



Full length research paper

Integration of Cultural Elements into Upper Primary School Social Science Curriculum Materials and their Implication for Equitable Education in Oromia, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating the integration of cultural elements into upper primary school social science curriculum materials in Oromia regional state, Ethiopia. To attain this objective, two social science curriculum materials (Afan Oromo and Social Studies) were selected randomly to enhance the generalizability of the findings to the whole population. Thereafter, 364 (50%) different paragraphs were selected by using simple random sampling technique. Quantitative research method, more specifically, content analysis was used as a main research design used for the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency distribution and percentage. The findings revealed that upper primary school social science curriculum materials in Oromia failed to include cultural elements of the region that are manifested in the forms of natural material and heritages, songs, cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, norms, heroes and heroines. Besides, most valuable indigenous cultural elements of the region were failed to be included in social science curriculum materials. Hence, for the better inclusion of cultural elements of the region into social science curriculum materials, curriculum developers at the region need to give a due attention.

Key words: Cultural element, Cultural element integration, Equitable education, Social science

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Introduction

Stating the powerfulness of culture in human life Banks (1997) states that, culture influences many aspects of human behavior including the cognitive and verbal skills we emphasize in schools. Further, he explains that culture involves the knowledge and skill we possess, when and how we use them, and how we value

them, the language we use, the way we stand, the ways we use our bodies, are all parts of culture. In support to this idea, Elliot (2004) noted that, cultural experiences include experiences of diversified race, ethnicity, gender and religion. Hence, we can suggest that human being cannot be separated from its own culture in its every respect. He further added

that culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art morals laws, customs, and other capabilities acquired by a man as a member of society. Therefore, culture needs to be integrated in education so that it serves as a tool to cultivate the cultural tendencies of one's own knowledge, skills and attitudes to which they are belonging. Concerning this, Bullivant (2001) states that, integrating cultural dimension into teaching and learning will enable students to prepare themselves to deal more effectively with various situations in their life. He added that, integration of the cultural dimension into a curriculum enables the students develop their sensibilities in relation to their immediate environment. To this end, cultural elements such as material heritage, cultural songs and plays, cultural values and hero/heroines are expected to integrate into our curriculum.

Banks (1997) suggested that, the curriculum as well as the curriculum materials need to incorporate these and other cultural experiences which call for the existence of cultural elements in the curriculum. When observed from the pedagogical point of view, the integration of these cultural elements in education plays a critical role in helping students develop their culture and easily construct the subject matter they are being thought. In addition to this, access to a variety of cultural resources and a broad range of knowledge contributes to the student's construction of a world-view. However, in many parts of the world most school curriculum has been influenced by such factors as dominating ideologies and also donor countries and funding organization. According to Dereje (2004), the influence of dominating ideologies, donor countries and funding organization led most African education system to highly centralized management that denies curriculum relevance. Therefore, what is thought and how it is thought in schools is all decided at one center.

When we consider the case of Ethiopia, Ethiopia is a country of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. In such a country, it is

recommended that the educational program must be designed from different cultural perspectives. Emphasizing this, Bennet (1995), argues that in a society when there is cultural diversity, all school subjects should be designed and thought from different cultural background, because the major aim of education is to create equal educational opportunities for the students from different ethnic groups. It is due to this significant fact that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia (1995:24) declared that: *"the Government shall have the duty to support, on the basis of equality, growth and enrichment of cultures and tradition that are compatible with fundamental rights, human dignity, democratic norms and ideas"* (Article 91/1). In addition, article 39/2 of the constitution states that *"every nation nationalities and people in Ethiopia has the right to express, to develop and to perform its culture; and to preserve its history."*

Furthermore, in Education and Training policy of Ethiopia (1994:10), one of its objectives emphasize on the importance of culture in education: and it states that: *"to provide education that promotes democratic culture, tolerance and peaceful resolutions of differences and that raises the sense of discharging societal responsibility."* This policy states that the role of education is to value and create a favorable condition for equality, mutual understanding and cooperation among people and the importance of culture in content of education. Hence, this paper tried to investigate the degree of integration of cultural elements into upper primary school social science curriculum materials in Oromia Regional state, Ethiopia.

