

Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions of Acceptance and Implementation Concerning Characteristics of the Social Studies Curriculum

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Elementary and secondary school principals and teachers were surveyed to determine their perceptions concerning the degrees of acceptance and the degree of implementation of social studies curriculum characteristics. A questionnaire was designed to elicit the societal aspects, the social science content, and the learning/development processes within the social studies curriculum. Analyses of data reveal significant differences of perception between elementary and secondary teachers, and between principals and teachers. Also, the difference between the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation concerning social studies curriculum characteristics was found to be statistically significant. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations are discussed.

Introduction

A major goal of social studies education is to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in our youth in order to provide society with functional and effective citizens (Jarolimek, 1986; Schuncke, 1988; Woolever & Scott, 1988). In order to achieve this goal Savage and Armstrong (1987) and Michaelis (1988) propose that social studies education should stress three orientations: social science content; societal-centered issues; and psychological aspects of learning and development.

The social science orientation provides the knowledge base from the disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, and sociology. The psychological orientation addresses the nature of the learner and characteristic components that affect the learning process. The integration of relevant social issues and conditions into the curriculum is portrayed through the societal orientation.

Even though the intent of social studies education is very acceptable and appealing, recent studies show that social studies education is suffering from lack of respect as

a legitimate school subject. Palonsky and Jacobson (1988) indicate that social studies education is a low priority subject and is taught with very little enthusiasm. Other studies report that teachers have not effectively communicated the importance of the subject to their students and that students find social studies boring and irrelevant (Jarolimek, 1986; Shug, Todd, & Beery, 1984). Shug (1989) and Mills (1989) found that teachers' views of social studies were narrow, extremely conservative, and supportive of the status quo. Also, the student teachers who were assigned to these teachers detected these views of social studies education in their supervising teachers.

In addition to these negative views and attitudes concerning social studies education, some educators report that textbook authors, curriculum supervisors, and teachers disagree concerning the purposes and reasons for teaching social studies (Betres, 1981; Joyce & Alleman-Brooks, 1980; Joyce, Alleman-Brooke, Orimsloye, 1982; Morrissett, 1985). Others have found a lack of agreement between teachers and principals concerning concepts of curriculum and instruction (Rice, et. al., 1988; vonEschenbach, 1988).

This lack of agreement jeopardizes the continuity of content, process, and skill development throughout the elementary and secondary social studies curriculum. Support for this continuity comes from Downey (1986), who stressed that learning throughout social studies must be cumulative, and Hergesheimer (1989), who recommended that the K-12 social studies program be sequential and cumulative.

Although the literature reports differences among textbook authors, supervisors, principals, and teachers concerning curriculum and instruction matters, it is not clear whether elementary and secondary teachers and principals differ in their perceptions of acceptance and implementation concerning the social science, psychological, and societal orientations to social studies education. Since principals are recognized as instructional leaders within the school's program and teachers are critical agents for the delivery of the curriculum, it is important to assess the degree to which they accept and implement these social studies curriculum orientations and whether there is any difference among their agreement.

Purpose of the Study

This study was undertaken in an attempt to assess the perceptions of elementary and secondary teachers and elementary and secondary principals relative to the goals and missions of social studies education as portrayed in three noted orientations--social science context, societal-centered issues, and psychological aspects of learning and development.

Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed in this study are:

1. Do elementary and secondary teachers differ in their degree of acceptance concerning characteristics of a social studies curriculum?
2. Do elementary and secondary teachers differ in their degree of implementation concerning characteristics of a social studies curriculum?
3. Is there a difference between the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation pertinent to these characteristics?
4. Do principals and teachers differ in their perception of the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation concerning characteristics of a social studies curriculum?

Methods

Sample

The sample for the pilot questionnaire was social studies teachers who were enrolled in graduate courses during a single quarter at a major university. A total of 20 teachers ($N = 20$) were randomly selected from four graduate classes in elementary and secondary social studies education, and all

the respondents returned the pilot questionnaire.

The *Alabama Education Directory* was used for random selection of 150 elementary (grades 1 through 6) schools and 150 secondary (grades 7 through 12) schools throughout the state of Alabama. The principals and social studies teachers from these schools were the subjects for this study. The principals were asked to respond to one questionnaire and to distribute the other questionnaire to a social studies teacher in their school buildings. Both principals and teachers were instructed to return the questionnaires directly to the researchers.

