Curriculum Integration in Social Studies as Predictor of Academic Performance in Social Sciences

Oyeleke Oluniyi
Centre for Distance Learning, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife
oluniyioyeleke@yahoo.co.uk

Ojebiyi, Olufemi A. (PhD)
Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling
Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
olufemiadesola@yahoo.com

Abstract
The study investigated curriculum integration in Social Studies as predictor of academic performance in Social Sciences. Integrated curriculum came into focus in the school system with the introduction of Social Studies in to the school curriculum. Integrated curriculum is considered more effective on students compared to single subject approach. Survey design was used to carry out the study. The study was guided by using one hundred and forty (140) students offering social sciences subjects such as geography, economics, and government, were purposively selected from four secondary schools as study sample. T-test and Pearson moment correlation coefficient statistical methods were used for data analysis. The result shows that there is no statistical evidence to suggest a wide gap between subjects with integrated curriculum and the subject with single subject approach. It further revealed that Social Studies and Economics have a considerable related mean figure of -54.25 for Social Studies and 55.67 for Economics, which shows a low mean difference of 1.41. Based on these, the researchers concluded that there is a relationship in integrated curriculum subjects; however, this has no substantial impact on students’ academic performance.

Key Words: Integrated Curriculum, Academic Performance, School Curriculum, Teacher’s Competence

What is Integrated Curriculum?
Curriculum integration is an offshoot of constructivistic school of thought in which learners are expected to construct their own knowledge, and in the process create meaning to learning process. The task of construction of meanings by learners is worthwhile but largely remains a daunting task in a system where rigid single subject approach dominates. The artificial breaking down of knowledge into bits itself is counter-productive. Knowledge is best acquired when learners look through the mirror of big picture. The inference is that for students to construct meaning and create further knowledge, traditional teaching method and single subject division could hardly stimulate the desired results, but rather, may constitute a cog in the wheel of progress. To the proponents of integrated curriculum, the inherent defects in compartmentalization of knowledge characterized by single-subject approach calls for a paradigm shifts.

Humphrey and Ellis (1981, p11) defined integrated curriculum as “one in which children broadly explore knowledge in various subjects related to certain aspects of their environment.” In exploring the natural environmental problems, which may be social, physical or economic in nature, issues are presented in the class in holistic way. This mode of presentation allows for clarity, wider perception, deeper understanding and application of concept learnt.

Megham (2008, p6) defined integrated curriculum as one that “brings together content from different disciplines in a meaningful way to focus upon issues and areas relevant to student lives” Meghan (2008) definition further reveals the limitation of single-subject approach since areas of relevance to learners are multi-related and the robustness of single subjects to address learners multifaceted needs is in great suspect. Integrated curriculum is intellectual effort aiming at connecting academic, career, and technical domain in instructional process in such a way that learners are prepared and equipped for further education, employment and career development (Kathleen and Fowler, 2010). Chernus and Fowler (2001) as elucidated by Kathleen and Fowler (2010, p2), explained integrated curriculum as an instructional approach that incorporates key content from two or more disciplines; with a well defined educational objectives (such as academic, industry and workforce-readiness standards) and uses authentic applied problems (problem-based learning) to engage and challenge students.

Various forms of curriculum integration have been identified. They include course integration, cross-curriculum integration, programme interaction, school wide integration, career academics (Chernus & Fowler, 2010),
An integrated curriculum is a likely effective method to teach civics concepts, democratic ideals for students in countries with fledgling democracy, social problems and issues in countries with social problems challenges. The flexibility associated with integrated curriculum models enhances the teachings of contemporary issues in the course of instruction. The benefits are bilateral as teachers discretionary potentials is developed to its fullest. Teachers who participated in integrated curriculum submitted that they become more effective in teaching as a result of their participation (Johnson et al, 2003) The effectiveness is not only measured by their subjective perception, it has been discovered to have a positive bearing on student test scores – their participation is
reported to have inspired increased scores in student achievement test (Stone, Alfred and Pearson, 2008). Adoption of integrated curriculum is not an easy decision. It is time consuming; require a lot of resources, expertise and competence of teachers. The rigid school structure itself is stumbling block. Teachers who are trained in didactic mould would find integrated curriculum not only disturbing but complex and could become a source of nuisance to established pattern in the school system. Leopp (1999) highlights some salient factors for impactful implementation of integrated curriculum.

