in law. This article initially explores the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach in current students, specifically providing a brief analysis of this approach. The content of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking approaches in legal studies for students; application of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking approaches in the current legal studies of students.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, And Transdisciplinary Thinking in Law For Students

Introduction

Faced with profound changes in social life and the increasing complexity of legal relationships in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and international integration, law is facing an urgent need to innovate its research thinking and approach. Traditional thinking patterns, which are heavily dogmatic and closed-minded, are increasingly revealing their limitations when trying to explain and solve new, complex, and multifaceted legal issues.

Law schools therefore also face a major challenge: how to balance the innovation of teaching methods with a shift in students' approach to knowledge and legal research, in order to meet the demands of modern society. Continuing to maintain a purely single-discipline legal thinking style is making it difficult for students to grasp the essence of the problem and propose practical and effective solutions.

In this context, innovating legal research thinking from an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary perspective becomes essential. This is not merely the addition of a new method, but a fundamental innovation in how objective legal reality is reflected, transforming the cognitive processes and thinking activities of students in

response to legal issues arising during the country's development. Applying this mindset helps students gain a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective, narrowing the gap between theory and practice, and enhancing their ability to solve complex legal problems in contemporary society.

Therefore, this interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach not only has theoretical significance but also profound practical value in shaping a generation of high-quality law students, contributing to the improvement of the legal system and the sustainable development of the country.

A Brief Explanation of the Approach to Legal Research in Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Thinking

The Concept of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Approaches (or Research) in the Academic Environment of Today's Students.

Multidisciplinary approach (or research): This can be understood as using knowledge, methods, and perspectives from many different scientific fields to solve a problem or study a phenomenon, instead of being limited to the scope of a single scientific discipline.

Interdisciplinary approach (or research): This also involves using knowledge, methods, and perspectives from many different scientific disciplines to create new understandings or solve problems that a single scientific discipline cannot solve thoroughly and convincingly.

A cross-disciplinary approach (or research approach) involves interdisciplinary research that organizes and synthesizes knowledge to create a new form of knowledge aimed at providing solutions to increasingly complex global problems, starting with climate change and sustainability, and then expanding to many related fields such as science, technology, social issues and policy, education and arts, law, and other areas.

Thus, the three approaches—multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary—distinguish significantly in their level of integration and depth of knowledge connection. Multidisciplinary approaches are parallel, interdisciplinary approaches are comprehensive, while cross-disciplinary approaches transcend boundaries and are closely linked to practice. Clarifying their nature and differences not only helps students develop modern research thinking but also provides a crucial foundation for further clarifying how these approaches can be specifically applied to the field of law.

Concepts of Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Approaches in Law

How are multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in law understood?

According to Professor Vo Khanh Linh's definition:

Interdisciplinary approaches in law can be understood as connecting or linking, integrating, and unifying knowledge created by different approaches into a unified, systematic whole to form a new qualitative knowledge system about the state and law in general, about various fields and branches of law, and about specific issues in the field of law in particular.

Multidisciplinary approaches in law can be understood as deploying an approach that uses legal knowledge and knowledge from various other scientific disciplines to interpret the state and law in general, a corresponding scientific field, or a subject within the field of law. Knowledge from various scientific disciplines is used to clarify different aspects and dimensions of the state and law in general, and specific legal sciences and subjects in particular, which have not yet reached the level of forming a corresponding independent discipline.

The interdisciplinary approach in law is an approach that uses legal knowledge and knowledge from other scientific disciplines to "penetrate" multiple angles, unifying knowledge to create a deeper system of knowledge about the state and law. Each "penetration" has its own object and research method, contributing to the formation of new scientific fields or subjects, while closely connecting legal theory with social practice.

From the views of Professor Vo Khanh Linh, it can be seen that interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in law, although differing in degree of integration and depth, all aim towards a common and important goal. This involves creating a new legal knowledge corridor through multi-dimensional linkages between legal thought and other scientific disciplines, aiming to form a more unified and systematic whole.

