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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' VIEWS ON CONTENT INTEGRATION AND THEIR SELF-REPORTED READINESS AND WILLINGNESS TO IMPLEMENT IT: ASSOCIATIONS, PREDICTORS AND TEACHER PROFILES

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Abstract

Content integration across subject boundaries is increasingly emphasised in curriculum reforms, yet its implementation may be shaped by how teachers understand its benefits and challenges and by their readiness and willingness to implement it. This study examined primary school teachers' views on content integration and their self-reported readiness and willingness to implement it in the context of the ongoing curriculum reform in Slovakia. Specifically, it examined the relationship between the cognitive and conative dimensions of teachers' views and sought to identify distinct teacher profiles based on these dimensions. A quantitative research design was employed using questionnaire data from 849 primary school teachers. Exploratory factor analysis identified three components of the cognitive dimension: perceived pedagogical benefits, organisational barriers, and socio-personal benefits. Correlation and regression analyses revealed a strong positive association between the cognitive and conative dimensions ($r = .704$, $p < .001$), with the cognitive dimension accounting for 49.5% of the variance in self-reported readiness and willingness to implement content integration. The three cognitive components jointly accounted for 52.5% of the variance, with perceived pedagogical benefits emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by lower perceived organisational barriers. Cluster analysis based on 813 complete cases identified four exploratory profiles within the sample: Enthusiastic Innovators (40.2%), Pragmatic Supporters (19.7%), Resistant Sceptics (8.2%), and Positive but Cautious Supporters (31.9%). The findings suggest substantial heterogeneity among the participating teachers and point to the potential value of tailoring professional support to teachers' views, perceived barriers, and readiness to implement content integration.

Keywords: *content integration, curriculum reform, primary education, primary school teachers, self-reported teacher readiness.*

Introduction

The quality of education is widely discussed in education and is a central objective of education policy in most developed countries. The educational attainment of the population is regarded as a key factor in economic growth and is strongly associated with the stability of democratic systems (Helus, 2008). Previous research has identified content integration as an important approach to enhancing the quality of the educational process (Aka et al., 2025;

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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Avdiu & Gollopeni, 2026; Drake & Reid, 2018), as it enables learning to move beyond the isolated treatment of individual subject areas and facilitates the development of meaningful and functionally relevant connections between them. Previous studies have identified teachers' professional competence as one of the key prerequisites for the successful implementation of content integration, particularly their ability to understand the principles of integration, identify relevant connections across educational content, and translate these connections into pedagogically meaningful classroom practice (Fogarty, 1991; Fu & Sibert, 2017; Yeung & Lam, 2007).

Successful content integration therefore requires a high level of subject-matter expertise, together with well-developed professional and pedagogical competencies. Teachers need not only sufficiently in-depth knowledge within their own subject area but also an understanding of the structure of, and interconnections between, relevant content across other subject areas. It is precisely the ability to perceive educational content within a broader context that enables teachers to establish interdisciplinary connections that foster a more comprehensive understanding of subject matter and its application in authentic contexts.

As Karbowniczek (2021) has emphasised, meaningful content integration requires coherent connections between areas of knowledge rather than a mechanical combination of content from different subjects. Fogarty (1991) has emphasised the need to identify natural overlaps across educational content and to connect related concepts, themes, and skills across disciplines. Yeung and Lam (2007) have suggested that teachers play a significant role in this process, as the way in which they understand and conceptualise content integration may influence its subsequent implementation. Research has also indicated a relationship between teachers' perspectives and the ways in which content integration is implemented in practice (Lam et al., 2013), while implementation is further influenced by teachers' knowledge and skills and by the conditions available for planning and implementing content integration (Fu & Sibert, 2017). Insufficient professional preparation, by contrast, may result in superficial or merely formal connections between content areas. Meaningful content integration should aim to establish connections across content areas that support learning in context and enable students to develop more comprehensive knowledge and competencies (Drake & Reid, 2018; Gresnigt et al., 2014). For example, Portaankorva-Koivisto and Havinga (2019) have shown that meaningful integration between mathematics and visual arts can be built around concepts shared by both disciplines or around common processes of knowledge construction, while preserving the distinctive nature of each subject. The quality of content integration thus depends on the nature and curricular organisation of educational content, teachers' interpretation of it, and their readiness to establish meaningful connections across subjects.