Research Method and Design of the Study

In order to investigate cultural elements into curriculum materials, quantitative research method, more specifically content analysis was employed. In quantitative content analysis a vast amount of written data is reduced to smaller groups of information, long texts with loads of words are represented by fewer words or expressions as put by Amare (2002) and

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Creswell (2009). Finally, content analysis can be conducted with any written material, from documents and can be applied to examine large amounts of texts. Due to the above significant facts, the researcher decided to use content analysis as an appropriate design used for the analysis of cultural elements in the upper primary school social science curriculum materials in Oromia Region.

Sample and sampling technique

Upper primary school social science curriculum materials, namely social studies and Afan Oromo subjects were taken as a sample of study. Probability sampling, that is, simple random sampling techniques was used in selecting Afan Oromo and social studies curriculum materials from grades 5 to 8. To this end, upper primary school social science curriculum materials, namely social studies grades 5 & 7 and Afan Oromo grades 6 & 8 were selected as a sample of the study.

Data collection

Secondary sources of data were used. The secondary sources of data used for this study include social science student's curriculum materials (social studies and Afan Oromo) used in Oromia Regional State. Coding sheets was employed as a major data collection tools so as to check the degree of integration of cultural elements in selected social science curriculum materials. In order to prepare coding sheets for the intend coding purpose, lists of people that are registered as heroes/heroine, natural and material heritage that were registered permanently and tentatively by UNESCO and the kind of songs reflected in the Region were taken from the Zonal Tourism Bureau. Once the lists are obtained from the Tourism Bureau, certain amendments was made in order to make the lists more reflecting the real situation of the Region by adding certain names that are left untouched by the Bureau.

In addition, Oromo cultural values most prominently registered by the Oromia Tourism Office were used for the purpose of preparing

checklists. Words, phrases, statements, supporting pictures/illustration and passages are used as unit of analysis or sampling units. Accordingly, in these study names of heroes/heroines, material heritage, songs and cultural values stated as words or phrases in a sentences or paragraph and illustration were used as units of analysis.

Validity and reliability

In order to check the validity of instrument, the instrument was prepared in advance and given to different professionals from different professions for comments. Besides, the researcher used the existing literature in order to develop coding sheets for checking whether the instrument was to the golden standards. In addition to the validity test, reliability of the instruments was checked. In order to check the reliability of instrument (coding sheet) the formula developed by Holisti (1996) was used. For this study, thus, the reliability test was calculated and it found out to be 0.85, which means the instrument was 85% reliable, where a reliability coefficient from 70% to 100 % or 0.7 to 1 accepted as reliable as suggested by Holisti (1996).

Method of data analysis

In this study, quantitative data analysis techniques were used. Based on the basic research questions, descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distributions and percentage were used. Coding of cultural elements was made by counting the occurrences of the desired cultural elements in paragraphs as per basic research questions. Data were presented in tables in order to facilitate the data presentation, analysis and interpretation of the study. In addition, the researcher used words, paragraphs and illustrations.

Profile of sources of data

As already stated in the proceeding sections, the cultural elements incorporated and manifested in terms of hero/heroines, material heritage, songs and cultural values in upper primary school social science curriculum materials developed and printed by the Oromia Educational Bureau used

as teaching materials in Oromia Regional state were used as subject of the study. More specifically, the curriculum materials used for the study were Afan Oromo and social studies of

grades 5-8 prepared for primary schools in Oromia. The details of the profiles of the sources of data are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Profiles of the curriculum materials

<i>Subject of the Study</i>	<i>Grade level</i>	<i>Total number of chapters</i>	<i>Total sampled chapters</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total number of paragraphs</i>	<i>Sampled paragraph</i>	<i>%</i>
Social studies	5	4	4	100	244	122	50
	7	4	4	100	240	120	50
	6	24	24	100	118	59	50
Afan Oromo	8	24	24	100	126	62	50
Total		56	56	100	728	364	50

As clearly indicated in Table, there were 56 (100%) different chapters that were used for the coding purposes. These 56 different chapters consist of 728 different paragraphs excluding the exercises that are used in all curriculum materials. 364 (50%) paragraphs were served for the coding purposes, which in term the researcher made generalizations from the findings.