Specifically, these three approaches all aim to answer, comment on, interpret, describe, and analyze legal issues from various perspectives. As a result, they contribute to creating new perspectives, deeper understandings of the state and law in general, and of specific areas and branches of law, as well as specific issues within the field of legal studies in particular.

Essentially, it is not wrong to say that the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach is the inevitable direction of development for legal research. Students' adoption of this mindset model necessitates a comprehensive restructuring, shifting from passive, dogmatic thinking in the process of acquiring knowledge and researching law to a proactive, innovative mindset within the academic environment and legal research process. This aims to contribute to the improvement of the legal system in the context of integration and digital transformation.

Content of the Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Approach to Legal Studies in Students

The Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Approach in Relationship and Interaction with the Law Field.

Over the past 40 years since the reform period (1986 to present), the process of lawmaking and legal education for students has undergone significant changes in both quantity and quality. Currently, with the rapid changes in practice and the development of science and technology, this is the practical basis for each student to innovate their thinking in law with the deeper goal of becoming individuals who can use law logically, clearly, and confidently, rather than simply producing people who understand the law.

With that assumption, lawyers Luong Van Chuong and Tran Quy An once shared with students on their path to studying law that, for Gen Z students who are nurturing the dream of becoming corporate lawyers, the speakers emphasized the importance of clearly defining their career direction from the moment they are in school. Students need to proactively cultivate in-depth legal knowledge about businesses, while also developing soft skills such as negotiation, communication, and strategic thinking. Especially when advising businesses, a lawyer not only "reads the law" but also must understand how the business operates, know how to put themselves in the client's position to provide solutions. The lawyers advised that students should seek internship opportunities at law firms and businesses to understand how things operate in practice, instead of just learning theory. Currently, the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary approach in interaction with the legal profession among students is still limited because, overall, the content of law training programs is still lacking. Currently in our country, most legal education is heavily positivist in nature, especially in undergraduate programs which do not yet address this. The prevailing trend is to develop training programs with independent content, integrating and unifying specialized, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary knowledge within law.

In other countries around the world, an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach to legal research and training has been established, implemented, and yielded positive and high-quality results. These are various approaches to law, such as: positivist legal approach, sociological legal approach, philosophical legal approach, rights-based approach, policy legal approach, comparative legal approach, psychological legal approach, economic legal approach, etc. Overall, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in legal research and teaching are a common and widespread practice worldwide. For example, at some Islamic universities in Brunei (Unissa), the development of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research is considered a strategic goal at the law school.

To enhance interaction within the legal field in the context of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking, each student can apply and approach the following two directions:

- First: combining legal knowledge with knowledge from many other disciplines to analyze a legal issue.

This method is not only feasible in law, but is also something that legal researchers frequently do, have done, and will continue to do. Because law is a social product, examining legal issues will always and necessarily require considering economic, political, and social factors. Therefore, legal issues in practice often do not exist as purely legal questions, but are linked to governance, finance, land, labor, technology, communication, data, and the relationships of interests between multiple entities. Thus, a law student cannot simply analyze legal issues according to the theoretical framework of the law, but must also apply critical thinking to identify the core issue, distinguish between primary and secondary factors, quantify risks, develop solutions, and choose the optimal solution in a specific context.

For example: The German Civil Code stipulates the obligation of anyone to compensate for

damage to another person's property (Article 832, paragraph 1 of the BGB). However, the scope of compensation (Articles 249 to 252 of the BGB) does not contain provisions for the case: Can a person sue for compensation for an object when that person did not use the object while it was being repaired? Therefore, the German Federal Supreme Court established a principle: because the usability of an object is lost, compensation must be paid if this usability is used for commercial purposes (kommerzialisiert), where the possessor considered the object as a tool for transaction. For example, compensation can be applied to a car during repair if the repairman uses it for commercial purposes without the owner's consent. However, this rule will not be applied to all cases.

The Value of Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Thinking Approaches in Law for Students

How valuable are interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking approaches for students? Does multidisciplinary thinking in law truly broaden perspectives or merely connect disparate pieces of knowledge? Can interdisciplinary thinking generate novel and more profound legal solutions compared to traditional approaches? And how does transdisciplinary thinking require students to adapt to effectively connect legal theory with social practice?