Instrumentation

A 30-item questionnaire was designed to depict the societal, the social science, and the psychological orientations of the social studies curriculum. After a review of the professional literature, five variables were identified for each of the three orientations. The societal orientation contained the variables of patriotism, self-direction, interpersonal relations, social issues, and social participation. The five variables in the social science orientation were generalizations, concepts, facts, identity of the social sciences, and sources of curriculum content. Variables within the psychological orientation were self-concept, affective education, thinking ability, decision-making, and diversity of learning. Two items were written for each of these fifteen variables.

The pilot assessment of the questionnaire was to determine whether items were clearly written and were appropriate to the social studies curriculum. The randomly selected social studies teachers ($N = 20$) were requested to select a response of "agree" or "disagree" to the clarity and appropriateness of each item. A minimum of 75% agreement for both clarity and appropriateness on each of the 30 items was used to ascertain validity.

The validated questionnaire instructed the respondents to rate their degree of acceptance and their degree of implementation for each of the 30 curriculum characteristics. A six-point Likert scale was used for both degree of acceptance and degree of implementation (with 1 representing lowest degree and 6 representing highest degree). A cover letter and stamped return envelope were included in the mailing.

Data Analyses

The responses from the pilot questionnaire were compiled according to frequency scores of agree and disagree responses. None of the frequency scores for each of the 30 items on the pilot questionnaire were below the 75% level, therefore, each of the items was judged to be clearly written and appropriate to social studies education.

Responses concerning degree of acceptance and degree of implementation from the elementary and secondary school principals and teachers were tabulated for each of the 30 items. Since two test items comprised a variable, the numerical range for each variable was 2 to 12 degrees on the Likert scale. The data were analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (Norusis, 1985). In order to establish any differences of perception, the multivariate analysis of variance was used. The probability level of $p <$

Table 1
Degree of Acceptance and Degree of Implementation Mean Scores For Each of the Fifteen Characteristics of a Social Studies Curriculum As Perceived By Elementary and Secondary School Teachers and Principals

Orientation Variable Questionnaire Item	Degree of Acceptance		Degree of Implementation	
	Teachers Elem. (94)	Principals Elem. (51) Sec. (83)	Teachers Elem. (94) Sec. (127)	Principals Elem. (51) Sec. (83)
Societal Orientation				
A. Patriotism (SPA)				
1. Promote patriotic mannerism	11.61	11.62	10.50	9.94
13. Maintain a pride in our national heritage	11.34	11.17	10.19	9.19
B. Self-direction (SSD)				
3. Develop an internalized attitude toward responsible citizenship	11.22	11.17	9.27	9.17
6. Relate the merits of an individual to the common good of society	11.14	10.92	10.03	9.03
C. Interpersonal (SIP)				
7. Promote acceptance of diversity among individuals	11.04	10.64	9.05	9.03
25. Enhance abilities to interact in group situations				

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Orientation Variable Questionnaire Item	Degree of Acceptance Teachers		Degree of Acceptance Principals		Degree of Implementation Teachers		Degree of Implementation Principals	
	Elem. (94)	Sec. (127)	Elem. (51)	Sec. (83)	Elem. (94)	Sec. (127)	Elem. (51)	Sec. (83)
D. Social Issues (SSI)	9.99	10.41	9.88	10.22	8.49	8.77	7.92	8.83
9. Examine controversy in social issues								
12. Investigate relevant social issues								
E. Social Participation (SSP)	11.13	10.79	11.08	10.70	9.99	9.13	9.33	8.84
20. Encourage participation in community service or activities								
21. Encourage the use of democratic rights and responsibilities to enhance one's society								
<u>Social Science Content Orientation</u>								
A. Generalizations (CGE)	10.26	9.97	9.92	9.82	9.41	9.01	8.54	8.70
2. Emphasize unit plans when designing instruction								
5. Portray the content in the context of a theme								

Table 1 (continued)

Orientation Variable Questionnaire Item	Degree of Acceptance		Degree of Implementation	
	Teachers Elem. (94)	Principals Sec. (83) Elem. (51)	Teachers Sec. (127) Elem. (94)	Principals Elem. (51) Sec. (83)
B. Social Sciences (CSS)	10.67	10.66	9.56	9.30
8. Emphasize a historical perspective		10.67	9.07	8.85
11. Incorporate content from all social sciences		10.54		
C. Source of Content (CSC)	10.34	9.44	10.35	9.99
14. Adhere to the state's course of study		9.94	9.71	10.71
26. Adhere to the content of the adopted textbook		9.99		
D. Concepts (CCC)	10.82	10.42	9.74	8.70
19. Teach concept development		10.67	8.72	8.77
24. Expand concepts throughout the grade levels		10.17		
E. Facts (CFT)	10.12	9.83	9.66	9.18
18. Present information with facts as opposed to concepts or themes		9.65	9.38	9.09
27. Identify the content by presenting specific knowledge		9.52		

