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The Hidden Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, in schools, students seem to gain much knowledge on the topics that are not included in the official statements of the course guides. Learning that contains information, beliefs, and the ways of behaving in the society relates to a hidden curriculum of schooling which is contrasted with the formal one. It is determined as the lesson conducted informally and usually unintentionally in a school system. The hidden curriculum helps not only to shape the individual but the system of the society in general (Kridel, 2010, p.169).This paper consists of several sections and each of it examines a particular topic concerning the unwritten curriculum in a school system. In a complex, these sections create a full picture of the importance of hidden curriculum learning and research its impact and relation to the social and moral school education. Finally, the main purpose of this study is to explore the peculiarities of the hidden curriculum phenomenon and investigate all the aspects of this subject.

Keywords: Hidden curriculum, teaching, knowledge, instruction and education

Introduction

In the middle of the twentieth century in 1959, a group of thirty-five scholars and educators met for the purpose of discussing how to improve science education as well as "to examine the fundamental processes involved in imparting to students a sense of the substance and method of science" (Bruner, 1960, p.17). The National Academy of Science sponsored this meeting. The ten-day meeting explored several important themes that had a primary implication not only for science but for education in general. The book of the American psychologist Jerome Bruner *The Process of Education* became the result of the conference. It emphasized on the importance of the structure. At the same time, this statement led to the development of the curriculum. Two years earlier, in 1957, another American scholar Ralph Tyler created his own approach and definition of the curriculum: "it is the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals" (Tyler, 1975, p. 79).

During the past decades, a lot of efforts were devoted to defining the curriculum phenomenon. Usually, it was simply determined as a course of study. In the early 20th, the curriculum served the areas of educational administration, pedagogy, and testing. Moreover, people used it as a method to design and develop the programs of study for schools. Subsequently, the curriculum expanded its focus on different disciplines such as art, humanities, and social studies in order to examine broader the educational forces and their effect on the individuals (Kridel, 2010, p.29). Currently, curriculum denotes the pupil's planned interactions with certain instructions and the process of evaluating. It takes a shape of a plan for effective teaching and learning. Thus, mostly the curriculums are based on the organizational needs of learning and objectives. The school and the community have a right to participate in the

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development of all types of the curriculums such as written and unwritten or hidden school curriculum. Hence, it appears to be a contact between society, the State and educational professionals with regard to the educational experiences that learners should undergo during a certain phase of their life (Kridel, 2010, p.453-454).

The Concept and Theories of Hidden Curriculum

In 1970, the American educational researcher and theorist John Goodland proposed five different types of curriculum planning. The first one was the ideological curriculum constructed by the scholars andteachers which became a curriculum of the ideas intended to reflect the funded knowledge. The second type was the formal curriculum officially approved by the State that represented society's interests. The third one called an operational curriculum observed the actual events in the classroom. Finally, the experiential curriculum revealed an actual experience of the learners. However, nowadays, a little bit different concept seems to be more useful. Therefore, such types of curriculums as recommended, written, supported, taught, tested, and learned exist. All of them are the components of the intentional curriculum. In contrast, the hidden curriculum is not a product of the conscious intention (Glatthorn, Boschee& Whitehead, 2006, p.6).

Phillip Jackson deduced one of the earliest studies of the hidden curriculum in his book *Life in classroom* (1968). He defined that elementary-school students should learn to live with "crowds, praise, and power" (Massialas, Allen, 1996, p. 62). To make it in school, students had to understand how to survive in the presence of many others. Furthermore, the learners got to know how to accept praise or disapproval. The most efficient skill that students gain in school is dealing with authority through obedience to the rules. In this type of setting, the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in students' progress. "Many of the rewards and punishments that sound as if they are being dispensed on the basis of academic success and failure are really more closely related to the mastery of hidden curriculum" (Massialas, Allen,1996, p. 120). Generally speaking, in his fundamental work, Jackson explained the social relationships of the school, classes' organization, and the teacher-student relationship. Following his words:

> Teaching is an opportunistic process. That is to say, neither the teachers nor their students can predict with any certainty exactly what will happen next. The plans are forever going awry and unexpected opportunities for the attainment of educational goals are constantly emerging. The seasoned teacher seizes upon these opportunities and uses them to his and his students' advantage… Although most teachers make plans in advance, they are aware as they make them of the likelihood of change… They know, or come to know, that the path of education progress more closely resembles the flight of a butterfly than the flight of a bullet (Dickenson, 2007, p.49).

