

## An Appraisal of the Status of integration of Social Studies Curriculum in Kenyan Primary Schools

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**Abstract:** This study was geared towards appraising the curriculum status of integrated Social Studies in Kenyan primary schools in the wake of a lot of fluid content which keeps on changing day in day out. To deal with the quick changes there's need to use Curriculum foundations sieves to allow only concrete content in the integrated Social Studies Curriculum. 250 teachers were sampled using stratified simple random sampling for teachers and purposive sampling for Tutors from the two Primary School Teacher Training College in Nakuru Sub County, the chair-persons of the Head teachers of the five zones of Nakuru Sub-County and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Research Instruments were questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide. This research study adopted a mixed research methods approach. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in the analysis of data. Findings show that the content of integrated Social Studies (SST) is beneficial to learners, it contributes to the attainment of the national goals of education, it has been changing very quickly within short span of time hence need to elongate time before next revision is done, the Social Studies teachers need to be taken for refresher courses to improve their teaching skills, there's relationship among topics taught from one class and the next and that integrated Social Studies curriculum has integrated emerging issues. The recommendation is that the government through Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should take time before reviewing Social Studies curriculum.

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Education, Integration, Curriculum, liquid content, concrete content, Philosophical foundations sieve, Historical foundations sieve

### INTRODUCTION

Shiundu and Omulando [1] have given detailed information of the genesis of Social Studies as a subject in Kenya. They state that the idea of integrated Social Studies has been in existence since 1969. They show that the African Social Studies Program (ASSP) is an organization which had 17 members from African commonwealth member states by 1992 and had its headquarters in Nairobi.

Social Studies program is as a result of a conference that was held in Mombasa in August 1968 by the (ASSP). The emphasis then was for the Social Studies to be taught in primary schools because to majority of children in Africa, primary education was terminal. However, now that basic education is up to secondary school there is need to extend this program to secondary schools and all Teacher Training Colleges.

Currently integrated Social Studies in Kenya is taught in primary school but it is not taught in secondary schools. However, for those who join primary school Teacher Colleges, it is offered among the option B of subjects taught in these colleges [2]. In the universities it is not offered as a course apart from

in Moi University where it is offered only to those teachers who are undertaking an education degree in Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE).

Social Studies is a core subject in Kenya education system [3]. It is compulsory for all students in primary schools. Social Studies in Kenyan primary school has undergone different changes in name and content. Initially, Geography and History and Government were taught as different subjects but at the summative examination of Certificate of Primary Education (CPE), they were tested as a general paper together with science. With the introduction of the 8-4-4 system of education in 1985, the paper was changed to GHC meaning Geography, History and Civics combined course [1]. This was done as one paper at summative examination of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) together with Religious Education. To this effect, therefore, the content was changed again to reflect changes that were at that time. After the recommendations of the Davy Koech Commission of 1999 [4], the name was changed to Social Studies and introduced in primary schools from 2003. Here again content was also changed to include other related areas and new developments like emerging issues.

Integration is a situation where you use concepts from one subject in solving problems in other subjects. "Integration of the curriculum brings into close relationship the concepts, skills, and values that constitute a curriculum so that these elements are mutually reinforcing to the learner" Goodland and Su [5].

Content integration deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures in their teaching of Social Studies. This helps the learner to appreciate the whole as opposed to individual contribution of each subject from where content is drawn to have Social Studies. In discussing curriculum content integration Sofadekan, [6] shows that the content of the Social Studies curriculum can be broken down into five distinct content-specific sub-categories: (i) culture (ii) national unity and integration (iii) social issues and problems (iv) social values and (v) peace and conflict.

In order to promote peaceful co-existence among the different cultural groups in a Kenyan set up, there is a need for content revision to encompass concrete cultural integration with the view to promoting national integration.

On the same note Beane [7] shows that the integrated curriculum design underscores the importance of four types of relationships that affect how students learn integrated Social Studies:

- I. Relationship between the learner and the Social Studies content. This means there must be consideration of the learners' level of development in relation to the content to be taught. This is possible when the psychological sieve is used in the process of content selection.
- II. Relationship between the learner and the teacher. This is a very important factor of integration. The teacher need to realise that contemporary classrooms are made up of learners from diverse cultures. Therefore, selection of examples to be integrated in the process of teaching and learning Social Studies should not be offensive to the cultural diversity in the modern classrooms. Philosophical foundations sieve can be used here.
- III. Relationship among the learners. Integrated Social Studies content should be geared towards empowering learners to develop into global citizens who are able to work anywhere around the globe.
- IV. Relationship within the content itself. Since Social Studies is an integration of different subjects, it is important to keep in mind the fact that contents integrated should be related to the major themes and they should be coherent with content from the other subjects which make up Social Studies. For example a topic on resources and economic

activities should get content on the same from all the subjects that make up the Social Studies. This should be done in such a way that the content is representative of the subjects. Historical foundations sieve can be used here.