Table 1 (continued)

Orientation Variable Questionnaire Item	Degree of Acceptance		Degree of Implementation	
	Teachers Elem. (94) Sec. (127)	Principals Elem. (51) Sec. (83)	Teachers Elem. (94) Sec. (127)	Principals Elem. (51) Sec. (83)
Psychological Orientation				
A. Self-Concept (PSC)	11.31	10.69	10.19	9.15
4. Enhance the student's self-esteem			9.00	8.66
23. Explore positive self-concept development				
B. Affective Education (PAE)	10.78	10.01	9.55	8.28
10. Encourage moral development			8.29	8.28
16. Utilize a value clarification model				
C. Thinking Ability (PTA)	10.54	10.43	8.87	7.69
15. Emphasize problem-solving			8.35	8.18
29. Explore methods for students to conduct research				
D. Decision-Making (PDM)	11.12	10.60	9.46	8.60
22. Expose students to strategies for making choices			8.71	8.59
28. Develop decision-making abilities for social issues				
E. Diversity of Learning (PDL)	11.11	10.55	9.61	8.28
17. Utilize a diversity of other media besides textbooks			9.01	8.70
30. Address the diversity of learning styles				

.05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Results

The rates of return for the validated questionnaire were 94 elementary school teachers (63%), 127 secondary teachers (85%), 51 elementary school principals (34%), and 83 secondary school principals (55%).

The tabulation of responses for each of the variables shows that the elementary school teachers' mean scores for the degree of acceptance and degree of implementation were higher than the mean scores of secondary school teachers on 14 of the 15 variables. The variable of "social issues" within the societal orientation was the only item for which the secondary teachers had a higher mean score for acceptance and implementation. The elementary principals' mean scores were higher than the secondary principals except for source of curriculum content. The elementary school principals had a slightly lower degree of accepting courses of study or curriculum guides as a content source for the social studies curriculum but reported a higher degree of using these sources in their program. When comparing teachers to principals, teachers generally have higher degrees of perceptions for acceptance and implementation in both the elementary and secondary categories.

Three of the four research questions in this study were: Do elementary and secondary teachers differ in their degree of acceptance concerning characteristics of a social studies curriculum? Do elementary and secondary teachers differ in their degree of implementation concerning characteristics of a social studies curriculum? Is there a difference between the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation pertinent to these characteristics? The multivariate analysis of variance demonstrated that there are statistically significant differences between elementary and secondary teachers' perceptions of acceptance and implementation concerning the 15 characteristics of a social studies curriculum. In addition, the results support a statistically significant differ-

ence between the level of acceptance and the level of implementation for these same characteristics.

More specifically, the multivariate tests and the Scheffe test for significance between mean scores show that 7 of the 15 variables are statistically significant for differences between elementary and secondary teachers, differences between degrees of acceptance and degrees of implementation, and for the interaction effect between teachers and degrees of perception. These seven variables are patriotism, self-direction, interpersonal relations, social participation, concepts, self-concept, and affective education. The difference in perception between the elementary and secondary school teachers is statistically significant for source of curriculum content. The variables of social issues, generalizations, social sciences, facts, and thinking ability have statistically significant mean score differences between the teachers' perceptions for the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation. Finally, decision-making and diversity of learning are two variables which have statistically significant differences between the two categories of teachers and between perceptions of acceptance and implementation but do not have a statistically significant index to account for interaction effect.

The fourth research question was whether principals and teachers differ in their perception of the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation concerning characteristics of a social studies curriculum. When analyzing the differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of acceptance and implementation, statistical differences are evident between elementary teachers and principals and between the perceptions of acceptance versus implementation. However, the interaction effect of elementary teacher/principal by perception did not produce a significant difference. For the secondary education sample, teachers and principals did not differ in their perceptions. The difference between their degree of acceptance and their degree of implementation when the ratings from both groups were combined was statistically significant, however. Also,

Table 2
Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Perceived Degree of Acceptance and Degree of Implementation for Fifteen Characteristics of a Social Studies Curriculum by Elementary and Secondary School Teachers

Effect	Hotellings Values	F Values
Elem. and Secondary Teachers	.35	4.14*
Accept/Implement Perception	1.69	20.08*
Teacher Groups By Perception	.21	2.52**

* $p < .0001$

** $p < .002$

the two secondary education samples significantly differed in their perceptions of acceptance and implementation.