The value of this approach lies in helping students apply knowledge from various legal fields to analyze and integrate them, creating new solutions and legal frameworks for a research topic. Furthermore, this approach helps students find solutions to problems from multiple perspectives. For example, a legal study on greenhouse gas emission reduction might use knowledge from environmental law to assess pollution levels, combined with economic law to analyze the cost- benefit of pollution reduction measures.

The differentiation of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in law studies for students has created more insightful knowledge about law, forming greater diversity in topics and research directions in law. To analyze the value of this approach, students should analyze it at two levels:

First: the value of combining multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge in law studies

The combination of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge in law studies brings core value in the ability to solve complex legal problems more comprehensively and convincingly than the traditional single-discipline approach. As mentioned, a multidisciplinary approach allows scientific disciplines to work in parallel, complementing knowledge without deep integration, while interdisciplinary approaches promote the blending of methodologies and theories to generate new insights.

For law students, this combination helps overcome the limitations of "narrow" thinking that focuses solely on pure legal norms, thereby enhancing their ability to analyze from multiple perspectives when faced with practical issues such as human rights, the environment, or the digital economy. Students not only systematize knowledge from constitutional, administrative, criminal, or civil law disciplines but also learn how to "connect" them with sociology, psychology, or economics, creating a solid foundation for building more feasible legal arguments and solutions. From a training and evaluation perspective, the presentation "Interdisciplinary Thinking in Training and Evaluating

Doctoral Students in Law in Vietnam" by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phan Trung Hien, Head of the Faculty of Law - Can Tho University, and Dr. Nguyen Phan Khoi, Head of the Department of Economic Law, Faculty of Law - Can Tho University, argues that promoting interdisciplinary thinking will help overcome the limitations of a single-discipline approach, thereby improving the quality of legal research. Along with that, the trend of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches is identified as the inevitable direction of development for legal research. Therefore, combining multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches will help students systematize knowledge from various legal disciplines to improve the quality of new scientific research in the academic environment.

For example, on an international level, many prestigious law schools have successfully adopted this model. At Harvard Law School (USA), the interdisciplinary program combines law with economics, history, cognitive science, and philosophy through research centers such as the Project on the Foundations of Private Law or the Law and Government program, allowing students to participate in multidisciplinary workshops on public policy and health. This helps students address complex legal issues such as racial inequality or environmental regulation by integrating economic data with legal analysis.

Similarly, Yale Law School (USA) promotes interdisciplinary research through journals such as the Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities and the Yale Journal of Health Policy, Law, and Ethics, where students combine law with the humanities, health policy, and bioethics. These examples demonstrate that interdisciplinary collaboration not only enhances research quality but also equips students with practical skills, enabling them to compete globally in an increasingly complex legal environment.

Secondly: the value of combining interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge in law.

The combination of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge elevates the value of law to a higher level, especially when addressing "wicked problems" such as corruption, organized crime, or terrorism – issues where traditional single-discipline thinking is completely ineffective. Interdisciplinary collaboration integrates knowledge and methods between disciplines, while transdisciplinary collaboration goes even further by completely breaking down boundaries, creating new theoretical frameworks and linking with non-academic stakeholders (such as government, community, and businesses). This provides a solid theoretical foundation.

Applying interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking approaches in the process of learning law for students.

Applying interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking in the process of acquiring legal knowledge for students.

The application of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking in the process of acquiring legal knowledge brings core value by transforming the learning method from passive and linear to active, inductive, and comprehensive. As indicated, the ideal law student should not only memorize legal norms but also understand their theoretical basis, historical and social context, scope of application, and practical impact. Legal theory does not provide specific "right or wrong" answers like a geometry problem, but plays the role of "guiding light" to orient the thinking of practitioners. Multidisciplinary thinking (disciplines working in parallel and complementing each other) helps students

gather multiple perspectives; interdisciplinary thinking (deep integration of methods and theories) creates new understanding; Furthermore, interdisciplinary approaches (breaking down boundaries, connecting with non-academic practices) build a "comprehensive matrix" to thoroughly address legal issues.