Beane [7] continues to show that as the quality of these relationships improve individually and collectively, students' success in mastering skills and concepts and more levels of thinking improves in the process of teaching and learning of integrated Social Studies content. Therefore, integrated curriculum formats address and promote the above four types of relationships more effectively than does the conventional, separate subject curriculum which makes up integrated Social Studies.

Bekoe [8] shows that the integration of Social Studies should be trans-disciplinary in nature and must not be shown in separate subjects in the social sciences like Geography, History, Economics and Sociology but should be theme-based and problem-solving oriented. The level of integration is the source of confusion because every subject borrows from other subjects just like Social Studies. But the facts and ideas borrowed by Social Studies are so utilized that they assist in producing reflective, competent and concerned citizen who can live effectively in the contemporary society [9].

Bamusiime [10] is of the opinion that Social Studies teachers need to understand that effective integration calls for linking and utilizing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from different learning experiences enhanced by various techniques, instructional materials and time schedules in the teaching-learning situation. This assertion concurs with Beane [7] who observed that the greater the degree of integration the greater the benefits of learning Social Studies. Students participating in full integrative programs tend to exhibit high levels of commitment, energy and performance, while assuming greater responsibility for learning and their actions. On the same footing Taba [11] notes that a curriculum that presents information only in bits and pieces prevents students from seeing knowledge as unified hence her advocacy for integration. The above benefits will only be achieved in Kenyan set up when each subject which forms Social studies are integrated especially at secondary schools and universities level. Further, the achievement will be there if integration of Social Studies content goes through the curriculum foundations sieves which sieves the liquid content and allows the concrete content which is able to stand the test of time to be integrated.

When applying the integrated approach in Social Studies content selection, the teacher should do the following as adapted from Bamusiime [10]:

- Use various techniques, methods and strategies
- Use relevant ideas, facts and opinions from other subjects to explain his points
- Use variety of teaching Aids
- Use local environment and resource persons
- Involve children in practical activities and develop the necessary behaviours, attitudes, skills and values among learners.

Sofadekan [6] discusses different approaches which have been employed leading to integration of topics and ideas from different subjects which are combined to form Social Studies. The approaches are; thematic approach, concentric approach, problem-solving approach, concept and generalization approach and pupil's activity approach. These are discussed with Kenyan Social Studies scenario in mind.

The teaching of Social Studies curriculum in Kenyan schools is built around themes hence it has a thematic approach. These themes are spiral in nature. The themes are large topics or large problem areas. Some of these topics and areas according to KIE [12] are Living together where: in class one they learn Living together in our home and school; in class two they learn Living together in school and neighbourhood; in class three they learn Living together in the district; in class four they learn living together in our County; in class five they learn Living together in our country Kenya; in class six they learn Living together in Eastern Africa; in class seven they learn Living together in Africa and in class eight they learn Living together in Kenya and the world.

For each of them a series of sub themes or topics are developed. Finally each topic is broken into a number of lessons depending on the content to be covered.

In concentric approach the basic tenet is teaching from known to unknown or simple to complex. The teaching of Social Studies content in Kenya is built from the learners' environment and it expands through up to the parts of the world in class eight. The expansion of content responds to the age and maturity of the learner.

Looking at the concept of generalization approach, according to Turnbull, Parkinson, Philips, Francis, Webb, Bull and Ashy [13] concepts are ideas which are either imaginary (abstract) or real. Real concepts are mainly built upon what the learners have experienced. Imaginary concepts are also used to include aspects like latitudes, longitudes, patriotism and conflict resolution among others. Generalization is seen

when certain language groups are said to have had certain characteristic traits for example, in migration, Bantus are generalized to have migrated from Congo forest and also they were farmers [12].

Pupil activity approach according to Sofadekan [6] is appropriate in higher levels like Teacher Training Colleges and universities. The students are given the freedom to select and organize their own learning experience, individually and in groups. This approach in Social Studies is not well applicable in Kenyan Social Studies classes because it is only taught in primary schools where learners are still dependant on the teachers' guidance.

Integration of content for Social Studies is important and forms a base upon which the curriculum developers must focus on as they review the content to be integrated which is able to stand the test of time. Therefore the content integrated in Kenyan Social Studies curriculum must not be liquid content but concrete enough to withstand changes in the contemporary society.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study used Socio-Cultural theory by Lev Vygotsky. This is an emerging theory in psychology that looks at the important contributions that society makes to individual development in all spheres of influence of a learner's life.

