

RUNNING HEAD: Social Studies Curriculum

Analysis of Social Organization and Policy Curriculum in Social Studies



Menko Johnson
EDIT 221
March 3, 2007

Executive Summary

San Jose Unified School District implemented a new Social Studies curriculum that utilizes a new method of organizing and presenting content in the Social Studies courses. The new method called SOAP (Social Organization and Policy) was compared to the traditional curriculum delivery system (LOSS) currently in place. Research sought to determine two key questions: did measures of student attitude towards Social Studies differ between the SOAP and LOSS groups, and was there a performance difference on a 100-item Social Studies standardized test (STAR) between the SOAP and LOSS groups.

Two one-way ANOVAs were conducted to analyze the differences in means on both the Social Studies attitude and content measures, and SOAP group scored significantly higher on both measures ($p=.05$). Thus, the researchers concluded that SOAP curriculum does increase students' attitudes and content knowledge about Social Studies when compared to the traditional LOSS curriculum.

Introduction

San Jose Unified School district received a new Social Studies curriculum enhancement grant which enabled a pilot-test of the new Social Organization and Policy (SOAP) curriculum developed by education researchers at the University of California, Davis. SOAP's problem-based learning approach focuses on teaching Social Studies utilizing a framework of social justice and power. Instead of teaching about a specific time period out of context, SOAP focuses student attention on different types of power struggles occurring in the major political forces active during the time period. The goal is to thematically connect disparate time periods through a thread of social power struggles and change.

A study was conducted to evaluate whether the SOAP curriculum was more effective at teaching Social Studies content and able to create a more positive attitude towards the subject compared to the traditional curriculum currently in place (LOSS). To answer these questions, 60 students were randomly assigned to either the SOAP or LOSS groups and treated for 15 weeks. Four tests were administered at the end of the 15 week treatment period to compare the two groups. Social studies attitudes were measured by the 23-item Social Studies Attitude Scale. To measure the two group's social studies achievement content knowledge, the 100-point California Social Studies Assessment Test was given to each student. Finally, each student's problem-solving and reading scores from the STAR test were also included in the study. A statistical analysis of the scores on these assessments was performed to see if there was a difference in social studies attitude or content knowledge between the SOAP and LOSS groups.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Below are the descriptive statistics for the total group ($n=60$) in the Social Organization and Policy study. There were 4 different tests conducted: a 23-item Social Studies (SS) Attitude test, The Social Studies (SS) Content test, consisting of 100 questions from the California Social Studies Content Test, and a Reading and Problem Solving assessment taken from the STAR test.

Descriptive Statistics	<i>Problem.</i>			
	<i>SS Attitude</i>	<i>SS Content</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Solving</i>
Mean	17.28	83.38	2.02	8.12
Standard Error	0.47	2.00	0.08	0.18
Median	18.00	85.00	2.00	8.00
Mode	18.00	100.00	2.00	8.00
Standard Deviation	3.65	15.47	0.65	1.39
Sample Variance	13.29	239.36	0.42	1.94
Kurtosis	-0.60	-0.53	-0.55	-0.75
Skewness	-0.36	-0.63	-0.02	-0.22
Range	14.00	55.00	2.00	5.00
Minimum	9.00	45.00	1.00	5.00
Maximum	23.00	100.00	3.00	10.00
Sum	1037.00	5003.00	121.00	487.00
Count	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.94	4.00	0.17	0.36

Table 1: Total Group Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations are summarized above, as each test has a different range of scores. The 100-item SS Content test had a mean of 83.38, with scores ranging from a low of 45 to a high of 100. This was the main measure of social studies achievement. The SS Attitude measure measured students' attitude towards social studies learning, with a range of scores from a low of 9 and high of 23.

Additionally assessments from the STAR test measured Reading and Problem-Solving achievement to compare to the Social Studies measures. The Reading test had a range of 1 to 3, with a mean of 2.02 and a median and mode of 2. The Problem-Solving test had a mean of 8.12 with a standard deviation of 1.39.

LOSS Group	<i>Problem.</i>			
	<i>SS Attitude</i>	<i>SS Content</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Solving</i>
Mean	15.27	76.43	1.93	7.60
Standard Error	0.60	2.92	0.12	0.26
Median	15.00	75.00	2.00	7.00
Mode	14.00	100.00	2.00	7.00
Standard Deviation	3.29	16.00	0.64	1.40
Sample Variance	10.82	255.84	0.41	1.97
Kurtosis	-0.70	-0.93	-0.35	-0.70
Skewness	0.00	-0.11	0.05	0.06
Range	13.00	55.00	2.00	5.00
Minimum	9.00	45.00	1.00	5.00
Maximum	22.00	100.00	3.00	10.00
Sum	458.00	2293.00	58.00	228.00
Count	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
Confidence Level (95.0%)	1.23	5.97	0.24	0.52

Table 2: LOSS Control Group Descriptive Statistics

The LOSS Social Studies Content group had a mean score of 15.27 on the attitude measure, with a standard deviation of 3.29. The scores on the content measure ranged from a minimum of 45 to a maximum of 100, with a mean score falling at 76.43. The reading and problem solving sections had mean scores of 1.93 and 7.60, respectively.