Students should apply an "interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary" mindset in their learning process as follows:

Actively build a "knowledge matrix" by reading interdisciplinary materials (e.g., articles on "law and economics," "law and society," or "law and psychology"), and participate in elective courses like "Law and X" (such as Law and Philosophy, Behavioral Law and Economics) instead of just studying traditional core subjects.

Apply this in case study analysis or research by asking multi-faceted questions: not only "what does the law stipulate?" but also "how does human psychology affect it?", "how does the social context change?", "how does data science support the evidence?".

Interdisciplinary practice involves collaborative group projects with students from other disciplines (economics, sociology, technology) or participation in workshops and field research linking law to real life (such as environmental policy impact assessment).

Utilizing supporting tools such as interdisciplinary mind maps or data analysis software to visualize the interaction between fields, thereby transforming passive knowledge into active thinking, oriented towards solving practical problems.

For example: When researching human rights, students can use knowledge from sociology, psychology, and law to better understand the multifaceted nature of human rights and effective ways to protect and ensure them. In addition, students can also use the theories and methods characteristic of constitutional, administrative, criminal, and civil law to better understand the role of law, as well as the ways in which law can recognize and protect human rights (following an interdisciplinary approach adopted by many modern law education programs, such as those in American and European law schools).

Or in the field of environmental law: students apply interdisciplinary thinking by combining knowledge of ecology (from natural sciences), economics (cost-benefit analysis), and law (international regulations such as the Paris Agreement) to analyze a case of river pollution. Instead of simply citing legal provisions, students will consider the scientific context (ecological impacts), economic factors (harm to the community), and sociological factors (impacts on the rights of vulnerable groups), thereby proposing more comprehensive policy solutions – this is the interdisciplinary approach encouraged in sustainable legal education reform.

Applying Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Thinking in Case-Solving Practice for Law Students

Currently, during their law studies, students still have limited exposure to real-world situations. This leads to many students, despite mastering theory, feeling confused, lacking confidence, and struggling to provide appropriate solutions when faced with complex

cases. To overcome this limitation, applying "interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary" thinking in case-solving practice serves as a springboard to help law students enhance their problem-solving abilities comprehensively and creatively.

According to Dr. Nguyen Vinh Huy, Vice President of the Ho Chi Minh City Business Association and President of the Central Business Association of Ho Chi Minh City, it is necessary to create more opportunities for law students to gain practical experience in the profession. "Current legal education serves not only the legal profession but also many other areas of society. Graduates work in diverse fields, not just as lawyers. Therefore, when evaluating training, it is necessary to look at the actual needs and the capacity of learners to meet those needs." The application of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking in the process of resolving cases requires law students to shift from a purely legal approach to a more comprehensive, creative, and practical analytical process, carried out throughout the stages from evidence gathering, problem identification, argumentation, to litigation and decision-making. Specifically:

Multidisciplinary thinking is applied right from the initial approach by simultaneously mobilizing independent fields of knowledge to enrich the perspective: when resolving a commercial contract dispute, students do not stop at the Civil Code but also analyze macroeconomic impacts from an economic perspective (cost-benefit analysis, inflation, market volatility), assess the psychological behavior of the parties through psychology (negotiation behavior, cognitive bias), consider sociological factors regarding power inequality between large and small businesses, or use technological data to verify the authenticity of electronic evidence (email, electronic contracts, blockchain); this helps to uncover aspects that pure law might miss, such as the underlying causes of the breach not only being "contractual failure" but also socio-economic factors.

Next, interdisciplinary thinking is applied in the in-depth analysis phase by integrating the above elements into a unified analytical framework. For example, combining game theory from economics with the principle of good faith in civil law to build negotiation or litigation strategies, or using environmental science models (ecological impact assessment, pollution data) to demonstrate the actual extent of damage in environmental cases, thereby creating legal arguments that are both logical and more persuasive in court.