This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. Social Studies incorporate content with a lot of interaction within and between cultures. This is done bearing in mind the fact that the different cultures of the world are interacting at a very high speed in the contemporary society. This theory grew from the work of seminal psychologist Lev Vygotsky who believed that parents, caregivers, peers and the culture at large were responsible for the development of higher order functions Vygotsky [14]. In other words those mentioned above have a role to play in the learners' development into good adult citizens by teaching the young ones on what their society expects of them this is through teaching of Social Studies.

The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction like in this study through Social Studies content plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. For Vygotsky [15], the relationship between the individual and the social setting is necessarily relational. However, by placing cultural mediation at the center of adult cognition and the process of cognitive development, social origins take on a special importance in Vygotsky's theories. The selection of content for integrated Social Studies should be from the learners environment so that it may

be practical oriented in nature and hence meet the daily expectations of the society even after the learner going through the school. The content selected should also be concrete in nature not to change soon.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This research study adopted a mixed research methods approach in order to provide an in-depth perspective on the issues touching on Social Studies. Creswell and Clark [16] justify the use of mixed methods because the combination of qualitative and quantitative data provides a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach by itself. This research study randomly sampled 250 teachers of Social Studies from one hundred and twelve public primary and private primary schools with classes ranging from one to eight in Nakuru Sub-County to participate in this study. Also in participation were two Social Studies Primary School Teacher Training Colleges tutors from Nakuru Sub County, one Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASO) from the District Education Officer and the four chairpersons of Kenya Primary Schools Head teachers Association (KEPSHA) who are in charge of the five zones of Nakuru Sub County. Questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data.

## **VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

To validate the instruments, the researcher carried out pilot-testing using six primary schools (three public primary schools and three private primary schools) all these schools are a way from the study area, the schools are in Nakuru North district. The pilot study consisted of 30 teachers. The researcher used Cronbach Alpha to test the reliability of the instrument. According to Orodho [17], a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of about 0.60 should be considered high enough to judge the reliability of the instrument in Social Sciences. The current instrument yielded 0.82 hence it was considered reliable.

## **STATISTICAL TREATMENT OF DATA**

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics include counts and percentages. Inferential statistics applicable for this study was the use of One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test differences for the categories comparison in relation to the type of school which was divided into public and private primary schools and the years of experience which were re-coded into three categories that is, teachers' with teaching experience below 5 years, 6-10 years and those

with teaching experience of above 10 years. ANOVA was used to test the differences for the null hypothesis in teachers' perceptions which were based on the type of school and also the experience of teaching Social Studies.

To ascertain the extent to which there was status of integration of Social Studies, the responses were interpreted using the following criteria; 3.50-4.00 = High integration in Social Studies, 2.50-3.49 = Moderate integration in Social Studies, 1.50-2.49 = Low integration in Social Studies and 1.00-1.49 = No integration in Social Studies.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

One of the issues involved in research is informed consent. It affords prospective participants the opportunity to accept or decline to engage in the research. It describes the need for participants to understand the aims, objectives and potential harm that such involvement may have on them [18]. The researcher took care that the anonymity of the respondents was guarded by assuring them that the information provided would only be used for academic purpose.

Before data collection started, the researcher obtained clearance from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Research Ethics Committee and permission to conduct research in Nakuru Sub County from National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), The County Commissioner and The County Education Officer in Nakuru County. The respondents did not write their names or the names of their schools while filling in the questionnaire.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This research study was guided by these research questions;

### ***1. What is the status of Integration of Social Studies in Kenyan system of education?***

Integration of Social Studies refers to the linking of all types of knowledge and experiences contained within the curriculum plan. Goodland and Su [11] show that integration links all of the curriculum's pieces so that students comprehend knowledge as unified rather than atomized.

To establish the status of integration in Social Studies in Kenyan primary schools, the respondents were asked to rate their perception on the same using six aspects of Social Studies integration. Table 1 shows their responses.