Discussion

Within the professional literature, writers contend that the design for an effective social studies curriculum is to include the three orientations of societal considerations, content from the social sciences, and psychological principles of learning and development. The results of this study

suggest that the teachers who are responsible for delivering these three foundations through their classroom instruction differ in their degree of acceptance and their degree of implementation. The magnitude of the mean scores indicates that both elementary and secondary teachers accept the importance of these 15 characteristics but the degree of acceptance held by the two groups is significantly different. All five characteristics within the societal orientation, four characteristics within the psychological orientation, and two characteristics within the social sciences orientation have

Table 3
Multivariate Tests Significance For Each of the Fifteen Characteristics of a Social Studies Curriculum as Perceived By Elementary and Secondary School Teachers

Orientation Variable	Between Teachers	Between Perceptions	Perceptions By Teacher
<u>Societal Orientation</u>			
A. Patriotism (SPA)	.000	.000	.000
B. Self-direction (SSD)	.000	.000	.002
C. Interpersonal (SIP)	.000	.000	.010
D. Social Issues (SSI)	.084	.000	.580
E. Social Participation (SSP)	.002	.000	.035
<u>Social Science Content Orientation</u>			
A. Generalizations (CGE)	.120	.000	.569
B. Social Sciences (CSS)	.193	.000	.023
C. Source of Content(CSC)	.001	.166	.201
D. Concepts (CCC)	.001	.000	.007
E. Facts (CFT)	.130	.000	.942
<u>Psychological Orientation</u>			
A. Self-Concept (PSC)	.000	.000	.014
B. Affective Education (PAE)	.000	.000	.035
C. Thinking Ability (PTA)	.121	.000	.098
D. Decision-Making (PDM)	.002	.000	.370
E. Diversity of Learning (PDL)	.001	.000	.845

Table 4

Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Perceived Degree of Acceptance and Degree of Implementation Between Elementary School Teachers and Principals and Between Secondary School Teachers and Principals Concerning Fifteen Characteristics of a Social Studies Curriculum.

Effect	HOTELLINGS VALUES		F VALUES	
	Elem.	Sec.	Elem.	Sec.
Teachers/Principals	.26	.11	1.92**	1.19
Acceptance/Implementation	2.01	2.08	14.67*	21.83*
Teachers/Principals by Perception	.19	.16	1.42	1.76**

* $p < .0001$

** $p < .05$

significantly different mean scores between elementary and secondary teachers. If 11 of the 15 characteristics are viewed differently by elementary and secondary school teachers, then stability and continuity of the social studies curriculum throughout the 12 grades can be jeopardized.

In addition, the discrepancy between the high degree of acceptance and the low degree of implementation indicates that these characteristics are not delivered in the daily social studies program by elementary and secondary school teachers. Although teachers may endorse the importance of these 15 variables, if they are not implementing them to the same or a higher degree, then the social studies program is not achieving its full potential. More importantly, the students are not receiving the comprehensive social studies program needed to provide the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective and functional citizenship.

Finally, the results of this study also suggest that principals and teachers do not share the same perceptions of acceptance and implementation concerning these characteristics of a social studies curriculum. The role of the principal is to serve as an instructional leader. In order to insure effective guidance, supervision, and leadership by principals, the characteristics of the social studies curriculum must be mutually perceived and endorsed by both principals and teachers. If a discrepancy between principals and teachers continues to exist, then erroneous expectations will jeopardize the quality of instructional leadership and the effectiveness of a school program.

Recommendations

In order to restore or enhance the continuity and effectiveness of the social studies curriculum by elementary and secondary school teachers and principals, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Continuous professional development of social studies teachers through inservice sessions should be designed and implemented. Inservice programs should generate a collaborative exploration and mutual endorsement of the social studies curriculum by elementary and secondary teachers. The inservice programs should also be focused on

an acceptable design for teaching social studies in a sequential and cumulative approach from K-12. In addition, it is critical that teachers develop a stronger conviction or rationale for teaching social studies and be provided staff development to help them develop innovative and effective instructional techniques.

2. Since scholars, researchers, and curriculum specialists allude to the importance of the three social studies orientations, then teachers need not only to accept but also to effectively implement these orientations in their instructional program. More importantly, it is recommended that administrators begin to intervene, assist, and support teachers in raising their level of implementation. The congruence between administrative support and teacher implementation could result in a social studies program that provides the knowledge, attitudes, and skills for developing effective and functional citizens.

3. In order for administrators to communicate their support of clear expectations for a social studies program, it is also recommended that they participate in staff-development sessions to discuss the characteristics and importance of the three orientations for the social studies curriculum. Administrators should develop a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of social studies education, and demonstrate their support by jealously protecting the time set aside for social studies classes and events.

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