

The Hidden Curriculum

El currículo oculto

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This article shows the way hidden curriculum goes farther than just being the conscious and unconscious setting within the formal instruction context. It also shapes students personality and assigns to each individual the role they are supposed to play in society. In this process, interaction with the teacher is crucial since he/she is the one who directly moulds and cultivates the singularity of students according to the specific demands of the social class to which they belong. This phenomenon is well described in research conducted by Jane Anyon (1980) which is referred to in this paper as an example of the influence of the hidden curriculum on school life.

Key words: Hidden Curriculum, Unconscious Setting, Teacher's Role, Singularity, Society

Este artículo muestra cómo el currículo oculto va más allá de ser simplemente el escenario consciente e inconsciente en el que se desarrolla la instrucción formal. El currículo oculto define la personalidad del estudiante y asigna a cada uno el papel que se supone debe ocupar en la sociedad. En este proceso, la interacción directa con el docente es decisiva ya que es éste quien directamente moldea y cultiva la singularidad de los estudiantes según las exigencias específicas de la clase social a la que pertenecen. Dicho fenómeno se describe

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muy bien en la investigación adelantada por Jane Anyon (1980), a la cual se hace referencia en este escrito, como ejemplo de la influencia del currículo oculto en la vida escolar.

Palabras claves: Currículo Oculto, Escenario Inconsciente, Rol del Docente, Singularidad, Sociedad

It is clear that learning at a school implies much more than the single fact of transferring a bunch of information, and that we teach not only the things we do but also the ones we avoid doing. The hidden curriculum is that set of attitudes which filter the teaching-learning process during everyday lessons as well as the other activities of school life. The hidden curriculum implies habitual interaction with students having academic knowledge as an excuse for showing off lifestyles and social behavior. Hence, one of the main ideas behind this concept is that students learn not only from what they are being taught through formal instruction but also, as Jackson (1968, in Seaton, 2002) says, from conscious and unconscious settings of the learning process.

According to this author, the learning process is organized consciously by having the school itself as a place separate from the home, and the classrooms with the teacher standing at the front and pupils seated in arranged rows, for example. On the other hand, an unconscious organization refers to individual teachers interpreting the behavior of students in class and the expectations that they (the teachers) have facing such behavior.

Therefore, it is evident that the hidden curriculum is a very broad concept that entails different theoretical viewpoints because the socialization process underlying

“education” involves the transmission of norms and values as well as a body of knowledge approved by the society in which the school functions.

The hidden curriculum may range from the way knowledge is organized in particular subjects to the way teachers and students address each other. In this respect the schoolwork suggests characteristics of education in every social setting that has been worth being studied by different experts.

As a matter of example, in research conducted and reported by Jean Anyon (1980), she concluded that “students of different economic backgrounds are being prepared to occupy particular ranks on the social ladder” and that is thanks to the hidden curriculum that operates in their academic life. Of course, while some schools focus on vocational education, others are geared to produce future doctors, lawyers and business leaders. Anyon describes how in a working-class school the work consists of following the steps of a procedure. The procedure is usually mechanical, involving very little decision-making or choice. The teachers rarely explain how the work might be connected to other assignments or what idea lies behind the procedure. Available textbooks are not always used and teachers prepare their own material or put work

examples on the board. Most of the rules regarding work prescribe what children are to do. The rules are steps to follow that students copy in their notes and memorize for further evaluation. Teachers continually give orders and control students' time. Meanwhile, in a middle-class school, work is done by accumulating right answers to get a good grade. Students follow directions for some figuring or some choice. Answers are usually found in books or the teacher gives them without leading to controversial topics. Teachers' decisions are usually based on external rules and regulations. Anyon also observed over the same year some schools that she called affluent professional schools, where work is creative and carried out independently, as well as executive elite schools, where work is developing one's analytical and intellectual powers. Children are continually asked to reason through a problem. A primary goal for them is to conceptualize rules and to prepare for life. This is the only school where the bells do not demarcate periods of time but everybody changes classes because they had made specific plans for each session. Children are not rigidly controlled by teachers but brought in line by reminding them to control themselves as part of their own responsibilities. In classrooms children get the material they need and use it at their convenience. Teachers are polite to the children but never call them "honey" or "dear" as she observed in other institutions.

We have found the above mentioned situations as an excellent example to illustrate how complex the hidden curriculum is and the way it becomes a tacit preparation for interaction in wider social

contexts. Here we can also deduce the crucial role that teachers play in the school system since we are the closest interactors of our students. We could say that there is like a "ghost" dialogue, which directs the intention of the adults to the young learners modeling their personality.

Dealing with the development of personality in our public schools in Bogotá, we could summarize the hidden curriculum into three main aspects: the teacher's attitude as possessor of knowledge, the teacher's attitude as possessor of authority and the teacher's attitude as possessor of acceptance and denial by means of evaluation. That makes our students "marked" or influenced by the objective and subjective points of view of their tutors.

The previous idea makes the hidden curriculum responsible for the process that we would call "personalization" where we teachers mold the singularity of a plural personality. A defined culture governs our living as citizens; that is to say, the plural personality; but regarding that process each one of our students has his/her own way to live it; that is the singularity we have to cultivate. As a matter of fact, we do so not only as professionals of education but also as human beings with particular likes, desires and viewpoints towards life. Unconsciously, we teach them about ways of living during everyday interaction.

Going upwards in our school system we would also have to analyze the same phenomenon on the part of administrators influencing teachers by means of tools such as the PEI (the school project) and the way it

implies the surveillance of a hidden curriculum on a great scale. This could be seen as negative or positive depending on the level of consciousness we had about it. And this conscience makes us socially active citizens but not always intellectually creative because we could just influence new tendencies from other fields “borrowing” pedagogy. That is the case of the so-called *competences*, which are concepts officially coined by the business world but because of focused economic demands, they have been assumed by the school as appropriate criteria for evaluation and assessment.

In consequence, every member of a social group must be aware of the influence that s/he exerts on the rest of the community

and therefore must assume her/his role responsibly. Hence, we observe that although we do not refer all the time to an explicit task, it will always leave its fingerprint in our students' lives.

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