**Table 1: Aspects in Kenyan System of Education Integration of Social Studies (n=246)**

Status of integration of Social Studies	Teachers Mean	Std. Deviation
The content of integrated Social Studies (SST) is beneficial to learners as it promotes skills of living together	3.48	.710
The integrated SST curriculum contributes to the attainment of the national goals of education	3.43	.634
The integrated SST syllabus has been changing very quickly within short span of time	3.34	.727
Many teachers of SST write notes from textbook on chalkboard while learners copy in their books	3.24	.695
There's relationship among topics taught from one class and the next	3.61	.594
SST curriculum has integrated emerging issues	3.29	.661
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.8733</b>	<b>.29332</b>

Table 1 shows that the overall rated average of the responses of the participants to the statement that the content of integrated Social Studies (SST) is beneficial to learners as it promotes skills of living together is ( $\mu= 3.48$ ,  $SD= .710$ ) this is the agreement zone. This means most teachers see Social Studies as a beneficial subject to the learners in relation to the needs of the contemporary Kenyan society. These results concur with a study done by Eshun [19] who concludes that Social Studies is seen as citizenship education which aims at preparing the learner or the young ones to become competent, concerned and effective citizens in a country.

In Kenyan system of education there are eight national goals of education. These goals according to Mwaka, Kafwa, Musamis and Wambua [20] bring to the fore the ideals the system of education in Kenya seeks to attain in terms of knowledge, skills and values. The formulation of the eight goals therefore is meant to specify what qualities are thought most desirable to develop among the Kenyan citizens.

This study interrogated the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement that the integrated Social Studies curriculum contributes to the attainment of the national goals of education. The mean scores of the respondents was found to be ( $\mu= 3.43$ ,  $SD= .634$ ) which is agreement zone. In relation to the majority of the respondents who were in agreement that the integrated Social Studies curriculum contributes to the attainment of the national goals of education, one of the KEPSHA chairpersons interviewed observed that;

*When pupils learn about different communities in Kenya through the topic language groups in Social Studies, it helps to attain the national goal which states that education should promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures. The Kenyan*

*school pupils should be able to blend the best of traditional values with the changed requirements that must follow rapid development in order to build a stable and modern society which shuns tribalism but appreciates the best from each Kenyan ethnic community.*

Another KEPSHA chairperson also was in agreement that integrated Social Studies help in promoting the attainment of the goals of education by asserting that;

*In Social Studies pupils are taught about Kenya and her neighbours of Eastern Africa and also about Africa and other countries of the world. This helps to attain the national goal which says that education should promote international consciousness and foster positive attitudes towards other nations.*

All the above examples could be taken to be indicative of the fact that a sense of national unity has been developed on the Kenyan citizens.

This study sought to find out the extent to which Social Studies teachers agree or disagree with the statement that the integrated SST syllabus in Kenya has been changing very quickly within short span of time. Results in Table 1 indicates mean scores of respondents on the value of the statement above to be ( $\mu= 3.34$ ,  $SD= .727$ ). This is within the agreement zone. Much as change is inevitable, the rate of change may affect negatively a good course. This is in line with the nature of education which is dynamic as the world keeps changing [11].

The above findings on changes in Social Studies were also discussed in the interviews. One of the KEPSHA chairpersons observed that;

*The sudden changes of Social Studies curriculum have created confusion to both the learners and the teachers. It is as if the curriculum developers are not sure which content is useful to the learners.*

Another KEPSHA chairperson was of the opinion that;

*For sure, due to rampant changes of Social Studies syllabus every now and then, the breadth and depth of the content keeps on getting interrupted and this may in one way or the other vary what has been acquired by learners of different periods in schools affected by the changes.*

Another KEPSHA chairperson on the same note observed that;

*Social Studies curriculum has been changing very fast and unless something is done to reduce these changes, it would be better if we went back to teaching individual subjects. The most affected class is class four. Initially we were learning about our province. After the 2007/2008 clashes, part of the content was changed, especially that which showed certain provinces were for certain communities. Within a short time in 2010 it changed but still with provincial structures. After the passing of the new constitution, provinces were abolished and counties were introduced. We started teaching the former provincial region for our case we taught about counties in the former Rift Valley provinces. We are again supposed to teach about our county. We need to have people who will ensure that the time it takes to change in Social Studies syllabus is elongated.*

From the discussion above, it is clear that the rate of changes of Social Studies curriculum is quite high. One of the reasons from the discussions above is the political influence which makes liquid content get its way into the Social Studies syllabus [21]. That is why there's need to have a philosophical sieve to deal with issues which are prone to change within a short span of time due to politics of the day.

According to Akinlaye, Corbin and Akinlaye, Obebe, Ololobou [6] methods of delivering Social Studies can include a number of presentational styles. These are; presentations like storytelling, creative activities like drawing and painting, discussions for example brainstorming, dramatizations like miming and inquiry/problem solving activities like field trips. A teacher who uses these different methods make teaching

and learning of integrated Social Studies lively in a classroom set up.