Literature Review

The discussion of content integration reflects a long-standing tension between subject-based curricula and efforts to create conditions for connecting knowledge, learning in context, and developing more complex student competencies. Content integration does not, however, represent a single approach to curriculum organisation. Fogarty (1991) has conceptualised it as a continuum of ten models, ranging from traditionally fragmented arrangements and connections within individual disciplines, through various forms of integration across disciplines, to models in which learners themselves integrate knowledge. More recent analyses drawing on Fogarty's framework have similarly emphasised that these models represent different approaches to curriculum integration, each offering distinct possibilities while also presenting specific challenges for implementation (Elpalina et al., 2024). To address the demands of 21st-century education, Drake and Reid (2018) have presented the integrated curriculum as one approach to connecting educational content. They have emphasised its potential to support complex

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competencies by connecting knowledge, skills, and attitudes through coherent curriculum planning. The empirical evidence for the benefits of content integration is, however, more complex. In their review of integrated curricula in primary education, Gresnigt et al. (2014) have identified several favourable outcomes in terms of students' knowledge, skills, and motivation, while also highlighting differences between forms of content integration and the importance of implementation conditions. Kreijkes and Greatorex (2024) have reached an even more cautious conclusion in their review of reviews. The available research has predominantly reported either positive effects of integrated approaches or no differences compared with subject-based curricula, while negative effects have only rarely been observed. However, given the methodological limitations of the existing evidence, the evidence does not establish that integrated curricula are superior to subject-based approaches. Recent developments in the Czech Republic also reflect growing efforts to evaluate content-integrated approaches within an evidence-based framework. Following the publication of a protocol for a systematic review of Integrated Thematic Instruction (Barancová et al., 2024), a subsequent national evidence-based recommendation has indicated that the available findings are predominantly favourable, while emphasising that the overall certainty of the evidence remains low and that further methodologically robust research is needed (Národní institut kvality a excelence zdravotnictví [NIKEZ], 2026). More recent findings nevertheless provide support for the potential of content integration in specific areas. The meta-analysis by Aka et al. (2025) has demonstrated positive effects on students' critical thinking and creativity across studies of approaches classified by the authors as integrated teaching. Thus, the current evidence does not support a simple assumption that content integration is superior to subject-based approaches, but it does suggest its potential to foster selected cognitive and broader competencies without compelling evidence of systematically negative effects on students' educational outcomes.

A closer examination of the identified benefits suggests that content integration may contribute to several areas of student development. In studies integrating science education with reading and language literacy, Gresnigt et al. (2014) have reported favourable outcomes in knowledge and vocabulary acquisition, science knowledge, and inquiry skills. Some studies have also indicated increased student motivation to read and greater enthusiasm for learning. Similarly, Alptekin et al. (2007) have found that primary school students taught through a theme-based syllabus integrating language learning with curricular content have outperformed those following a predominantly grammar-based syllabus in listening, reading, and writing skills. Siew and Ambo (2018), in a quasi-experimental study integrating project-based learning with STEM education among fifth-grade students, have reported improvements in scientific creativity.

Findings concerning motivational and affective benefits are less conclusive. In an experimental comparison of thematic and subject-based curriculum delivery, Putwain et al. (2011) have found no compelling evidence that the thematic approach enhances student motivation. Similarly, the broader synthesis by Kreijkes and Greatorex (2024) has shown that positive outcomes associated with content integration have predominantly been related to achievement measures, whereas the evidence for motivational and affective benefits has been considerably weaker.

Teachers play a crucial role in translating curricular intentions into pedagogical practice. The implementation of content integration is associated with how teachers conceptualise it, the knowledge and skills they possess, and the benefits and barriers they perceive (Fu & Sibert, 2017; Lam et al., 2013; Yeung & Lam, 2007). The conditions under which implementation takes place are also important. Fu and Sibert (2017) have identified planning time and compatible schedules for collaboration with colleagues as significant predictors of the frequency with which content integration is used, while Lam et al. (2013) have highlighted both limitations in teachers' subject knowledge and a lack of alignment between the integrated curriculum and

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

the assessment system. Similarly, Chumdari et al. (2018) have found that although thematic teaching has been successfully implemented in primary schools, its implementation has been constrained by demands on teachers' skills and preparation, insufficient training, and inadequate support facilities. When content integration conflicts with other systemic demands, teachers may adopt different implementation strategies (Xu & Lu, 2022). From this perspective, teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs are important for understanding how curricular requirements for content integration are translated into pedagogical practice (Shriner et al., 2010).

A positive perception of content integration cannot therefore be automatically equated with teachers' readiness to implement it in practice. Even teachers who recognise its pedagogical potential may encounter practical difficulties when planning and delivering integrated teaching. Retnawati et al. (2017) have identified challenges related to selecting appropriate themes, time management, conditions for delivering instruction, and student assessment. Taken together, these findings suggest that teachers' views on the pedagogical value and practical feasibility of integration are related but distinct aspects of their decision-making. This raises a key question: if teachers perceive content integration as pedagogically beneficial while also perceiving fewer barriers to its implementation, is this associated with greater readiness and willingness to implement it in their own teaching?

These issues are particularly relevant in countries where content integration is becoming a more explicit component of curricular requirements. National curriculum reforms introducing thematic and integrated approaches have also been documented in other contexts, including primary education in Trinidad and Tobago (John, 2015). Slovakia provides one such example, as its reformed curriculum for primary education creates opportunities, particularly in the first and second cycles, to connect educational content (Rochovská & Brozmanová, 2025).