1. Teachers must undertake professional development programme
2. A shift from didactic model of teaching to constructivism based method.
3. Teachers are encouraged to become member of learning communities for cross fertilization of ideas. Integration requires pooling ideas from various experts in related field of study depending on the nature of the integration.
4. Teachers need to be more skillful in facilitating small group learning.
5. The use of authentic assessment by the facilitators is absolute. Authentic assessment focuses on higher level of objective than achievement score test. Attitudinal changes, skill acquisition, performance objectives are effectively measured with the aid of authentic assessment.
6. Teachers’ ability to manage experimental-oriented instruction is very essential.
7. There is need for joint support of the school administrators and teachers. Administrator would need to offer moral support and commensurate resources to implement integration.
8. Adequate information to all the stakeholders such as the parents, members of the community where the school is located about the proposed method and associated foreseeable changes, otherwise misconception by the outside group can create tension.
9. Finally, a systemic reform will ease potential tension as against a drastic change.

**Purpose of the Research**

Do we just integrate for its sake? How does a school take into consideration the potentials and real limitations to curriculum integration? Factors such as peculiarity for the teacher’s competence, school resources, time, teacher’s capacity and mentality do affect the success or otherwise of integrated curriculum. Aside some of the challenges highlighted above, research on the gains made on test score by students using integrated curriculum is still limited (Mighan, 2008 p25). This is the core focus of this study.

**Research Method**

Survey design was used to carry out the study. A total number of one hundred and forty (140) SSII students offering social sciences subjects such as Economics and Government and arts subjects such as Yoruba, Christian Religious Studies and English language were used for the study. The students were purposively selected from four secondary schools in Ile Central Local Government of Osun State, Nigeria. Two of the schools are public owned while the other two are private schools. The school selected are: Obafemi Awolowo University, International School, Ambassador College, Moremi High School and Ife Girls High School. The Schools were selected because of the researchers’ easy accessibility to the schools records from which data for the study were obtained.

**Research Instrument**

The research instrument used is the examination records of the selected schools. The results obtained are J.S.S. III third term result of Social Studies, Yoruba, Christian Religious Knowledge and English Language and SSIII third term results of the same sets of students in social sciences subjects such as Economics and Government; and Yoruba, Christian Religious Knowledge and English Language. Social Studies at the JSS level serves the purpose of integrated curriculum subject while Christian Religious Knowledge, Yoruba and English Language are selected for single subject teaching approach. In Nigeria education system, Social Studies is an integration of Economics, Geography, Government and History. The exclusion of geography and history at the senior secondary level is because of limited number of candidates who offer the subject, which will be extremely small to constitute an acceptable sample size, while history as a subject is no longer available in most schools in Nigeria. Economics and government were chosen because of the availability of adequate sample size. These pure social science subjects are offered at senior secondary school level, while Social Studies is offered as corresponding subject at junior secondary school level. Yoruba, Christian Religious Knowledge and English Language are offered across the junior and senior secondary school level.