In the course of analysis, degree of integration of cultural elements in the contents of the upper primary school social science curriculum materials of the Oromia Regional state were included in a frequency distribution and percentage for the purpose of better understanding and easy interpretation of data.

1. Portrays of the Heroes/Heroines contents in social science curriculum materials

In this section, portrayers of heroes and heroines contents in the upper primary school

social curriculum materials of the Oromia Regional state are discussed. Hero/ Heroines refer to men/women admired for courage of achievement in a Region under the study. The following individuals or cases are taken as hero's from the Oromia Tourism Bureau Office has been used as a coding unit. The integration of cultural elements in the curriculum materials was searched through coding procedures by attempting the extent that these elements are appeared in the curriculum materials. To this end, the coders identified a total of 15 famous heroes and heroines with their achievements from 364 sample paragraphs. Two subjects were identified and used for the analysis in order to answer questions raised in the basic research questions. The result of the investigation is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Presentation of hero and heroines

Heroes and Heroines	Subjects				Belongs to
	Social studies	Afan Oromo	Total	%	
Aba Jifar,	0	0	0	0	Oromoo
General Wako Gutu	0	0	0	0	
General Tadesse Biru	0	0	0	0	
Abdisa Aga,	0	0	0	0	
KumsaMorada	0	0	0	0	
Haji Adem Sado	0	0	0	0	
General Husen Bune,	0	0	0	0	
Colonel Aliyi Ciri,	0	0	0	0	
Colonel Adem Jilo	0	0	0	0	
Garasu Duki	0	0	0	0	
Artist Ali Bira	0	0	0	0	
Atlets	1	2	3	20	
Total	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3)	3	20	
Minilik II	5	1	6	40	Amhara
T/ Haymanot	2	0	2	13.3	
Total	7 (46.7)	1 (6.7)	8	53.3	
Yohannis II	1	1	2	0	Tigray
Total	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2	13.3	
Tona	2	0	2	13.3	
Total	2 (13.3)	0	2	13.3	SNNP
Grand total	11 (66.7)	4 (26.7)	15	100	

Source: BBO (2008).

As indicated in Table 2, the presentation of hero and heroines of Oromo's in different subjects under the study found to be too small. 3(20%) of hero and heroines portrayed were from Oromoo ethnic group. 12 (80 %) heroes and heroines were from non-Oromo other ethnic groups. More specifically, from Amhara 8 (53.3%), Tigre 2 (13.3 %) and SNNP 2 (13.3 %) were portrayed.

From the non-Oromo ethnic groups, heroes and heroines like Minilik II and T/Haymanot were from Amhara Region, Yohannis II from Tigri and Tona from SNNP are mentioned in the text and illustrations in upper primary school social science curriculum materials of the Oromia Regional state. The results of this finding contradict with the Ethiopian constitution (1995),

the cultural policy (1997) and the Education and Training Policy (1994) where all of them capitalized the development of each nation's and nationalities and ethnic groups cultural experiences in the education system. From these data, one can conclude that the upper primary school social science curriculum materials developed and printed by the Oromia Education Bureau and used as teaching materials in Oromia Regional State failed to reflect heroes and heroines of Oromo ethnic groups as a major component of cultural elements which, negates Banks and Banks (1999) approaches which assess the inclusion of cultural elements in terms of heroes and heroines.