Content integration is not a new phenomenon in the educational practice of Slovak teachers. As early as the 1980s, emphasis was placed on establishing cross-curricular links, although educational content remained strictly divided into school subjects corresponding to individual academic disciplines. During the 1990s, Slovak teachers became familiar with content integration primarily as an alternative to traditional education. They were introduced to the concept of Integrated Thematic Instruction (Kovalik & Olsen, 1993) and received training in designing year-long themes and developing a content-integrated curriculum that remained consistent with the prescribed curriculum. However, these alternative elements did not enter the national curriculum documents at that time. The national curriculum reform introduced in 2008 subsequently sought to implement changes consistent with learner-centred teaching. One of its new features was a two-level curriculum model comprising a prescribed national curriculum and a school curriculum developed by teachers and tailored to the needs of the individual school. Educational content was organised into curriculum areas and cross-cutting themes, which provided greater support for content integration than the previous arrangement. However, the reform was implemented within a relatively short period and without adequate conditions or support for teachers. This contributed to its negative reception among teachers (Porubský et al., 2015). A further national curriculum reform was launched in 2023. The new curriculum emphasises learner-centred teaching, inclusive education, digitalisation, and a content-integrated curriculum. Although educational content continues to be organised into curriculum areas, the document explicitly supports content integration, particularly through teaching in integrated blocks and projects. The curriculum changes were introduced gradually. In the 2023/2024 school year, 40 schools began teaching according to the new curriculum, and revisions were made on the basis of this pilot implementation. A further 400 schools joined the piloting of the new curriculum in the 2024/2025 school year. In the 2026/2027 school year, implementation of the reform became compulsory in primary schools. From September 2026, all primary schools in Slovakia began teaching Grade 1 according to the reformed curriculum. At the same time, the broader principles of the reform, particularly the use of innovative teaching

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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

methods and changes in the roles of teachers and students, are gradually being introduced into teaching across all grades.

The implementation of content integration within the reformed curriculum places greater demands on teachers' understanding of the principles of content integration and their readiness to apply them systematically in their teaching. The ongoing curriculum reform in Slovakia therefore provides a relevant empirical context for examining the relationship between teachers' perceptions and evaluations of content integration and their self-reported readiness to implement it.

Research Issue and Research Questions

The research problem arises from the requirement of Slovakia's reformed curriculum to integrate educational content, raising questions about whether primary school teachers have been systematically prepared to implement content integration, how they perceive it, and what views they hold regarding it. The requirement to connect educational content does not in itself necessarily lead to improved educational quality; rather, the quality of the processes through which teachers select, connect, pedagogically adapt, and present this content to students is crucial. Effective integration therefore requires not only curricular conditions that enable connections across content areas but also adequate subject-matter and pedagogical preparation among teachers. In this respect, teachers' professional competencies can be regarded as a key mediator between the potential of content integration and the actual quality of education provided.

The main aim of the study was to examine primary school teachers' views on content integration and their self-reported readiness and willingness to implement it. The specific objectives were to determine whether the cognitive dimension of teachers' views predicted their conative dimension and to identify distinct teacher profiles based on these two dimensions.

The following research questions were formulated:

1. What are primary school teachers' views on content integration, and what benefits and barriers do they identify? (cognitive dimension)
2. To what extent do primary school teachers report readiness and willingness to implement content integration in their teaching? (conative dimension)
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between primary school teachers' views of content integration (cognitive dimension) and their self-reported readiness and willingness to implement it in their teaching (conative dimension)?
4. What teacher profiles can be identified based on the cognitive and conative dimensions of content integration?

Research Methodology

General Background

The study forms part of a national research project conducted in Slovakia between 2024 and 2026, entitled *Research on Teachers' Potential and Analysis of Curriculum Documents from the Perspective of Content Integration in Primary Education*. The project responds to the ongoing national curriculum reform, which places increased emphasis on integrating educational content across learning areas, particularly in primary education. Its main aim is to examine the conditions and potential for implementing content integration from both curricular and teacher-related perspectives. The study employs several complementary methods, including a review of previous research, qualitative content analysis of national curriculum documents, a large-scale questionnaire-based survey of primary school teachers, and semi-structured interviews

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

with teachers. Particular attention is paid to teachers' understanding of and views on content integration, their readiness and experience in implementing it, and the potential of the reformed curriculum to facilitate meaningful connections across learning areas. The present study reports findings from the quantitative component of this broader national research project.

Sample

The sample consisted of 849 teachers working in primary education (Grades 1–4 of primary school) in Slovakia. This exceeded the minimum benchmark of 385 respondents calculated for a large population of unknown size, using a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and an assumed response distribution of 50%. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. To enhance the geographical coverage of the sample, teachers from all eight regions of Slovakia were included, and the regional proportions in the sample approximately matched the available figures for the regional distribution of teachers.

At the same time, attention was paid to ensuring heterogeneity within the research sample in terms of selected sociodemographic and professional characteristics. Data collection also took into account the marked predominance of women characteristic of the primary teaching profession in Slovakia, while male teachers were also represented in the sample. The sample included teachers of different ages and with varying lengths of teaching experience.

Efforts were also made to include teachers working in different types of primary schools and under varying organisational conditions. Consistent with the structure of primary education in Slovakia, the majority of the sample comprised teachers from state primary schools, while teachers from church and private schools were also represented. The research sample consisted of primary school teachers working in both fully organised and partially organised primary schools. The sample also included teachers working in different year groups within primary education. Participating teachers worked at schools that had begun implementing the reformed curriculum at different stages: in 2023, 2024, 2025, or 2026. The characteristics of the research sample are set out in more detail in Table 1.

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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Distribution of Respondents by Gender						***n***	**%**
Female						815	96
Male						27	3.2
No response						7	0.8
Distribution of Respondents by Region						***n***	**%**
Bratislava Region						99	11.7
Trnava Region						100	11.8
Trenčín Region						83	9.8
Nitra Region						99	11.7
Žilina Region						117	13.8
Banská Bystrica Region						98	11.5
Prešov Region						139	16.4
Košice Region						112	13.2
No response						2	0.2
School and Teaching Characteristics of the Sample	**Category**					***n***	**%**
School type	State primary school					743	87.5
	Private primary school					38	4.5
	Church-affiliated primary school					64	7.5
	Other					4	0.5
School organisation	Fully organised primary school					726	85.5
	Partially organised primary school					117	13.8
	No response					6	0.7
Grade taught	Grade 1					204	24
	Grade 2					197	23.2
	Grade 3					159	18.7
	Grade 4					193	22.7
	Other					85	10
	No response					11	1.3
Stage of curriculum reform implementation at the respondent's school	Yes, since the 2023/2024 school year					80	9.4
	Yes, since the 2024/2025 school year					272	32
	Yes, since the 2025/2026 school year					183	21.6
	No					307	36.2
	Other					3	0.4
	No response					4	0.5
Age and Teaching Experience	***n***	***M***	***SD***	***Mdn***		**min**	**max**
Age	826	48.65	8.87	50		20	75
Teaching experience (years)	831	23.65	10.63	25		0	46

Note. Fully organised primary schools provide all primary grades, whereas partially organised primary schools provide only a subset of primary grades.

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Instruments and Procedures

The research instrument was a questionnaire developed by the authors. The questionnaire was based on a conceptual framework developed through a review of the theoretical foundations of content integration, relevant previous research, and interviews with primary school teachers. In total, the questionnaire comprised 16 items addressing content integration, together with sociodemographic items. The questionnaire comprised four single-choice items, six multiple-response items, three open-ended items, one rating-scale item assessing perceived importance, and two sets of 17 statements in total (Tables 2, 3, 4, 6). For each statement, respondents indicated their level of agreement on a four-point Likert-type scale; a separate 'I do not know' response option was also provided. The questionnaire was pilot-tested, and the results of the pilot study were published previously (Rochovská & Brozmanová, 2025). Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the use of the collected data and provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. To address the research questions formulated in the present study, responses to the two sets of items comprising the 17 Likert-scale statements were analysed.

The first step involved constructing scales from the questionnaire items. Based on the theoretical framework, 11 items were identified as representing the cognitive dimension of teachers' views on content integration. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of these items. The EFA indicated a three-factor structure reflecting pedagogical benefits of content integration (Table 2), organisational barriers (Table 3), and socio-personal benefits (Table 4). Items comprising the *Organisational Barriers* factor were reverse-scored when computing the factor and overall *Cognitive Dimension* scores, so that higher scores consistently reflected more favourable perceptions of content integration across all three factors. Thus, a higher *Organisational Barriers* score indicates lower perceived barriers. The internal consistency of all three factors was satisfactory (Factor 1: Cronbach's α = .845, McDonald's ω = .852; Factor 2: Cronbach's α = .760, McDonald's ω = .765; Factor 3: Cronbach's α = .765, McDonald's ω = .779). The factors were moderately to strongly intercorrelated (r = .39–.60), indicating that they represent related aspects of a broader construct. The overall scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .854; McDonald's ω = .869). Therefore, both the three factor scores and the overall score representing the cognitive dimension of perceptions of content integration were used in subsequent analyses.