**Data Analysis**

The means score of the social studies and the mean score of the social sciences. T-test and Pearson moment correlation coefficient (r) statistical method was used to determine the degree of relationship between the students’ performance in social studies and the traditional social sciences subjects – economics and government. The results of the students in Social Studies at the junior school are correlated with their corresponding results in Economics and Government at the senior secondary school to determine their relationship and the impact of
curriculum integration. The results of the students in Christian Religious Knowledge Christian Religious Knowledge, Yoruba and English Language at the junior secondary school are correlated with their corresponding performance in the same subjects at the senior secondary school. The results of the correlation coefficient and the t-test of the integrated curriculum and the single subject were compared to determine the subjects with higher rate of relationship across the JSS and SS academic performance.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects Combination</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies/Government</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies Economics</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>Weak negative relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba SSS/JSS</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Weak positive relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The striking feature of the findings is that there is no strong statistical evidence to suggest a wide difference between subjects with integrated curriculum and the subjects with single subject approach. In terms of relationship in test score performance between the JSS and SS level, it is difficult to conclude that a child who is exposed to social studies will perform better in economics and government at SS level than subjects taught as single subject, and in this case Yoruba, Christian Religious Knowledge, and English Language. However, the relationship between Social Studies and Government shows the variables with strongest relationship among the combinations that are statistically proved to be related. The other integrated curriculum – Social Studies and Economics do not related with the correlation co-efficient, but a very considerable related mean figures – 54.25 for social studies and 55.67 for economics. This shows a low mean difference of 1.41. The plausible reason why there is no statistical relationship could be due to variability at which students obtain scores across the Junior and Senior Secondary school levels. The raw scores were observed to show some students scoring low in JSS in Social Studies while scoring high in SSS in Economics and vice-versa. The implication is that it is difficult to ascertain a student has made progress from JSS to SSS. On the totality, there is improved performance as the mean increases from 54.25 in Social Studies to 55.67 in Economics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>JSS</th>
<th>SSS</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>61.57</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>-10.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies/Government</td>
<td>54.83</td>
<td>54.68</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies/Economics</td>
<td>54.26</td>
<td>55.67</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Religious Studies</td>
<td>59.15</td>
<td>65.65</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>59.36</td>
<td>65.13</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding puts some celebrated advantages of integrated curriculum in suspects. This has drawn attention to George (1996) assertion that ‘all the accolades about integrated curriculum are probably unfounded or unsubstantiated’ and that there is no evidence to prove that integrated curriculum is more effective than ‘good teachings of traditional curriculum’ (cited in Simnu-kluz, 1997).

This may not be a robust finding to outright discredit integrated curriculum. In fact, it tends to support the importance of integrated curriculum. There is a degree of considerable relationship between social studies and government. The likely justifiable reason for the difference could be traced to the content of social studies which, from personal observation tilted towards government than other component subjects. The percentage of social studies content drawn from government is comparatively higher than other component subjects. There are abundance of research findings to support an advantage of integrated curriculum in terms of increased team spirit, improved pupils attitude and work habits (Maclever, 1990), better student self-direction, higher attention span, higher level of home work completion, better attitudes towards school attendance (Jacobs, 1989), capacity to incorporate real life problems into classroom learning (Simnu-kluz, 1997), motivation and increased learning (Landa, 1997), enhanced problem-solving skills and higher achievement in college (Austin, Hirsten, & Walsh, 1997), effective content learning and positive attitude (Lake, 1994). In spite of these volumes of research findings, the result of research in academic performance is still very marginal. Juxtaposing these various findings, it may not be out of place to assert that though, integrated curriculum teachings has positive bearing on attitudes, skills acquisition, motivations, positive attitude, the impact on test score achievement is limited. Another area of consideration is the methodology adopted, teachers’ competence, the structure of the curriculum, the school focus, effectiveness of the implementation process, and the nature of the school under study. This may have substantial effect on the findings. Is there any significant difference in the methodology adopted by the teachers in the teaching of integrated curriculum and single subject? Does the curriculum design accords flexibility during instructional process to give room for incorporating learners’ areas of interest? Are the teachers competent enough in the techniques of teaching student with integrated curriculum model? This could be focus of further studies. Another area worth of further investigation is to determine the relationship between integrated science and science subjects such as chemistry, biology and physics.

**Conclusion**

The result shows a relationship in integrated curriculum subjects slightly above relationship in non-integrated or single subject curriculum. However, the relationship has no substantial impact on academic performance, bearing in mind that there are increase in the mean score among single subjects from JSS to SS.

**References**


This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE’s homepage: http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There’s no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** http://www.iiste.org/Journals/

The IISTE editorial team promises to the review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

**IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners**

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar