

## Social Studies Teachers' Perception of Concept of Integration in Social Studies Curriculum

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**ABSTRACT** Social studies is seen as a more digestible integrated or interdisciplinary subject by the mode at which its contents are drawn from certain numbers of subject disciplines. This study seeks to determine the perceptions of teachers about the concept of integration in social studies curriculum. This descriptive study was carried out with 80 social studies teachers at the junior secondary schools level in Ekiti state, Nigeria. An instrument was used to establish the extent at which the concept of integration is perceived by social studies teachers. The results of the study showed that majority of the social studies teachers are not knowledgeable about the concept of integration, therefore, making its application in the teaching of social studies difficult. The researchers concluded that teachers should be resourceful and innovative in order to make learning more relevant for the benefit of the child being taught in the classroom and the nation as a whole.

### INTRODUCTION

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (National Council for Social Studies, USA 2010). The definition of social studies as given by NCSS has really showcased how the subject should be taught in the classroom, however, many academic scholars of social studies did not view the subject from the angle of an integrating school subject. As a way of locating the integrative threads that can be found in certain objectives, which are common to several courses, which require the correlation of facts and broad principles of theories and problems or which combine knowledge feelings, beliefs and values (Ajiboye et al. 2010). Ajiboye et al. did not mention what should be done with the integration threads after they have been located in the objectives, which have been presumed common to the several courses, of which these objectives are merely sub divisions within the same discipline.

The teachers' role in the development of a child could not be overemphasized as many scholars see teachers as links that connect students to the curriculum they are required to learn (Dada 2008). Results of researches have also

shown that the mode at which the children learn really displayed that learning is connected with life challenges, and this has, therefore, prompted the teachers and curriculum planners all over to reassess their methods of teaching the younger ones about their society and how they should be properly adapted (Bamusiime 2010).

Following the above submission, the syllabuses and teaching and learning techniques are being transformed in many nations. Separate teaching of subjects in especially primary schools is becoming uncommon so also in teachers education institutions because of the adoption of social studies syllabuses by many countries. It was supported that the content in social studies curriculum should be unified as against the teaching of the subject as a separate academic discipline. Separatists' approach to the teaching in social studies lessons should be deemphasized in order for teachers to blend different contents of academic disciplines into their teachings for learners' to be able to grasp knowledge holistically. It justifies the proper understanding and application of the integrated mode of teaching and learning in the schools.

The subject, social studies as a school discipline for the young generations was introduced basically to enable learners adapt to their environment and be able adjust to the stress of rapidly changing society, quite a lot of research findings have reported problems regarding the methodology used to teach the subject by school teachers (Abdu-Raheem 2010). The key

challenge is that teachers of social studies find it extremely difficult to apply specific techniques that could help facilitate the realization of the desired objectives of the subject. Effective imparting of social studies knowledge on students requires a teacher who is grounded with variety of both content knowledge and pedagogical from the integrated curriculum of the subject.

Teaching of social studies in schools has been reportedly difficult because of the inability of some institutions or teachers to conceptualize the nature of the subject itself. Ajiboye (2010) further explained that social studies as a school subject was not clearly understood by countless scholars. He noted that several teachers of the subject are unaware of its contents and methods, most especially, the concepts of integration and multidisciplinary thereby making them impart the knowledge of the subject inappropriately to the learners. Dada (2008) observed that the difficulty in effective application of the concepts of integration in teaching of social studies could be as a result of previous training acquired and the competences on the part of teachers. The teachers who were certificated in social studies as disciplines tend to have a better knowledge of its application (integrated approach) to the teaching of social studies unlike other teachers who are major in disciplines that are related whose orientation is to view the subject from separatists' angle. However, Bamusiime (2010) identified factors like teachers' attitude, examination demands and pressures, curriculum demands, time allocation, instructional materials and financial factors that make it hard for teachers to effectively apply the concept (integrated approach) while teaching social studies.