Table 2
Pedagogical Benefits of Content Integration

Factor 1	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.
1. Content integration enables students to acquire more comprehensive knowledge.	3.45	0.753			
2. When educational content is integrated, students' higher-order cognitive processes are developed more effectively than in traditional subject-based teaching.	3.27	0.883	.712**		
3. Connecting content across multiple subjects enables students to develop critical thinking skills.	3.33	0.89	.614**	.659**	
9. Content-integrated teaching is more engaging and interesting for students than traditional subject-based teaching.	3.26	0.896	.509**	.537**	.463**

Note. ** $p < .001$

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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Table 3
Organisational Barriers to Content Integration

Factor 2	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.
4. When content from two or more subjects is integrated, students' achievement in the individual subjects decreases.	2.75	1.31			
6. Teaching that integrates content from two or more subjects requires an unmanageable amount of preparation from the teacher.	2.58	1.17	.381**		
10. When integrating educational content, teachers lose track of the content covered in the individual subjects.	2.87	1.16	.450**	.431**	
11. Content integration does not provide an adequate basis for assessing students in the individual subjects.	2.68	1.2	.371**	.446**	.572**

Note. ** $p < .001$

Items were reverse-scored for the computation of the factor score; higher factor scores therefore indicate lower perceived organisational barriers.

Table 4
Socio-personal Benefits of Content Integration

Factor 3	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.
5. Content integration enables students to reflect on how they learn.	2.65	1.22		
7. When content from two or more subjects is integrated, relationships within the classroom improve.	2.37	1.41	.456**	
8. When content from two or more subjects is integrated, students' social skills improve.	2.87	1.14	.452**	.663**

Note. ** $p < .001$

Parallel analysis indicated a three-factor solution. To further evaluate the factor structure, one-, two-, and three-factor solutions were subsequently tested and compared (Table 5). The three-factor solution showed the best fit to the data (RMSEA = .039, TLI = .982) and provided a theoretically meaningful and interpretable factor structure. Therefore, the three-factor solution was selected for further analyses.

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Table 5
Exploratory Factor Analysis (Factor Loadings, Communality, Eigenvalues)

Items	F1	F2	F3	h^2
1. Content integration enables students to acquire more comprehensive knowledge.	.827			.675
2. When educational content is integrated, students' higher-order cognitive processes are developed more effectively than in traditional subject-based teaching.	.883			.774
3. Connecting content across multiple subjects enables students to develop critical thinking skills.	.708			.580
4. When content from two or more subjects is integrated, students' achievement in the individual subjects decreases.		.514		.337
5. Content integration enables students to reflect on how they learn.			.383	.361
6. Teaching that integrates content from two or more subjects requires an unmanageable amount of preparation from the teacher.		.597		.387
7. When content from two or more subjects is integrated, relationships within the classroom improve.			.856	.684
8. When content from two or more subjects is integrated, students' social skills improve.			.736	.678
9. Content-integrated teaching is more engaging and interesting for students than traditional subject-based teaching.	.431			.419
10. When integrating educational content, teachers lose track of the content covered in the individual subjects.		.772		.598
11. Content integration does not provide an adequate basis for assessing students in the individual subjects.		.773		.516
Initial eigenvalues	4.199	0.820	0.399	
SS loadings	2.46	1.84	1.71	
Variance explained (%)	22.4	16.7	15.5	
Cumulative variance (%)	22.4	39.1	54.6	

Note: F1 = Factor 1: Pedagogical Benefits of Content Integration; F2 = Factor 2: Organisational Barriers of Content Integration; F3 = Factor 3: Socio-personal Benefits of Content Integration; h^2 = communality

Then seven items were theoretically categorised into the conative dimension (Table 6). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of this scale revealed that one item (*"Integration of educational content in teaching would prevent me from covering the curriculum..."*) did not exhibit a sufficient factor loading and was not part of the shared latent factor. Following its exclusion, the remaining six items formed a two-factor solution based on model fit indicators. However, for the purpose of subsequent analyses, a single overall score was used, despite the weaker fit indices (*TLI*, *RMSEA*). The overall scale demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .705$; McDonald's $\omega = .716$), and the items were significantly intercorrelated.

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Table 6
Conative Dimension

Items	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. I consider connecting themes across different subjects in primary education to be	3.17	0.818					
2. Although preparation for content-integrated teaching is more demanding, I am willing to prepare for teaching in this way.	2.94	0.853	.351**				
3. When integrating educational content, I would not be able to assess a student objectively on the content covered.	2.76	1.16	.315**	.259**			
4. I would like to participate in professional development activities (seminars, workshops, etc.) to learn more about content integration.	3.04	1.06	.223**	.271**	.089*		
5. Content integration would take away time that I could otherwise devote to helping students acquire more knowledge in individual subjects.	2.76	1.15	.336**	.372**	.492**	.159**	
6. I would like to learn how to plan teaching more effectively by integrating content from multiple learning areas.	3.14	0.924	.308**	.307**	.126**	.586**	.223**

Note. ** $p < .001$

Data Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation was conducted to examine the factor structure of the scales. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega. Linear regression analysis was performed to examine the extent to which the cognitive dimension and its three components predicted the conative dimension. K-means clustering was used to identify distinct teacher profiles based on the cognitive components and the conative dimension, and the gap statistic was applied to determine the optimal number of clusters. Cluster analysis was conducted using complete-case analysis. Only respondents with complete data for all variables included in the cluster analysis were retained. Consequently, 36 respondents with incomplete responses to multiple questionnaire items were excluded, and the analysis was based on 813 complete cases (95.8% of the total sample). Statistical analyses were conducted using Jamovi, version 2.3.24.