SOAP Group	<i>Problem.</i>			
	<i>SS Attitude</i>	<i>SS Content</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Solving</i>
Mean	19.30	90.33	2.10	8.63
Standard Error	0.51	2.09	0.12	0.22
Median	19.50	93.50	2.00	8.50
Mode	17.00	100.00	2.00	8.00
Standard Deviation	2.79	11.45	0.66	1.19
Sample Variance	7.80	131.20	0.44	1.41
Kurtosis	1.08	1.28	-0.56	-0.93
Skewness	-0.78	-1.14	-0.11	-0.27
Range	12.00	45.00	2.00	4.00
Minimum	11.00	55.00	1.00	6.00
Maximum	23.00	100.00	3.00	10.00
Sum	579.00	2710.00	63.00	259.00
Count	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
Confidence				
Level(95.0%)	1.04	4.28	0.25	0.44

Table 3: SOAP Experimental Group Descriptive Statistics

The SOAP Social Studies Content group had higher mean scores in all 4 test areas, although it has not yet been determined whether or not those differences are statistically significant. The mean score on the attitude measure was 19.30 and the

mean content score was 90.33. These differences will be explored in the *Research Questions* section below.

Histograms

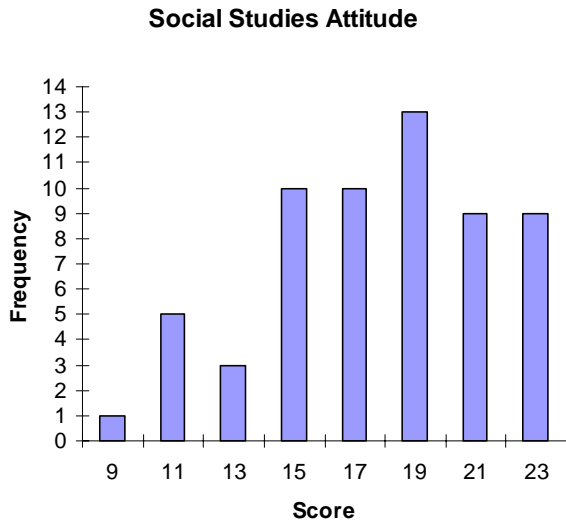


Chart 1: Social Studies Attitude

The Social Studies Attitude histogram had a mean of 18.03 and a median and mode of 18. As you can see by the shape of the curve, it is negatively skewed with scores clustered towards the upper scores.

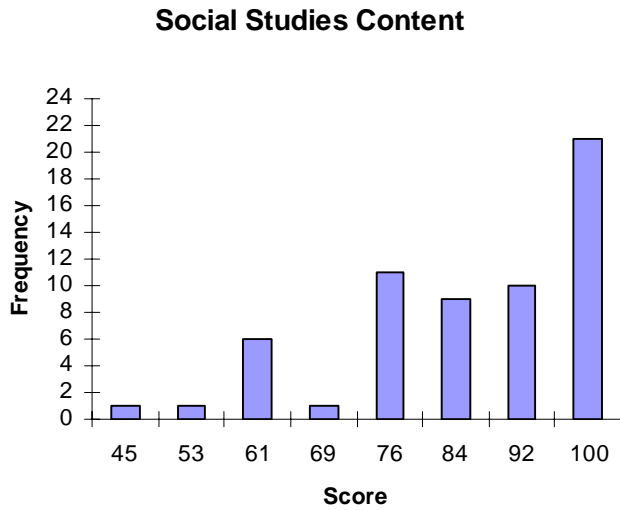


Chart 2: Social Studies Content

The Social Studies Content histogram has a mode for the group of 100. The graph is negatively skewed with scores clustering at the upper end of the score range.

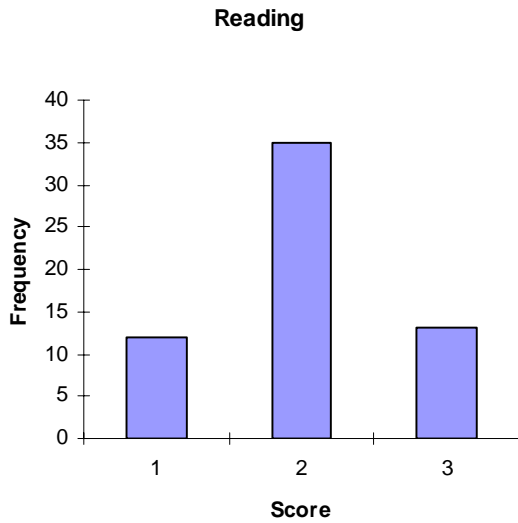


Figure 3: Reading Assessment

The reading assessment test has a range of scores from 1 to 3, with a mean of 2.02. Unlike other histograms, the reading scores are not skewed and have a normal distribution.

