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

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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 co-efficient 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 constructive 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.
Humphey 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),

coordinated curriculum, project-based learning, thematic curriculum (Simanu-Kluz, 1997). Nigeria Social Studies integrated curriculum adopts course integration approach. Relevant contents are selected from the traditional social sciences such as geography, economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, and arts based subjects such as history.

In Nigeria, the concept of integrated curriculum came into limelight in the school system after the introduction of social studies in the school curriculum. Initially, traditional social science subjects such as history, geography, and government constitute the core aspect of the curriculum. Aside the rigid compartmentalization of the curriculum, the country's quest towards decolonization of every segments of the society was a stimulating impetus (Makinde, 1979, Fadeiye, 2005).

The argument is that integrated approach would present related concepts from geography, Government, History in holistic form rather than a single subject perception. Further to the argument is to re-write the curriculum. Concepts in the traditional social sciences were biased towards the colonial power geographical and socio-economic milieu (Fafunwa, 1974). They use either exotic or foreign terminologies which has no significant reflection of African challenges. A plausible way to minimize this seemingly obstacles to learning in the context of African experience and value system is to re-design curriculum focusing on African values, challenges and terminologies. Presumably, learners are prepared to fit into existing African society and by and large, the curriculum would address the socio-political and economic requirement of Africans.

Integrated curriculum or multi-disciplinary curriculum is widely conceived as more impactful on pupils compare to single subject approach. Argument in support of the importance of integrated curriculum is enormous, amidst of a marginal proportion of potentials or real disadvantages. However, most of the research conducted focus on attitudinal changes, skill acquisition and the possibility of the successful implementation of the integrated curriculum. The aspect of scores in test and examination remain largely unexplored (Lake, 1974).

Integrated curriculum aids students' ability to acquire skills, such as critical thinking, problems solving and analytical capacity. Critical thinking is easily crystallized because of the inter-connections across content (Kain, 1993). During instructional process, a competent teacher is expected to utilize relevant theoretical perspectives in educational thought to teach. Themes and instructional contents in integrated curriculum are drawn from real life issues and problems within students' locality to compliment the planned curriculum. Teachers employ Socratic-questioning method to define problems, proffer solutions and construct meanings. The use of this method to teach familiar issues do not only ensure readiness, learners propensity to learn is strengthened. This process of learning possesses inherent capacity for learners to be well equipped in acquisition and deepening of critical analysis, problem-solving and reflexive thinking skills. Development of problem solving skill itself is handsomely challenging and rewarding. It stimulates the capacity to 'create new dendrite connections' capable of making further connections (Jenson, 1998). The presentation of learning using familiar examples which is capable of stimulating the learners to think critically make integration model imperative. Learners' input is part of the contents to be taught, this fosters democratic traits. Teacher can adopt methods in which learners are 'forced' to develop cooperative skills, peer relationship skills, and participative learning skills. Integrated curriculum has also been discovered to stimulate learners' motivation towards learning and increased interest in school activities. Positive attitude such as high rate in school attendance is directly linked to the use of integrated curriculum (Kain, 1993). In an experimental research conducted about the relevance of integrated curriculum, in the New York City's marginal schools, the findings show a reduced drop-out rate between middle and high school, improved reading scores, and additional credits towards graduation (Kathleen and Fowler, 2010, p7).

Lake (1994) states some components of integrated curriculum. They are:

1. A combination of subjects
2. An emphasis on projects
3. Sources that go beyond textbooks
4. Relationship among concepts
5. Thematic unit as organizing principles
6. Flexible schedules
7. Flexible students groups

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 skilful 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 Ife 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

Relationship between Senior Secondary School and Junior Secondary School English Language

	Mean	SD	DF	R	t-test
JSS	61.57	4.94	17	-0.22	-0.93
SSS	51.21	9.74			

Social Studies and Government

	Mean	SD	DF	r	Interpretation
Social Studies	54.83	12.69	38	0.33	Positive moderate relationship
Government	54.66	12.73			

Social Studies and Economics

	Mean	SD	DF	R	Interpretation
JSS	54.25	12.68	60	-0.28	Negative relationship
SSS	55.67	11.63			

JSS and SS Christian Religious Studies

	Mean	SD	DF	r	Interpretation
JSS	59.15	11.42	62	-0.09	Inverse relationship
SSS	65.64	11.52			

SSS and JSS Yoruba

	Mean	SD	DF	r	Interpretation
JSS	59.36	11.14	42	0.15	Positive
SSS	65.13	8.41			

Subjects with Relationship

Subjects Combination	r	Degree
Social Studies/Government	0.33	Moderate
Social Studies Economics	-0.28	Weak negative relationship
Yoruba SSS/JSS	0.15	Weak positive relationship

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.

	JSS	SSS	Difference
English	61.57	52.21	-10.36
Social Studies/Government	54.83	54.68	-0.15
Social Studies/Economics	54.26	55.67	1.41
Christian Religious Studies	59.15	65.65	6.50
Yoruba	59.36	65.13	5.77

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 Simanu-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 (Maclver, 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.

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