Finally, interdisciplinary thinking is strongly implemented in the practice and decision-making phase by going beyond the boundaries of the academic environment, inviting practical collaboration with practicing lawyers, judges, businesses, technology experts, or even affected communities, while applying digital tools such as AI software to support evidence analysis or virtual court simulation platforms in mock trials; For example, in a mock labor court trial, students can collaborate with businesses to collect real-world data (financial reports, employee surveys) and use AI to predict trial trends, helping to more accurately simulate real-world litigation processes and better understand the social and economic factors behind disputes.

The systematic application of these three mindsets not only helps students bridge the gap between theory and practice but also hones their ability to quickly adapt to complex, multifaceted cases in modern society, thereby forming well-rounded lawyers with sharp critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills in an increasingly dynamic legal

environment.

For example: In a dispute over a contract for the sale of an apartment (such as Judgment No. 11/2023/DS-PT dated January 4, 2023, of the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City), if students only apply pure law, they might stop at declaring the contract invalid and calculating compensation. However, with an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, students will analyze further: from an economic perspective (the actual market value of the apartment at the time of signing and at the time of the dispute), a psychological perspective (the seller's behavior when they know they are not eligible to conduct business), and a sociological perspective (the impact on vulnerable individual buyers). By combining interdisciplinary approaches, students can invite real estate valuation experts or use market data from technology platforms to demonstrate actual damages, leading to more persuasive arguments and comprehensive solutions (not only compensation but also proposing similar preventative mechanisms for other projects).

Alternatively, in a labor dispute case involving non-competitive practices after termination of employment, students can apply interdisciplinary thinking by combining labor law with economics (analyzing the impact of market competition).

Conclusion

In today's rapidly changing social and technological landscape, innovating legal research thinking from an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary perspective is the most crucial transformation every law student needs to undertake. No longer content with rote memorization of legal norms or traditional case analysis, today's students must become proactive learners, connecting knowledge from multiple fields to create a comprehensive perspective and innovative solutions.

By applying this mindset to knowledge acquisition, students will gain a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations, socio-economic-technological context, and practical impact of legal regulations, rather than focusing only on the surface. When applying this thinking to case resolution, students will be able to conduct multi-dimensional analysis from the evidence gathering stage to argumentation and litigation, combining economics, psychology, technology, and other disciplines to create sharper, more persuasive arguments and more practical solutions [1-13].

References

1. Vo Khanh Linh (editor), *Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in legal research and training in Vietnam today*, Publishing House of the Institute of Legal Sciences - Ministry of Justice, Hanoi, 2018
2. Vo Khanh Vinh (editor), *Continuing to innovate legal thinking to serve the cause of national development*, Publishing House of Social Sciences, Hanoi, 2020.
3. Vo Khanh Vinh (editor), *Textbook on general theory of state and law*, Publishing House of the People's Police, Hanoi, 2016.
4. Dieu Anh (compiled) (2025); 5. Ho Chi Minh City University of Law (2024); Ho Chi Minh City University of Law promotes interdisciplinary research in the field of law, Ho Chi Minh City University of Law website.
5. Thai Hai (n.d.); *Innovating the thinking on legal research and training in Vietnam today*, Thanh Tra Magazine.

6. Nguyen Quyen - Song Mai (2025); Legal training: Specialized or multidisciplinary, as long as the quality is good, Ho Chi Minh City Law Newspaper.
7. Academy of Social Sciences (2021); Scientific Seminar No. 06: Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in legal research and training, Gass.edu.vn .
8. Vietnamese Lawyers (2024); Research on sustainable development: Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in law, Vietnamese Lawyers.
9. Vietnamese Lawyers (2025); Developing legal human resources: From professional mindset to problem-solving skills, Vietnamese Lawyers.
10. Cong Ly (2025); Master of Law training in the digital age: From innovative thinking to shaping academic standards, Cong Ly Newspaper.
11. Max Planck Law (n.d.); Turning the page endlessly: Interdisciplinarity in
12. Harvard Law School (n.d.); Research Programs and Centers, Harvard Law School.
13. Temple University (n.d.); Defining Legal Epidemiology, Public Health Law Research (PHLR).