Mutebi in the work of Bamusiime (2010) pointed out that integration of concepts and themes are better structured in a span and sequence. They liken the span to the width and depth of a particular topic. Teachers of social studies need to determine their wideness and deepness in the teaching of the subject so as to establish how they should apply the techniques in classroom teaching. Sequential structure of social studies curriculum refers to logical arrangements of content that are to be taught at any level. Thus, the teaching of social studies requires the use of child-centered instructional methods among active learners' involvement, interdisciplinary and integrative instruction. This study therefore envisages that proper understanding and application of the integrated approaches in classroom could reduce the notion

of relying heavily on textbooks and lecture/traditional methods of teaching, which are widespread in the schools.

### **Research Objective**

Social studies curriculum is prepared in a way that the teaching is made meaningful for those who imparted the ideas, facts, concepts and generalizations. The only way by which the objectives of promoting responsible and active citizenship, creating a desire for intelligent, willing participation in civic and social activities and developing a knowledge and appreciation of civil duties, rights and responsibilities could be achieved is for the teachers to view the subject as an integrated discipline and teach it as such in the classroom. Hence, the objective of this study is to find the extent to which the social studies teachers understand the integrated approach and whether it is applied while teaching social studies in schools or not.

### **Research Question**

*To what extent do teachers of social studies understand and apply the concept of integration in the teaching of social studies?*

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 significant level:

*There is no significant difference in the perception of those teachers that are certificated in social studies and those that are certificated in disciplines that were integrated into social studies.*

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Social Studies Teaching and Learning***

In social studies teaching and learning selection of contents is the principal aspect. Therefore, the selection of social studies contents can be made from the learners' experience at any level, the people' experiences within and outside the school community, and the relevant academic discipline of the social sciences, arts, science and so on.

A cursory look at the social studies curriculum in Nigeria indicates that considerable portion of both the contents and the course outlines are drawn from the concepts, generaliza-

tions, objectives and method of academic disciplines (Dada 2008). This arrangement portends a bad image for the discipline, as many scholars believed that social studies has no identity of its own, and therefore, unable to stand.

The submission above brought about many suggestions from different school of thoughts. One suggested the appliance of social studies being given to the experiences of the people in immediate community of schools, and teachers are advice to pick social studies contents of their respective schools from within the experiences of the contents be drawn from the experiences of the people in the immediate society. Another school of thought was of the opinion that the selection of the contents be drawn from the experiences of the learners that are in conformity with the world educational philosophy of child-centeredness of learners-centeredness. However, a more alarming move tends to support the use of problems approach in the selection of the social studies contents. The argument posited is that social studies is essentially a problem-solving approach discipline and that if the contents are drawn from the learners and people problems, the social studies education given will be factual and all-inclusive (Falade 2007).

Whichever approach is used in the selection of social studies, contents should satisfy the following conditions:

1. They should be able to make clear contributions to the realization of the educational goal of the nation.
2. They should be able to meet all the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of social studies objectives.
3. They should be able to provide a variety of experiences capable of contributing to the entire development of the learners.
4. The contents selected should be suitable for all round development of the learners.
5. They should be significant to the real life of the learners.
6. They should be consistent.
7. Learners should be at the center of the planning.

### **Teaching Social Studies through Integrated Approach**

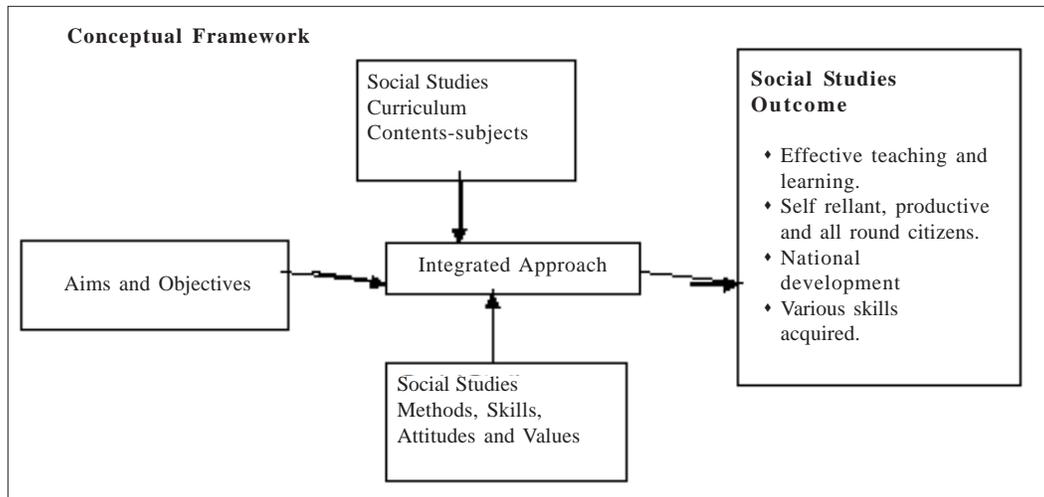
The word integration means the act of bringing two or more things together. In social studies, integration refers to the consolidating of basic concepts, facts and knowledge in subjects that

