

Hidden Curriculum

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ABSTRACT: The hidden curriculum is regarded as one of the conceptual capitals of curriculum. The recent attention to this concept has reduced the superficial approaches to the phenomenon of curriculum. This phenomenon is now paid attention to not only from the viewpoint of design but also from the perspective of implementation and its development is closely being followed. Although this concept was first came into use by Philip Jackson in 1968, it has drawn the attention of curriculum theorists in the past few decades each of whom view it from a different angle; in consequence of which. Numerous papers and books on this subject have been published. The diversity of viewpoints in these publications enriches the theoretical richness of curriculum concept but makes its understanding difficult for many individuals. In the present paper, the researcher endeavored to review the literature, definitions, attitudes and influential factors upon the hidden curriculum to develop a better understanding.

Keywords: hidden curriculum, approaches of hidden curriculum, influential factors upon hidden curriculum

HIDDEN CURRICULUM

The educational system of every society is not unconcerned with implicit and explicit transfer of norms and distinctive approaches to the learners. The students spend a long time in schools which constitutes the most influential periods of their personal development. They are introduced to explicit and designed educational programs and obtain experiences which shape their culture and values. The effectiveness of these experiences is much more than direct methods and informed educational endeavors. The Hidden curriculum consists of teaching items which are not officially intended and developed by school and educational system. The educational authorities use the concepts of "hidden curriculum" and "invisible curriculum" to explain teachings and attitudes influenced by these implicit factors (Alavi, Abdollahi and Ahmadi, 2008).

The sociologists, educational researchers and psychologists usually use this concept to describe non-official system of an educational center. The hidden curriculum is not written down or officially taught by lecturers but whole educational system teaches it in an implicit manner. Despite of the lecturer's level of skill and the progress in the curriculum, the learners are exposed to something which is not explicitly acknowledged. Every educational system endeavors to transfer different types of knowledge and skills to students through design and development of definite curricula so as to prepare them to undertake their roles and responsibilities in the real life. In educational systems, students receive highly valuable experiences the greatest part of which is unavailable in curricula. The students actually learn more than what they are systematically taught by teachers in the schools (Alikhani, 2004). Through curricula, especially hidden ones, students get informed of a variety of scientific, economical, social, political and historical knowledge, and become aware of concepts such as respect, righteousness, patience, obligation, sense of responsibility, attention to collective interests, equality, law abiding, and ... (Alikhani, 2004).

HIDDEN CURRICULUM FROM EXPERTS' VIEWPOINTS

The term "hidden curriculum" was used by P.W. Jackson (1960) in his book "Life in Classroom" and it was promoted by Benson Snyder in 1971 (Ghorchian, 1995). Before naming this phenomenon as "hidden curriculum", these teaching materials were emphasized by experts; after terming this phenomenon as "hidden curriculum", different experts such as sociologists, educational psychologists and educational planners contributed to conceptual analysis and development of a theoretical framework for this term. The majority of published works on this subject reviews and criticizes the viewpoints, values, norms and skills which the students learn with no explicit association to teaching items. The function of hidden curriculum has been defined in different ways. These definitions range from embedding values, socializations based on dominant policies, education of obedient

individuals, promotion of existing social hierarchy to functions which might be considered as “social control” (Alavi et.al, 2008).

Portlli (1993) in a paper titled “The Logic of Hidden Curriculum” stated: “the term “hidden” in hidden curriculum can have different meanings: 1- something which hides itself and takes an active role in its hiddenness (this thing is termed as “X”); 2- something hidden by another thing. In this case the hider know the place of X and it is inclined to hide X; 3- X is hidden but it has no previous intention of being hidden, nobody intends to hide it and X might not know it is hidden”.

The “hiddenness” in hidden curriculum might not be assigned the first meaning but attributing the second and third meanings to it is possible. It means that the hidden curriculum is intentionally hidden from someone or its presence or essence is unknown or unclear without any definite intention behind such a curriculum. Another noteworthy point is that “hidden” describes an association. X might be hidden for A but visible to B. Therefore, one can manifest a hidden curriculum despite of the fact that it might be referred to as hidden because it is still hidden for another person (Portlli, 1994). Martin also stated: “A hidden curriculum might be discovered and stay invisible despite of that. This is because finding a hidden curriculum is not the same as explaining it and stating it.”

As the term “hidden curriculum” implies at face value, it refers to the aspects of curriculum such as content, books, methods, etc. But this concept includes all implicit materials and concepts in principles and structure of educational system (e.g. order in class and group activities) and communication and interaction patterns in school (e.g. reciting lessons, listening, information, etc.). As a result, it is better to call hidden curriculum as “implicit education” because it consists of all teachings which are provided beyond the objectives of official learning (Saidi, Razvani, & Kianinazhad, 2002).