Research Results

First, the results of the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among all variables are presented in Table 7. All relationships were positive and statistically significant ($p < .001$).

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Factor 1 – Pedagogical Benefits	13.32	2.84				
2. Factor 2 – Organisational Barriers	10.89	3.68	.457**			
3. Factor 3 - Socio-personal Benefits	7.89	3.11	.616**	.378**		
4. Cognitive Dimension	32.11	7.79	.829**	.791**	.806**	
5. Conative Dimension	17.81	3.83	.650**	.572**	.481**	.704**

Note. Items comprising the Organisational Barriers factor were reverse-scored; higher scores indicate lower perceived organisational barriers.
**$p < .001$.

Next, a linear regression analysis was conducted. The dependent variable was the *Conative Dimension*. The cognitive component was examined in two separate models (Model 1 and Model 2 in Table 8).

In the first step (Model 1), the impact of the *Cognitive Dimension* was evaluated as a single predictor. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 811) = 796.49$, $p < .001$, accounting for 49.5% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .495$). The *Cognitive Dimension* emerged as a significant positive predictor of the *Conative Dimension* ($B = .35$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .70$). Within the present sample, teachers with more positive perceptions of content integration reported greater readiness and willingness to implement it in practice.

In the second step (Model 2), the predictors were three factors: *Pedagogical Benefits, Organisational Barriers*, and *Socio-personal Benefits*. This model was also statistically significant, $F(3, 809) = 298.37$, $p < .001$, with the proportion explaining 52.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .525$). The factor *Pedagogical Benefits* emerged as the strongest unique predictor of the conative dimension ($\beta = .45$, $t = 13.77$, $p < .001$). Among the teachers in the present sample, those who more strongly recognised the benefits of content integration for students and teaching quality reported the greatest willingness to implement it in their teaching. The second strongest predictor was the *Organisational Barriers* factor ($\beta = .34$, $t = 12.47$, $p < .001$), indicating that, within the present sample, lower perceived organisational barriers were associated with greater self-reported readiness to implement content integration. The weakest association, which was nevertheless statistically significant, with the conative dimension was found for the *Socio-personal Benefits* factor ($\beta = .08$, $t = 2.55$, $p < .001$).

Table 8
Linear Regression (Conative Dimension – Dependent Variable)

Predictor	***B***	***SE***	**β**
Model 1			
(Constant)	6.700	.406	
Cognitive Dimension	.347	.012	.704
Model 2			
(Constant)	5.167	.457	
Pedagogical Benefits	.601	.044	.445
Organisational Barriers	.358	.029	.343
Socio-personal Benefits	.097	.038	.079

Note. The Organisational Barriers factor was reverse-scored; higher scores indicate lower perceived organisational barriers.

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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

Using the gap statistic, a four-cluster solution was identified as optimal for the present sample. The four clusters represented distinct teacher profiles characterised by different configurations across the cognitive components and the conative dimension of content integration. The four-cluster solution explained 59.2% of the total variance (*SS*between = 1,924; *SS*total = 3,248), indicating meaningful separation between the groups.

The distribution of respondents across the clusters, along with the respective mean scores and standard deviations, is presented in Table 9.

Table 9
Cluster Means and Standard Deviations

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
	(*n* = 327; 40.2%)	(*n* = 160; 19.7%)	(*n* = 67; 8.2%)	(*n* = 259; 31.9%)
Pedagogical Benefits	15.10 (1.17)	12.60 (1.88)	7.01 (3.75)	13.10 (1.81)
Organisational Barriers	13.70 (1.90)	11.00 (2.70)	5.12 (2.90)	8.81 (2.98)
Socio-personal Benefits	9.87 (1.56)	4.34 (2.05)	2.45 (2.41)	9.00 (1.49)
Conative Dimension	20.60 (2.08)	17.60 (2.54)	10.50 (4.12)	16.30 (2.60)

Note. Values represent means, with standard deviations in parentheses. Items comprising the Organisational Barriers subscale were reverse-scored; therefore, higher scores indicate lower perceived organisational barriers.

The four teacher profiles were labelled as follows:
Cluster 1: Enthusiastic Innovators (*n* = 327, 40.2%). Teachers in this cluster exhibited very high scores across all components of the *Cognitive Dimension* as well as the *Conative Dimension*.
Cluster 2: Pragmatic Supporters (*n* = 160, 19.7%). Teachers in this cluster demonstrated above-average scores in the *Conative Dimension* and *Pedagogical Benefits* and perceived relatively low organisational barriers. Their scores for *Socio-personal Benefits* were relatively low.
Cluster 3: Resistant Sceptics (*n* = 67, 8.2%). The smallest group exhibited the lowest scores across all components of the *Cognitive Dimension* as well as the *Conative Dimension*.
Cluster 4: Positive but Cautious Supporters (*n* = 259, 31.9%). Teachers in this cluster exhibited high scores for *Pedagogical Benefits* and *Socio-personal Benefits* and a moderate score in the *Conative Dimension*, but perceived relatively high organisational barriers.