2. Portrays of the material heritages

In this section, portrayers of material heritages in contents and illustrations of Upper primary school social curriculum materials of the Oromia Regional State were presented. Material heritage infer issues related with valuable things such as historic buildings passed down from previous generations. In order to determine the extent to which cultural elements are incorporated in

relation to material heritage, the materials heritages of the Region registered by Region Tourism Bureau has been used as a coding and the degree of their presence are summarized in the (Table 3). To this end, the coders identified a total of 36 material heritages within the 364 sample paragraphs for the twodifferent subjects and summaries of the findings are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3. The distribution of natural and material heritage in the selected curriculum materials

Natural and material heritages	Subjects						Belongs to
	Social studies		Afan Oromo		Total	%	
	f	%	F	%			
Bale Maintains park	3	8.3	1	2.8	4	11.1	Oromoo
Dirre Sheek Hussein	2	5.6	0	0	2	5.6	
Sofa Umer Caves	2	5.6	0	0	2	5.6	
Aba Jifar Palace,	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Kumsa Moroda	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Palace	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Aba Jifar Museum	0	0	0	0	0	0	Amhara
Kumsa Moroda	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Museum	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	7	19.4	1	2.8	8	22.2	
Aksum	4	11.1	1	2.8	5	13.9	
Lalibala	5	13.9	1	2.8	6	16.7	
Fasiledes	5	13.9	0	0	5	13.9	
Total	14	38.9	2	5.6	16	44.4	SNNP
Melka Kunture	5	13.9	0	0	5	13.9	
Konso Tracing	5	13.9	2	5.6	7	19.4	
Total	10	27.8	2	5.6	12	33.3	
	31	86.1	5	13.9	36	100	

As indicated in table 3, material heritage as a cultural element hasn't received much attention in social science curriculum materials in Oromia Region. Out of 36 material heritages that are counted as a coding unit, only 8 (22.2%) of the Oromo ethnic cultural heritages were portrayed. This is to say that, out of 364 different paragraphs only 7 (19.4%) and 1 (2.8%) material heritages have been included in the texts and illustrations of Social studies, and Afan Oromo curriculum materials respectively. Whereas, out of total 36 materials heritages counted, about 28 (77.8%) belongs to

non -Oromo ethnic cultural heritages, where 16(44.4%) belongs to Amhara, and 12 (33.4%) belongs to SNNP.

From the analysis of data, therefore, one can understand that, the preparation of social science curriculum materials in Oromia Region, contradicts with Banks and Banks (1999) view, who stated that curriculum and curriculum materials provide opportunity to communicate cultural heritages, transmit and inculcate social issues. In addition, the finding contradicts with the ideas of Bond (2004) which states that,

recognizing the cultural elements in the form of material heritage in the curriculum enable the teaching learning process convenient and can facilitate student’s interactions and understanding.

3. Portrays of the songs and plays as cultural elements

Songs and plays are issues pertaining to cultural music and games which are most commonly played during public and government holidays. For easy analysis of the

songs and plays, mainly focused on conducting frequency counts in the text and illustrations section of the sample curriculum materials such as dances, music, patterns of marriage and mourning. The songs and plays of the region registered by Oromia Region Tourism Bureau have been used as a coding unit. To this end, the coders identified a total of 42 songs and Plays from 364 sample paragraphs identified and used for the analysis in order to answer questions raised in the basic research question and summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. The distribution of songs and plays

Subject	Social studies		Afan Oromoo		Belongs to Regions of		
	f	%	F	%	f	%	
Dhichisa	0	0	2	4.8	2	4.8	Oromoo
Shobote	2	4.8	0	0	2	4.8	
Ragada	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Hiyole	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Ashoashila	0	0	2	4.8	2	4.8	
Tirrii	0	0	1	2.4	1	2.4	
Taphaqillee	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Geerarsa	1	2.4	2	4.8	3	7.2	
Horse riding	2	4.8	2	4.8	4	9.6	
Circular Playing	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	5	11.9	9	21.4	14	33.3	
Begena Playing	1	2.4	5	11.9	6	14.3	Non Oromoo
Kiraar playing	2	4.8	4	9.6	6	14.3	
Nation and nationalities song	2	4.8	6	14.3	8	19.1	
Ililtaa	0	0	8	19.1	8	19.1	
Total	5	11.9	23	54.8	28	66.7	
Grand Total	10	23.8	32	76.2	42	100	

As can be seen from the Table 4, all sample curriculum materials analyzed in this study contain only 14 (33.3 %) songs as cultural elements in their texts belongs to Oromo cultural music. Whereas, the rest 28(66.7%) belongs to non-Oromo’s cultural element,

which disagrees with the notion of Lynch (1983) that curriculum materials contents needs to incorporate the cultural elements of the society in such a way that it make students aware about their environment. More specifically, from the total of 364 different

paragraphs of curriculum materials only “Gerarsa, 3(7.2%)”, “Shobote, 2 (4.8%)”, and Horse riding, 4(9.6%), “Dhichisa, 2(4.8%)”, and “Ashoashila, 2(4.8%)” were portrayed in all curriculum materials. Subject wise, in Afan Oromo curriculum materials from a total of 364 different paragraphs 9(16.67%) main concepts were appeared in the form of, “Dhichisa”, “Geerarsa” “Ashoashila” Tirri” and Horse riding. Social studies portray the least cultural elements 5(9.26%). Coding units such as, Horse riding, “Gerarsa”, and “Shobote” were better portrayed in curriculum materials in social studies curriculum. The most cultural songs reflecting in the Region such as “Hiyole” “Ragada”, “TaphaKille” and Circular playing haven’t appeared at least once through ought 364 different paragraphs that are incorporated in the curriculum materials. This indicates that the most cultural element of Oromia Region that are usually observed in the form of songs are failed to be portrayed in appropriate manner. Banks (1997), suggested that, integrating cultural elemental into the curriculum is to integrate societal experiences and points of view into the curriculum in the form of cultural songs. From the analysis made so far, the region education bureau should reconsider the issues of multiculturalism in development the curriculum at all level in all subjects.

Conclusions

Upper primary school social science curriculum materials developed and printed by the Oromia Education bureau and used as teaching materials in Oromia Regional State failed to properly reflect cultural elements (heroes and heroines, material heritage, songs and cultural values) of Oromo ethnic groups as a major component of cultural elements. In other words, only a very small number of heroes and heroines, material heritage, songs and cultural values were from Oromo ethnic groups whereas, the majority of cultural elements were from non-Oromo ethnic groups.

Efforts were made to identify the most dominant cultural elements portrayed in the upper primary school social curriculum materials of the Oromia Regional State. Based on the analysis, songs and material heritage were appeared in similar proportion, whereas hero and heroines were the least portrayed form the groups. This indicates that the upper primary school social science curriculum materials in Oromia Region gave least attention to hero and heroines of cultural elements peculiar to the Oromo ethnic group.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made: The upper primary school social science curriculum materials developed and printed by the Oromia Education bureau and used as teaching materials in Oromia Regional State failed to reflect the cultural elements that are manifested in the form of heroes and heroines, material heritage, Songs and cultural values of Oromo ethnic groups as a major component of cultural elements. Hence, it is what is expected of the curriculum developer at Oromia Regional state to take into consideration to include the cultural elements of the Region appropriately into the social science curriculum materials while they are preparing curriculum materials. The most little frequent cultural element was observed in social studies curriculum materials, hence text book writers at Oromia regional state are advised to give due attention in order to include the cultural elements of the region.

As the findings show the infusion of material heritage of the Region into the texts of students needs careful attention, since in the analysis it was found out that material heritage of Oromo ethnic groups are either mentioned in small proportions or are never mentioned at all. Curriculum materials writers and editors need to be aware that by fairly portraying cultural elements material heritage of the Region under the study they not only recognize the cultural contribution of Oromo ethnic groups but also create opportunities for students to develop their

cultural knowledge which will enable them to enhance their inter and intra cultural understanding.

Conflict of Interest

Authors didn't declare any conflict of interest regarding to this article.

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