are related from recognizable parts to form whole during the process of teaching and learning.

Tyler in Dada (2008) views integration as the horizontal relationship of the various disciplines within the curriculum to each other, that is relating what is learnt in mathematics to what is learnt in science using the ideas generated in the study of literature to educate the perception of historic period as relating ideas about historic causality as it functions in dynamics of community life. Tyler's view of integration in this sense is not different from the concept of subject correlation, which have been advertised in educational literature but seldom effectively used during classroom instruction. The integrated approach was suggested because of the growing dissatisfaction with courses provided under separate subjects that separated students from their traditional culture and made them to be ashamed (Nakabugo 2009). He submitted that the trans-disciplinary approach is in conformity with traditional African education.

The above observations agreed with Vygotsky's view that learning is socially constructed and that, the society is to provide a blueprint for the development of a child. The belief that positive changes have been made towards proper teaching, that the curriculum has remained structured following the colonial model is a myth. However, teaching of the subject still remained teacher-centered and does not allow for a more realistic and active learning. The absence of integrative methods of teaching could be the source of uncreative or poor teaching of social studies in schools. Integrated knowledge therefore helps the learners make effective decisions about the problem of living, to recognize knowledge from the social sciences and humanities into new holistic angles and framework, that focused on the development of effective and productive citizenship, it also enables learners to have a holistic look of the world as an integrated entity.

Social studies methodology is based according to Bamusiime (2010) on the essential principles that are recommended for its teaching and learning. These principles include concept of integration, structured problem-solving interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary and use of learners' environment, while various methods, approaches, techniques and strategies are encouraged in the teaching and learning of social studies, specifically, child centered approaches are highly encouraged and suggested.



**Fig.1.** Conceptual framework showing the integrated approach in teaching of social studies

The Figure 1 indicated that the integrated approach to teaching of social studies is made possible through the consolidating of contents from different subjects to form a body of knowledge. The curriculum also consolidated the aims and objectives of teaching of the subject, in addition to different skills, methods, attitudes and values that are essential for the realization of the social studies outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research is a descriptive survey of quantitative methods because of the method by which data was collected through questionnaires in order to provide answers to the research question raised and test for hypotheses with a view to describing the existing situation.

### Population

All the teachers handling the teaching of social studies in Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria were the population for this study.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

Eighty (80) social studies Junior Secondary School teachers were randomly selected from twenty (20) schools for the purpose of this study.

Stratified sampling technique was used to cater for the gender of the teachers.

### Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study is the Social Studies Teachers Questionnaire on Concept of Integration (SSTQCI). It was developed by the researcher, and consisted of three (3) sections. Section A sought for the background information of the respondents such as name of school, location, sex, qualification, certificated discipline, years of experience and class taught. Section B elicited information on the extent to which the respondents understand the integrated approach when teaching social studies in classrooms, while section C provided information on the application of integrated concepts in the classroom teaching and learning processes.

### Validity and Reliability of SSTQCI

The content validity of the instrument was ensured by giving it to specialists in the field of social studies at the university level. The agreement indices of judges' evaluation using Cohen Kappa gave a score of 0.90. The reliability of the instrument was also ensured through trial testing 20 social studies teachers other than the sampled teachers in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The researcher personally administered the instrument. Meanwhile, the Cronbach Alpha was used to estimate its reliability, which was 0.72 and 0.72, respectively for sections A and B.