With a focus on the techniques used in teaching of integrated Social Studies curriculum, the current study interrogated whether many teachers of SST write notes from textbooks on chalkboard while learners copy in their books. The overall mean of the responses was ( $\mu= 3.24$ ,  $SD= .695$ ). The above responses can be said to mean that most teachers who teach Social Studies rarely integrate different styles of teaching.

A study on teaching behaviour and students' achievement in science by Akuezuilo [22] shows that student activities are better than teacher activities in promoting authentic learning, at least in junior secondary school integrated science classrooms. This observation is also true when it comes to integrated Social Studies.

Responding to the item there's relationship among topics taught from one class and the next, Table 1 shows how teacher's responses were analysed. The rated average was found to be ( $\mu= 3.61$ ,  $SD= .594$ ) which is in the strongly agree zone.

There is indeed a spiral relationship between topics taught from one class to the next. Document analysis of Kenya Institute of Education [12], in standard one pupils' are taught about living together in the home and school. In standard two they learn living together in school and neighbourhood and finally in class three they learn about living together in the district. These topics are related in content taught and learnt. That means the topics are integrated and related.

For Bergesom [22], Social Studies must be centred on innovative methods that aim at seeking the truth which include problem detecting, problem solving, and learning by experimenting and discovery. On emerging issues data was collected, analysed and a discussion done. The average mean of the respondent as shown in Table 1 was found to be ( $\mu= 3.29$ ,  $SD= .661$ ). When document analysis was done on Kenya Institute of Education [12], the topics on emerging issues which have been integrated includes; Citizenship where ways of becoming and losing Kenyan citizenship are aligned to the new constitution which allows for dual citizenship, Democracy and Human Rights and finally law, peace and conflict resolution. All these are emerging issues which have found way in the Social Studies curriculum.

***2. Is there a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers classified according to the type of school on the status of integration of Social Studies ?***

In order to find out if there was observed difference in mean perception of teachers on status of integration of Social Studies aspects according to the school type, data was analysed and presentation done in Table 2, 3, and 4. The following null hypothesis was tested

*H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the type of school taught and the perception of teachers on status of integration of Social Studies aspects.*

**Table 2: Status of Integration of Social Studies**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Public primary school	148	2.8840	.30901	.02540
Private primary school	98	2.8571	.26864	.02714
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>2.8733</b>	<b>.29332</b>	<b>.01870</b>

Table 2 shows that the teachers from public school had a higher mean of 2.8840 (SD .30901) compared to private schools which had a mean of 2.8571 (SD .26864). As a result of this observed

difference in mean perception of teachers, the researcher tested whether there is homogeneity of variances.

**Table 3: Test of Homogeneity of Variances on Status of Integration of Social Studies**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.000	1	244	1.000

There is homogeneity of variance because the p value 1.000>0.05. Therefore hypothesis 1 was tested

at 0.05 level in Table 4 to determine if the observed mean difference was significant.

**Table 4: Status of Integration of Social Studies**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.043	1	.043	.494	.483
Within Groups	21.037	244	.086		
Total	21.079	245			

The analysis of variance in Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference on the teachers perception on the status of integration in relation to the type of school because the p value is .483 hence  $p > 0.05$  and the F value is .494. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. From the findings it can be deduced that the type of school taught either private or public does not play a critical role in influencing the teacher's perception on status of integration.

Teachers' perceptions have important implication for instructional practices in any system of education. One of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) core function is to conduct research and develop curriculum for all levels of education below the university [1]. In relation to the findings above it can be argued that since the integrated Social Studies syllabus is developed by the (KICD), the same syllabus is used in both public and private schools hence teachers from both type of schools are in agreement that integration is catered for in the Social Studies curriculum.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Touching on the Status of integration of Social Studies, it is clear from findings that the content of integrated Social Studies (SST) is beneficial to learners, it contributes to the attainment of the national goals of education, it has been changing very quickly within short span of time hence need to elongate time before next revision is done, the Social Studies teachers need to be taken for refresher courses to improve their teaching skills, there's relationship among topics taught from one class and the next and that integrated Social Studies curriculum has integrated emerging issues.

*H<sub>01</sub>*: The teachers from public primary schools have a higher perception on status of integration of Social Studies aspects than their counterparts from private primary schools in relation to the computed mean. There's no significant difference on the teacher's perception on status of integration in relation to the type of school taught either private or public.

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made; It is recommended that the government through KICD

should take time before reviewing Social Studies curriculum. This can be done by emerging issues which need learners' attention being posted to school through bi-annual circulars. In case these issues are intact for a considerable amount of time about ten years, they need to be included during the next revision.

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