Jackson noticed that "the hidden curriculum emphasized specific skills such as learning to wait quietly, exercising restraint, trying to complete the work, keeping busy, cooperating, showing allegiance to both instructors and peers, being neat and punctual, and conducting oneself courteously" (Dickenson, 2007, p.50). Those features of school life had

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little to do with educational goals but are certainly part of the hidden curriculum.

The primary theory of the hidden curriculum is that the schools do more than just transmitting of the knowledge. It can be defined as an aspect of schooling rather than the intentional curriculum that seems to produce changes in students' values, behavior, and perception. Besides, it lies outside the boundaries of school's intentional attempts (Glatthorn, Boschee& Whitehead, 2006, p. 25). Therefore, the idea of the hidden curriculum consists "of what students learn through the experience of attending schools rather than the stated educational objectives of such institutions" (Dickenson, 2007, p.30).

Hidden Curriculum as a Process of Socialization

In most cases, formal schooling does not teach the students how to deal with the problems of the constantly changing environment. In fact, it deals with the time spent at school but, unfortunately, it does not provide the certification for knowledge, skills, and attitude that are important for students as well. However, the hidden curriculum has a remarkably powerful force that has a particular impact on the students. Moreover, the influence can be both positive and negative. The actual result depends on the circumstances. Thus, the hidden curriculum can be recognized as the process of socialization.

According to the explorations of Philip Jackson, John Goodland, and the others, the general school climate affects the students' learning. A clear strategy of using the hidden curriculum was developed in connection with the idea of the school becoming a laboratory of real life experiences. Under these circumstances, children learn a decision-making skill by actively participating in the distribution of power in school. Besides, they develop such participatory skills as proposing action, rulemaking, and voting. These skills cannot be obtained only theoretically but through actual participation in school-related decisions that impact each student personally.

The teachers of all subjects take part in the study of the topics that actually form the hidden curriculum. Thus, the students gain the skills they need to cope with their environment and participate in the major decisions that concern them. As a result of learning with the hidden curriculum, the students develop a relatively high sense of political and social efficacy. Furthermore, they begin to understand how the system around them operates and learn how to feel competent becoming directly the part of that system. The learners realize how not to be manipulated by the system through the hidden curriculum as well as how to control their environment rather than being controlled by it.

On the other hand, the hidden curriculum may limit teacher's instruction as it forces to educate children on how to behave. Frequently, the instructors argue that the overcrowded school curriculum does not give them any opportunity for such an exercise concentrating much on the written plan while the hidden curriculum devotes this time to learning. In addition, the teachers usually do not always feel comfortable instructing on socialization as it is considered as parents' obligation (Massialas,1996, p.64-69).

The Hidden Curriculum and Its Moral Implications

The hidden curriculum learning starts from the very beginning of school. Students learn how to compose opinions and ideas about their classmates and environment. For instance, children develop the proper ways to act at school. According to the investigations of the

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American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, the hidden curriculum is efficient in providing the ground for the moral development of students. Kohlberg's work helped him to connect his thoughts of the hidden curriculum with three main points. First, the hidden curriculum mostly contacts with social studies in schools. Secondly, it is quite influential in the moral development of students. Lastly, the moral learning should be based on fairness.

Moreover, in his studies, Kohlberg showed some situations that were the results of the hidden curriculum's impact. First of all, he identified a conjunction between cheating and hidden curriculum. In this case, hidden curriculum has a negative impact as it provides the necessary conditions for cheating and encourages it. While the administration, teachers, and parents forbid cheating at school, the competitive environment puts students under pressure to receive better grades than their classmates. Thus, this situation encourages cheating. Secondly, Kohlberg noticed that behavior of the teachers in the classrooms is one of the factors that determines hidden curriculum. Through punishing or rewarding, the educators deliver particular moral and social messages. At the same time, when the official curriculum declares that the courses will be held in a democratic manner, the school's agreement emphasizes the use of authority. The teacher that conducts the lecture appears to be the only authority. Thus, a school that officially seems to be democratic can have an authoritarian hidden curriculum.