Eisner (1994) regarded “hidden curriculum” as a set of learning in an educational system realized within the dominant culture in an educational environment which are provided for the students without awareness of faculty members and students.

Ausbrooks (2000) defined the term “hidden curriculum” in the following manner: “A hidden curriculum consists of implicit messages in the social environment of an educational center which are unformulated but are felt by everybody. Hidden curriculum is a body of knowledge learnt by students through their presence in the school (Razvani, 2002).

Bloom (1981) believed that curriculum consists of explicit and implicit curriculum. He believed that explicit curriculum includes written principles and objectives of schools and educational centers while hidden curriculum is undeveloped and non-defined. He presumed that the hidden curriculum in an education system is made during everyday life and interactions in learning settings. He considered curriculum in terms of a process and a result which is simultaneously visible and hidden, essential and behavioral.

McLaren (1989) believed that a hidden curriculum is different from a planned curriculum and viewed it from critical and political-identity viewpoints. He stated that: “A hidden curriculum is associated with implicit methods through which knowledge and behavior are generated. It means that hidden curriculum is related to what happens beyond official and planned educational material. It is a part of managerial and bureaucratic pressure of school through which the students are forced to obey the dominant ideologies and social activities associated with power, authority, behavior and morality (Fathi & Ajargah, 2008).

One might say all of the above definitions have a common point and it is their conceptual opposition to explicit curriculum. Hidden curriculum is a map designed and implemented to obtain a definite and announced objective. On this basis, “hidden curriculum” could be considered a program for which there is no real objective and the results of which are not stated or predefined: whether intentional or without any intention.

Of course, one can define hidden curriculum from two aspects (Razvani & Kianinezhad, 2002). From the viewpoint of resolution, it consists of real learning of students which might not have been determined beforehand: whether intentioned by planner in a micro-plan or it might have been obtained in practice; that is, to be the expected outcome of learning. From the viewpoint of “process”, it consists of factors and procedures of formation of a hidden curriculum distinct from those of resolution. These factors include all or some factors pointed to in different definitions of hidden curriculum such as the structure of an educational system, physical and psychological environments of school, principles of school, teachers-students and student-student teachings, type of explicit curriculum from viewpoints of design, structure and content of educational material, familial background of students and developments and even changes of an educational system.

CONCEPTS OF CURRICULUM

Vallance (1991) in her book *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education* categorized the hidden curriculum into three concepts. In the first concept, a hidden curriculum refers to everything in school from teacher-student

interactions to the structure of classroom and general pattern of an educational organization which might be called a small model of social values system. In the second concept, a hidden curriculum refers to the processes executed in/through school such as acquisition of values, socialization and maintenance of a hierarchical structure. In the third concept, a hidden curriculum refers to different degrees of intentions and depth of hiddenness of functions of a school. In this concept, a hidden curriculum consists of secondary results of random and unintended nature as well as deep results originating from social and historical function of education (Girox, 1983).

Portlli divided different concepts available in a hidden curriculum into four categories (quoted in Razvani, 2002). In the first category, a hidden curriculum refers to unofficial expectations or implicit but expected messages. Within the second category, a hidden curriculum is defined as the intended messages and intentions of learning. As denoted in the third category, a hidden curriculum as implicit messages resulted from the structure of an educational system. Hidden curriculum in the fourth category is regarded as equivalent of what a student creates.

APPROACHES TO HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Bain (1985) in her paper called "*The hidden curriculum Re-examined*" mentioned four general approaches opted for to understanding hidden curricula and associated studies in this field (excerpted from Lindabin, 1986):

A. The first general approach takes a non-theoretical stance towards hidden curriculum. The representative of this approach is "*Life in Classroom*" by Philip Jackson (1967). Jackson merely described the events of a classroom without associating his observations to any theory of society and school. In this regard, his work is a non-theoretical one. From his viewpoint, daily activities of school constitute a powerful mechanism to transfer distinctive values and beliefs to students.

B. The second general approach takes a functional view to hidden curriculum the major representative of which is Robert Deribin. He is among those few experts who have positive viewpoints of hidden curriculum. Deribin believed that hidden curriculum is an effective mechanism for transferring fundamental norms to students.

C. The adaptive approach to hidden curriculum is represented by Bowles and Gentis (1976) in "*Schooling in Capitalist America*". The most significant principle of this approach is the convergence of school and society which possess inequalities. In this approach, the school is regarded as a regenerative factor of unequal hierarchies and unfair relations in the society. They believe that through daily discipline in schools, the students understand the concepts of social stratum, eligibility of hierarchies and their lack of control over their works.