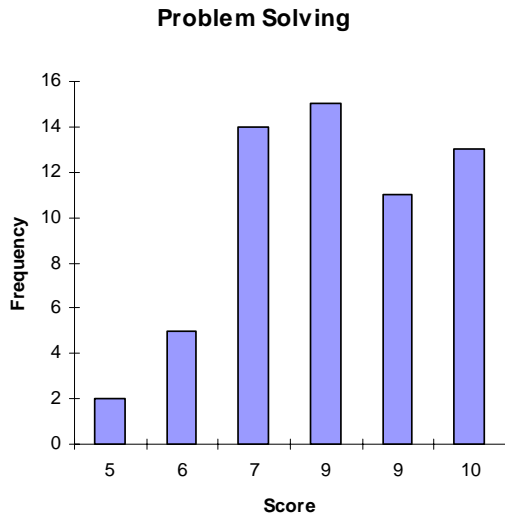


Figure 4: Problem Solving Assessment

The scores on the problem-solving assessment range from 5 to 10, and are bimodally distributed at 8 and 10. The mean score for the group is 8.08.

Research Questions

Two major questions were posed by the researchers when the study was designed:

1. Is there a difference in Social Studies Attitudes mean scores between students treated with SOAP (experimental) materials and those treated with LOSS (control) materials?
2. Is there a difference in Social Studies Content knowledge between the mean scores of students treated with SOAP (experimental) materials and those treated with LOSS (control) materials?

In order to answer these questions statistically, two sets of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted. The first test addressed research question #1, and looked to see if there is a significant difference between the mean attitude

scores of the SOAP and LOSS groups (Table 4). The second ANOVA compared the SOAP and LOSS means on the Social Studies content assessment (Table 5).

Social Studies Attitude ANOVA

SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Trad SS Att	30.00	458.00	15.27	10.82
SOAP SS Att	30.00	579.00	19.30	7.80

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	244.02	1	244.02	26.20	0.00	4.01
Within Groups	540.17	58	9.31			
Total	784.18	59				

Table 4: ANOVA comparison of Social Studies Attitude

In a direct comparison of the SOAP group ($n=30$) with the regular curriculum group ($n=30$), the SOAP group's $F=26.20$ and the critical $F=4.01$. Since the observed F is greater than the critical F ($p=.05$), the null hypothesis that there is no difference in attitude between SOAP and traditional curriculum groups, must be rejected. The average score for SOAP group members was significantly higher than the average score of the traditional social studies classroom (19.30 versus 15.27).

Social Studies Content ANOVA

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Trad SS Cont	30.00	2293.00	76.43	255.84
SOAP SS Cont	30.00	2710.00	90.33	131.20

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	2898.15	1	2898.15	14.98	0.00	4.01
Within Groups	11224.03	58	193.52			
Total	14122.18	59				

Table 5: ANOVA comparison of Social Studies Content

The investigators also sought to see if there was a difference in Social Studies content knowledge between the SOAP and traditional groups. An ANOVA examining the mean scores of these groups was performed. The F value of the SOAP group was $F=14.98$ ($p=.05$) which was greater than the critical $F=4.01$. Thus the null hypothesis stating that Social Studies Content knowledge is the same between the two groups must be rejected. Based on the means of 90.33 for the SOAP group and 76.43 for the traditional group, members of the SOAP group score significantly higher than their traditional group counterparts.

Correlation Matrix

	SS Attitude	SS Content	Reading	Problem- Solving
SS Attitude	1			
SS Content	0.953	1		
Reading	0.084	0.058	1	
Problem- Solving	0.822	0.835	0.185	1

Table 6: Correlation Table for each Dependent Variable

The correlation table results reveal some interesting relationships between our measures of Social Studies Attitude, Social Studies Content knowledge, Reading ability, and Problem-Solving ability. One might predict that a student's attitude towards social studies would be highly correlated with their content knowledge, and this was found to be true. The correlation between attitude and content knowledge has a strong positive correlation of $r=.953$. Additionally, Problem-Solving also had a strong positive correlation with both Social Studies Attitude ($r=.822$) and Social Studies Content ($r=.835$). Surprisingly however, the Reading assessment was found to have little or no correlation between any of the other 3 assessments.

Conclusions

The researchers sought to answer two main questions: does the SOAP social studies curriculum improve scores on measures of social studies knowledge, and positively increase student attitudes toward the subject of social studies. The ANOVAs clearly demonstrated that SOAP curriculum increased both content and attitude scores after 15 weeks of exposure compared to the standard LOSS curriculum. Given the promise of demonstrable achievement improvements, it would be recommended that the district investigate the program further. San Jose Unified School District may well want to consider a broader study of the SOAP curriculum to determine whether or not it would be advisable to adopt the SOAP program district-wide. More study is warranted based upon these preliminary results.