

A B S T R A C T

The Measurement of Social Studies Classificatory
Concept Attainment of Seventh Grade Students.

Pauline R. Sahoy

This research was prompted by the lack of instruments to measure Social Studies Concept Attainment in the Jamaican context. Using a pilot sample of 139, a main sample of 380 and a replication sample of 380 drawn from the population of Traditional High and Secondary School Students who had recently completed or were completing 7th grade, the investigation set out to achieve two main objectives:

Objective 1: (a) To Design, Establish Content Representativeness and Reliability of an Instrument to Measure Concept Attainment.

One hundred and eighty items were developed to measure fifteen Social Studies classificatory concepts randomly sampled from three major Social Studies content areas. Following scrutiny by experts to establish content representativeness, Hoyt's internal consistency estimate was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The result of this technique revealed that:

- (i) the total test, the subtest for History concepts, the subtest for Geographic Region concepts and the subtest for Map and Globe Skills concepts were reliable for the main sample and the four subsamples (r s ranged between .93 and .66).
- (ii) the subtests for Least Complex and Intermediate Complexity tasks were reliable for the main sample

and the four subsamples (r s ranged from .88 to .72).

(iii) the subtest for Most Complex tasks, for the main sample and the four subsamples had internal consistency estimates ranging from .36 to .69, none of which reached the minimum satisfactory level of .70.

(iv) the subtests for all excepting one of the individual concepts and the individual tasks for the main sample and four subsamples had low internal consistency estimates, none of which reached the minimum satisfactory level of .70.

Objective I: (b) The Structure of Concept Attainment

Factor Analysis, Guttman Scalogram Analysis and two-way Analysis of Variance within groups were used to establish the structure of Concept Attainment. The most important findings, corroborated by the Replication Study were:

- (i) Classificatory concepts in Social Studies are not functionally related according to the three conceptually determined major content areas within this subject-matter.
- (ii) A single factor is adequate to describe the task variables for seventh grade social studies - that is to say the twelve types of tasks all measure the same thing - concept attainment.
- (iii) It is reasonable to regard the content-oriented and the task-oriented modes of concept attainment as independent.
- (iv) The three levels of complexity derived from the twelve tasks appear to form a cumulative hierarchy, but seem

not to be consistently ordered.

- (v) There is some kind of functional integrity of Social Studies Classificatory subject-matter by the time students complete grade seven; but is not known whether or not this is simply a function of the association which characterizes the teaching of Social Studies concepts or whether it truly represents differential latent abilities for dealing with the subject-matter.

Objective II: To ascertain Differences in Conceptual understanding between Traditional High and Secondary School Students, Boys and Girls and Textbook Groups.

The conceptual understanding of seventh graders was ascertained mainly by examination of the means and standard deviations obtained by the students on the total concept test and each of the individual concept and task subtests. Existence of differences between parts of the sample divided according to school type, gender and textbook used was determined by Analysis of Variance. The main findings were:

- (i) The Social Studies conceptual understanding of seventh grade students is unsatisfactory and appears to be much more at the classificatory than at the formal level.
- (ii) Classificatory conceptual understanding in the Social Studies of seventh grade students is not unitary or global, characterized by equally high or low performances related to all concepts.
- (iii) Seventh grade Traditional High School students demonstrate significantly higher conceptual understanding for all concepts and tasks than Secondary School Students.

- (iv) Social Studies classificatory conceptual understanding of Boys and Girls is quite similar.
- (v) None of the textbooks used by seventh grade Social Studies students is associated with satisfactory understanding of classificatory History concepts and classificatory Geography concepts.
- (vi) The History textbooks used by seventh graders vary in effectiveness with "*People on the Move Book 1*" being much more effective than "*Story of Our Islands*" and "*People Who Came Book 1*" for both content and task-oriented learning.
- (vii) The Geography textbooks used by seventh graders vary in effectiveness with respect to facilitating understanding of Geography concepts in terms of content and task-oriented learning, with "*First Geography of Jamaica*" being the most effective and "*Philips' Caribbean Modern School Atlas*" being least effective. Of the other two texts, "*Human Geography of Jamaica*" is more effective than "*People of Other Lands*".