C. The critical approach is represented by Jiro and Apple (1980s). This approach can be regarded as the most serious works on hidden curriculum based on a neo-Marxist approach to theory of adaptation. Therefore, the schools should not be regarded as the regenerative entities but places with high potential for social development. To understand a hidden curriculum, the researcher should study the ongoing culture of the schools and analyze its association with the society. This approach is also called "Theory of Resistance to Hidden Curriculum" because it adheres to the view that students resist to school teachings and this resistance might lead to recreation and development. This approach was criticized by some critics using the term "hyper-resistance" but no alternative theory was developed for it. The basic idea behind this approach is viewing the hidden curriculum as a broad set of realities in an educational system which deeply affects the formation of viewpoints and values of students.

Factors Affecting Hidden Curriculum of Schools:

A. The principles and rules of schools: which are influential upon formation of a hidden curriculum. There are principles decided upon in schools for running different affairs such as grouping students, development methods, evaluation methods (i.e. type of test, test scores, etc.), discipline problems, encouragement and punishment issues, participation in running school affairs, etc. These principles affect the personality of students. Several factors as an instance is investigated here, one of which would be the method of evaluation and teacher's reaction to the scores. If the teacher humiliates a weak student, he/she might reinforce this negative attitude in such students and they will lose confidence in making up for losses. These negative perceptions are a part of hidden curriculum. The type of learning activities (personal or in group) is also influential upon their results. Those students who act in groups attain skills and qualifications which are unattainable with individualistic activities (Maleki, 1995).

B. interpersonal relationships . Different human relationships form in schools each of which has its own educational consequences. One of these relationships is established between educational personnel and students. The school personnel's viewpoints are significant in such a relationship. If they have a distinctive hierarchical perceptions, students' lifestyle and social stratum influence the hierarchical decisions. Because the children of those families that school employees respect more will receive more attention while others remain unprivileged and neglected (Maleki, 1995).

C. Interactions between teachers and students: and behavior and perception of teacher affects those of students. If a teacher has an open attitude and provides sufficient opportunity for the learners, such efforts will reinforce the endeavors, abilities and self-confidence of students. If teachers act based on their wills and viewpoints and act in a dominant manner, the students' abilities will remain passive and they might grow similar dominative approach towards others (Maliki, 1995).

D. The association between education and hidden curriculum: hidden curriculum is an unpredictable aspect of learning. Educational design without attention to this aspect is negligence of a major part of factors which significantly affect the students' learning. Teachers usually pay attention to influential explicit factors affecting education and ignore implicit factors affecting students' learning. It is essential to identify and clarify influential factors affecting hidden curriculum and control them in design and implement procedures. One of the factors which lessens the gap between explicit and hidden curriculum is student's participation in education process (Maleki, 1995). Therefore, teachers should identify the influential factors affecting a hidden curriculum and consider them to act more rationally during design and implementation of educational processes.

CONCLUSION

As stated before, what designers and planners develop in macro level is an official and explicit curriculum. This plan is developed based on definite elements to attain educational objectives. It means that explicit curricula are executed and evaluated in educational centers to determine their level of realization of objectives. There are other factors which are neglected in curriculum. These factors affect the thoughts, emotions and behaviors of learners, and exert more influence than explicit and pre-defined curriculum. The principles of classroom and educational setting, social setting of educational centers and interactions of students with managers and teachers are some of these factors. Hidden curriculum significantly determines what is the basic of sense of value and self-respect in participants, and is more influential than any official curriculum in adaptation of teachers and students with educational setting. There is no preschool, elementary school, high school or college without an imposed hidden curriculum on students and faculty members. Although each curriculum has its distinctive characteristics which are specific to an institute but existence of hidden curriculum might influence the whole education process. Besides, negligence to negative effects of hidden curriculum might disrupt the acquisition of educational objectives. The negative effects of hidden curriculum such as authoritative behavior of principals, complete silence and passivity of students are not predicted in an explicit curriculum despite the fact that they make the real curriculum. The teaching materials included in a hidden curriculum are the most important educational contents that students naturally learn at schools. This curriculum practically taught at schools is formed by experiences of classrooms, libraries, celebrations and social environments of schools. Therefore, planners and executives should completely comprehend their responsibilities. One might say that the results of comprehensive experience in schools or any learning situation depends on official curriculum and hidden curriculum to a relatively identical degree. The hidden curriculum which students develop for themselves is made of the official curriculum and the hidden one.

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