**Analysis of Data**

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages and inferential statistics like t-test to test for the differences.

**DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The results of the study are presented below under the demographic and hypothesis.

**Table 1: Respondents’ distribution by academic qualifications**

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NCE	16	20.0
B.ED	52	65.0
Others	12	15.0
Total	80	100.0

Table 1 from the fieldwork of the researchers revealed that 52 respondents, representing sixty-five percent were holders of Education Degrees while 16 respondents, representing twenty percent were holders of NCE and 12 respondents, representing fifteen percent have certificates other than Bachelor of Education.

Table 2 from the fieldwork of the researchers showed that 56 respondents out of the 80 sampled were certificated in social studies. This represents seventy percent, while 24 respondents, representing thirty percent were certificated in related disciplines. However, they still teach the subject.

**Table 2: Respondents’ distribution by certificated disciplines**

<i>Disciplines</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Social Studies	56	70.0
Non Social Studies	24	30.0
Total	80	100.0

Table 3 from the fieldwork of the researchers revealed that 28 respondents were males,

representing thirty-five percent of the sample, while 52 were female, representing sixty-five percent of the total respondents. This will enable to test for the differences in the perception of male and female social studies teachers.

**Table 3: Respondents’ distribution by gender**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	28	35.0
Female	52	65.0
Total	80	100.0

**Research Question 1**

*To what extent do teachers of social studies understand and apply the concept of integration?*

Table 4 from the fieldwork of the researchers revealed that 18 respondents, representing 22.5 percent claimed that the statements were true, 29 respondents, representing 36.25 percent partly agreed that the statements were true while 33 respondents, representing 41.25 percent believed the statements were not true. By implication the results indicated that majority of the teachers handling the teaching of social studies at the junior secondary schools were ignorant of the fact that integrated approach could be used or applied in teaching social studies. However, a sizeable number of teachers established that they apply integrated approach while majority of the sampled indicated that they impart the knowledge of social studies through the use of traditional methods. This finding was in agreement with the submission by Bamusiime (2010) that teachers in the classroom do not use or apply the integrated method of teaching while teaching social studies to the learners.

**Hypothesis 1**

*There is no significant difference in the perceptions of those teachers who are certificated in social studies and those that are certificated in discipline related to social studies but teach the subject.*

**Table 4: Teachers understanding and application of the concept of integration**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Partly true</i>	<i>Untrue</i>	<i>Total</i>
Teachers certificated in Social Studies	11(19.0)	21(38.0)	24(43.0)	56 (70.0)
Teachers not Certificated	07(29.2)	08(33.3)	09(37.5)	24 (30.0)
Total	18 (22.5)	29(36.25)	33(41.25)	80 (100.0)

Table 4 from the fieldwork of the researchers showed that the t-test result is 0.923, with  $df = 70$  and  $P > 0.05$ . This means that there was no significant difference in the perception of those that were certificated in social studies about the concept of integration and those certificated in related disciplines but handling the teaching of social studies. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The result of this study agreed with the work by Kristin (2013) that elementary teachers' perception of teaching of social studies through historical fiction using Google Lit trips were the same irrespective of their area of specialization.

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes that most of the teachers handling the teaching of social studies at the junior secondary school were not knowledgeable about the integrated approach to the teaching of the subject, thereby making its application in the classroom difficult. Schools were still characterized with the traditional method of imparting knowledge, values and skills, and therefore putting the child and the nation at disadvantage.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers of social studies should be imaginative and innovative to ensure that what they teach the learners is well understood for their benefits and the benefit of the nation.
2. Emphasis should be placed on quality delivering of knowledge, values and skills by maintaining learners' interest in each lesson. Teaching should be learners' centered.
3. Teachers in training should be grounded in the Social Studies Curriculum development so as to be aware of the aims and objectives, which the curriculum aims to achieve.
4. Teachers should be motivated to teach social studies in a more practical rather than theoretical way. Learners should be engaged with tasks individually and in groups so as to help them reach meaningful decisions and conclusions.
5. Workshops and conferences should be organized for teachers of social studies, both in training and classrooms periodically to assess and review (where necessary) the progress of social studies teachers and come up with proper recommendations.

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