Discussion

The teachers in the sample expressed positive views on the benefits of content integration and generally regarded it as a pedagogically valuable approach to teaching. In particular, they viewed content integration as a means of supporting students' cognitive development. They associated its pedagogical benefits with the acquisition of more comprehensive knowledge and the development of higher-order cognitive processes and critical thinking. They also considered it a way of making teaching more engaging and interesting than traditional subject-based teaching. These findings are consistent with previous research in which teachers attributed a range of pedagogical benefits to integrated curricula and generally evaluated their potential for student learning positively (Fu & Sibert, 2017; Lam et al., 2013; Shriner et al., 2010). Notably, these teachers' beliefs correspond, to some extent, with empirical evidence regarding the effects of content integration. Empirical studies and reviews point particularly to its potential to support the acquisition of knowledge and skills, critical thinking, creativity, and other cognitive competencies among students (Aka et al., 2025; Gresnigt et al., 2014). However, teachers'

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

positive beliefs should be interpreted with caution, as the current evidence does not establish the general superiority of integrated curricula over subject-based teaching, and their effects depend on the specific form of integration and the conditions under which it is implemented (Gresnigt et al., 2014; Kreijkes & Greatorex, 2024).

Teachers in the present sample reported relatively low levels of perceived organisational barriers to the implementation of content integration. Some teachers associated these barriers with concerns about reduced student achievement in individual subjects. Others expressed concerns about the increased and potentially unmanageable demands associated with lesson preparation, difficulties in monitoring the content covered, and greater complexity in assessing students within individual subjects. Among the participating teachers, the perceived barriers may arise not from a rejection of content integration itself, but rather from concerns about its organisational feasibility and the demands it places on teachers' time management. Perceiving fewer organisational barriers emerged as the second strongest predictor of teachers' self-reported willingness and readiness to implement content integration ($\beta = .343$). Previous research has identified similar practical and organisational demands associated with content integration. Retnawati et al. (2017) have identified teachers' difficulties in thematic teaching particularly in relation to selecting and connecting appropriate themes, time management, conditions for delivering teaching, and assessment, while Fu and Sibert (2017) have highlighted the importance of planning time and opportunities for collaboration among teachers. However, barriers are not solely organisational. Yeung and Lam (2007) showed that implementation may also be complicated by teachers' unclear or differing understandings of curriculum integration, while Xu and Lu (2022) highlighted tensions between the requirements of an integrated curriculum and other institutional demands within the education system. Similar implementation challenges have also been documented in the Czech Republic, a geographically and culturally close context (Koldová et al., 2022; Patoková et al., 2024).

The teachers in the study sample also regarded the benefits related to students' metacognitive abilities, social skills, and improved classroom relationships as the least important. This contrasts with previous research that has highlighted the potential of content integration to support various aspects of students' socio-personal development (Aka et al., 2025; Drake & Reid, 2018; Siew & Ambo, 2018).

At the same time, more positive views of the pedagogical value and benefits of content integration were associated with greater self-reported willingness to implement it in teachers' own practice. This finding suggests that teachers' beliefs about the value of content integration for student learning may be important, as highlighted in previous research (Fu & Sibert, 2017; Lam et al., 2013; Shriner et al., 2010; Yeung & Lam, 2007). Supporting implementation may therefore require more than simply addressing practical and organisational barriers. Beyond practical guidance on implementation, some teachers may need help understanding the pedagogical value of content integration and its possible contribution to students' personal development. This also points to the need for these teachers to become familiar with the theoretical foundations of content integration and its different types and models.

By contrast, although the perceived socio-personal benefits were a statistically significant predictor of teachers' conative readiness, their standardised regression coefficient was small ($\beta = .079$). This indicates that their practical contribution to predicting teachers' readiness is limited when perceived pedagogical benefits and organisational barriers are taken into account. The statistical significance of this association may partly reflect the large sample size and should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of a substantively strong predictive relationship.

The differences among teachers in the study sample cannot be adequately captured by a simple continuum ranging from positive to negative attitudes. Four teacher profiles were identified, suggesting considerable heterogeneity within the sample in terms of teachers' views on content integration and their readiness to implement it. Previous research has also

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

documented heterogeneity in teachers' conceptions, beliefs, and responses to the requirements of content integration (Fu & Sibert, 2017; Lam et al., 2013; Shriner et al., 2010; Xu & Lu, 2022; Yeung & Lam, 2007).

A uniform approach to implementation and professional support may therefore be insufficient to facilitate curriculum change. The group of 'Resistant Sceptics' may pose a particular challenge in this process, as they were characterised not only by low self-reported willingness and readiness to implement content integration but also by limited belief in its pedagogical and socio-personal benefits. From the perspective of curriculum reform, these teachers may slow the implementation process; at the same time, their reservations may draw attention to potential shortcomings in the reform. These teachers may change their beliefs, but this is likely to occur only if they themselves become convinced that this approach to teaching is effective, for example, through evidence of improved student outcomes, greater student engagement in learning, and positive feedback from students and parents. Professional support for Resistant Sceptics could therefore take the form of professional development focused on examples of effective practice and evidence of the positive effects of content-integrated teaching.

The profiles of Pragmatic Supporters and Positive but Cautious Supporters warrant particular attention, as they highlight an important distinction between positive views on content integration and readiness to implement it in practice. Pragmatic Supporters recognised the pedagogical benefits and practical value of content integration but placed less value on its socio-personal benefits. Professional development for these teachers could therefore focus on students' holistic development, the psychological aspects of teaching, support for students' intrinsic motivation to learn, and the creation of a positive classroom climate. By contrast, although Positive but Cautious Supporters recognised both the pedagogical and socio-personal benefits of integration, they showed lower conative readiness and perceived greater organisational barriers. These teachers may benefit particularly from practical and methodological support aimed at managing the organisational demands of implementation. This profile is especially important in the context of curriculum reform, as it suggests that positive views alone may not be sufficient to translate reform requirements into pedagogical practice. Overall, Enthusiastic Innovators may act as agents of change during the implementation of curriculum reform and to facilitate peer learning among colleagues.

Teachers who recorded lower scores on either the cognitive or conative dimension of views on content integration may have retained a degree of distrust towards education reform arising from their experience of the 2008 reform. Porubský et al. (2015) found that some teachers perceived no positive changes following the 2008 reform, were dissatisfied with its implementation, and viewed the development of the education system at the time unfavourably. These teachers also attributed only limited benefits to the reform in terms of students' educational outcomes and interest in learning.

The study has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. As the data are based on teachers' self-reports, the potential influence of social desirability cannot be excluded, particularly the tendency to present their own knowledge of and readiness for content integration more favourably. Positive evaluations of content integration may also have been influenced by its explicit incorporation into the reformed curriculum. A further limitation concerns the use of convenience sampling and voluntary participation, which may have resulted in the overrepresentation of teachers with a particular interest in the topic. Therefore, despite the large size and regional heterogeneity of the research sample, the findings cannot be generalised without qualification to the entire population of primary teachers in Slovakia. Moreover, the cluster analysis was based on complete cases, resulting in the exclusion of 36 respondents with incomplete data. Although the proportion of excluded cases was small (4.2%), systematic differences between respondents with complete and incomplete data cannot be ruled out.

PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

The findings contribute to international discussions by highlighting the gap between teachers' positive views on content integration and their readiness to implement it, and the need to tailor professional development to different teacher profiles. The findings also open avenues for further research aimed at developing a deeper understanding of the identified teacher profiles. Particular attention should be paid to Resistant Sceptics, whose negative perceptions of content integration may be associated with broader attitudes towards curriculum reform, although this cannot be established from the present data. A valuable next step would therefore be qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with representatives of the different profiles identified through cluster analysis. Such interviews could help explain how teachers' motivations, experiences, and working contexts relate to their views on the benefits and barriers of content integration and their readiness to implement it. Future research should also examine whether similar teacher profiles emerge in other educational and national contexts, thereby enabling an assessment of the stability and broader applicability of the proposed typology.

Conclusions and Implications

Examining teachers' views on content integration is particularly important when curriculum changes are being introduced into primary education practice. It is necessary to understand what teachers think about content integration and how they assess their own willingness and readiness to implement it. Teachers in the study sample reported that they were ready to integrate educational content into their teaching. Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between their views on content integration and their self-reported readiness and willingness to implement it. Regression analysis further showed that perceived pedagogical benefits were the strongest predictor of readiness, followed by lower perceived organisational barriers. Although socio-personal benefits were a statistically significant predictor, their practical predictive contribution was small. Teachers' views and self-reported readiness were not homogeneous within the study sample. Cluster analysis identified four exploratory profiles that differed in their perceptions of pedagogical and socio-personal benefits, organisational barriers, and readiness to implement content integration.

These findings can inform support for the implementation of curriculum reform and help avoid a uniform approach for all teachers. The findings suggest that professional development focused exclusively on training teachers to apply new teaching methods is unlikely to be sufficient. Support should instead be differentiated, ranging from clarification of the theoretical and pedagogical rationale for content integration, including its potential cognitive and socio-personal benefits for students, to assistance in overcoming organisational barriers and practical demonstrations of its implementation in teaching. Appropriately differentiated support may help teachers become active agents of curriculum change. Successful implementation may depend not only on teachers' ability to respond to reform requirements but also on the value they attribute to content integration, the barriers they perceive, and their readiness to incorporate it into their own teaching.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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PROBLEMS
OF EDUCATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 84, No. 5, 2026

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