Under these circumstances, the scholar also made some suggestions of changing the hidden curriculum. As a matter of fact, changing of the official program will not take much time while transforming the hidden curriculum is a much more time-consuming task. He recommended the teachers and administration of schools to state the moral values clearly as well as provide the democratic environment.

The students learn most of the necessary values which are represented through the official and hidden curriculums at school. Nevertheless, the hidden curriculum plays much more significant role in transferring the values. In spite of it, the moral education is almost always conducted with the official program. Finally, many of the scientists agreed with Kohlberg that the moral education can be shown through the just environment in schools and that in this case the hidden curriculum has a more profound effect on the students than the formal one (Kohlberg, 2005, p. 329-334).

Pedagogy of the Hidden Curriculum

With the help of the hidden curriculum, the teachers can influence negatively on their students. Furthermore, the instructors can use the hidden curriculum in their teaching as a method of sending a specific message. Thus, some instructors purposely use the hidden curriculum, for example, in case of providing their students with some knowledge, beliefs or experiences that are not the part of the regular curriculum. According to the needs and expectations, the teachers are required to find the right style of instruction.

Furthermore, there are also the other factors such as student learning style or students with special needs that has an impact on the instruction. Every pupil is unique in his or her learning style. Evidently, the educators' instructions have to consider it. Moreover, the character education should be a part of the written curriculum. For example, learning in groups can help students of different cultures become better acquainted. In addition, gaining knowledge about diverse

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cultures may assist in learning to respect each other. Undoubtedly, team work usually has a lot of benefits. Therefore, the teacher can use various instruction methods to help students to feel like at home in their team, although the instructor should think carefully of how to group the learners. The teams can be divided according to the ability, interest or levels. When the instructor formed the teams, each group gets the separate theme they are responsible for and deliver it to the other group. Thus, the teams learn a certain part by teaching each other. This method helps the students to learn hidden curriculum values such as,"learning to learn"(Anderson, 2001, p.30).

The other factors that can influence the instruction are the classroom size and the furniture arrangement. Therefore, smaller classes are easier to manage. Additionally, there are strategies that can help to teach the hidden curriculum to children with disabilities. Basing on the hidden curriculum and its strategies, the students learn how to form opinions and ideas about their environment and their classmates.

Positive and Negative Effects of the Hidden Curriculum

Many people believe that the hidden curriculum represents a negative side of the public educational system. In fact, the problem is that not only instructors are responsible for a hidden curriculum in schools but also media, books, and peers become involved as the teachers of the curriculum. One obvious reason for the negative outcome of the hidden curriculum may be a lack of critical thinking. Thus, when children unknowingly perceive the opinions and attitudes of others, they do not develop their own thinking processes. The more students can achieve critical thinking, the more they will be able to recognize a hidden curriculum signs (Massialas, Allen, 1996, p. 73).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hidden curriculum is one of the considerable parts of a school system which can be found in every educational institution. It is mainly a way the teachers educate students on how to become good citizens and follow the norms of the society. Moreover, it is acknowledged as a socialization process of schooling. Hidden curriculum appears to be a way of transmitting the messages about values, attitude, and principles to the students. Besides, one of the main tasks of the curriculum is to prepare pupils to get involved in the life of a public sphere. In short, the hidden curriculum is even more essential than the written one because it has a stronger and more effective influence on the students in many ways. It places an efficient role not only in a socialization process but in the moral education as well. Despite the unintentional and unwritten characteristics of the hidden curriculum, it requires a special teachers' preparation. Evidently, this curriculum can have both positive and negative effects on students. If the curriculum is used without awareness it can work not in a right way. One primary way to protect the students from the negative impact of hidden curriculum is to help them to develop their critical thinking which will assist in distinguishing the hidden curriculum messages. Finally, the main task of the hidden curriculum is to contribute to society proper productive members. Therefore, this aspect places a crucial place in schooling and requires a huge responsibility from the teachers' side. Additionally, this topic demands more investigations for the purpose of developing of the hidden curriculum in the continually changing world.

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