

## Comparison of Hidden Curriculum Theories

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**Abstract:** *This study provides a summary of the existing researches on 'hidden curriculum'. Investigated literature are explained in detail and summarized as a table to show the whole picture. In that context it gives a key literature and debates within the field of "hidden curriculum", which is not done before.*

**Keywords:** *Hidden curriculum, Unwritten curriculum*

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### INTRODUCTION

School curriculum is generally accepted as an explicit, conscious, formally planned course with specific objectives. In addition to this didactic curriculum, students experience an 'unwritten curriculum' described by informality and lack of conscious planning. This refers to a 'hidden curriculum' that includes values, intergroup relations and celebrations that enables students' socialization process. This survey is aimed to provide a summary of the existing research on hidden curriculum. The purpose in this study is to present the key literature and debates within the field of 'Hidden Curriculum', described by various theorists, as to better understand its context. Henceforth, firstly, definitions of hidden curriculum by various theorists will be given (Table 1). Then, the theories are explained in detail.

#### Theories of Hidden Curriculum

The school is an organizational embodiment of a major social institution whose prime function is to bring about the developmental changes in individuals. It is an agency of socialization whose task is to effect psychological changes that enable persons to make transitions among other institutions; that is, to develop capacities necessary for appropriate conduct in social settings that make different kinds of demands on them and pose different kinds of opportunities (Dreeben, 1968, p.3). Any adequate answer to the question of what is learned in school must await a massive empirical effort based on a clear formulation of the elements of school and classroom organization, of the instructional process, of the relevant motivations and inducement, and of the outcomes of schooling (Margolis, 2001, p.5).

In that context, citing Margolis, Emile Durkheim observed that more is taught and learned in schools than specified in the established curriculum of textbooks and teacher manuals. Even though it is not directly mentioned as 'hidden curriculum', this refers to hidden curriculum. In *Moral Education* Durkheim ([1925] 1961, p. 148) wrote:

"In fact, there is a whole system of rules in the school that predetermine the child's conduct. He must come to class regularly, he must arrive at a specified time and with an appropriate bearing and attitude. He must not disrupt things in class. He must have learned his lessons, done his homework, and have done so reasonably well, etc. There are, therefore, a host of obligations that the child is required to shoulder. Together they constitute the discipline of the school. It is through the practice of school discipline that we can inculcate the spirit of discipline in the child".

Within the framework of that thought, Philip Jackson (1968) is generally acknowledged as the originator of the term 'hidden curriculum' in his book "Life in Classrooms". Through observations of public grade classrooms, Jackson identified features of classroom life that were inherent in the social relations of schooling. He observed

Table 1. Definitions of Hidden Curriculum

Author	Book	Definition
Emile Durkheim ([1925] 1961, p. 148)	Moral Education	Durkheim observed that more is taught and learned in schools than specified in the established curriculum of textbooks and teacher manuals. Even though it is not directly mentioned as 'hidden curriculum', this refers to hidden curriculum.
Philip Jackson (1968)	Life in Classrooms	Learning to wait quietly, exercising restraint, trying, completing work, keeping busy, cooperating, showing allegiance to both teachers and peers, being neat and punctual, and conducting oneself courteously.
Robert Dreeben (1968)	What is learned in classroom?	The hidden curriculum makes the pupils to form transient social relationships, submerge much of their personal identity, and accept the legitimacy of categorical treatment.
Elizabeth Vallance (1973)	"Hiding the hidden curriculum: An interpretation of the language of justification in nineteenth-century educational reform." (Article)	The "unstudied curriculum," the "covert" or "latent" curriculum, the "non-academic outcomes of schooling," the "by-products of schooling," the "residue of schooling," or simply "what schooling does to people"
Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976)	Schooling in Capitalist America	Schools are not as an agency of social mobility but as reproducing the existing class structure, sending a silent, but powerful message to students with regard to their intellectual ability, personal traits, and the appropriate occupational choice and this takes place through the hidden curriculum
Jane Martin (1976)	"What should we do with a hidden curriculum when we find one?" (Article)	Hidden curriculum can be found in the social structure of the classroom, the teacher's exercise authority, the rules governing the relationship between teacher and student. Standard learning activities can be found also to be sources, as can the teacher's use of language, textbooks, tracking systems, and curriculum priorities.
Paul Willis (1977)	Learning to Labour	The hidden curriculum of the school structure which is most important in determining the reproduction of class relations in schools; rather, it is the hidden curriculum of pupil resistances (cultural production) which must be understood if the dynamics of social and cultural reproductionism is to be explained.
Jean Anyon (1980)	"Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (Article)	The hidden curriculum of schoolwork is tacit preparation for relating to the process of production in a particular way. Differing curricular, pedagogical, and pupil evaluation practices emphasize different cognitive and behavioral skills in each social setting and thus contribute to the development in the children of certain potential relationships to physical and symbolic capital, to authority, and to the process of work.
Michael Apple (1982)	Education and Power	He emphasized that hidden curriculum involves various interests, cultural forms, struggles, agreements, and compromises.
Henry Giroux (1983)	Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A critical analysis.	He defines hidden curriculum as those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom

that there were values, dispositions, and social and behavioral expectations that brought rewards in school for students and that learning what was expected along these lines was a feature of the hidden curriculum. He argued that hidden curriculum emphasized specific skills: learning to wait quietly, exercising restraint, trying, completing work, keeping busy, cooperating, showing allegiance to both teachers and peers, being neat and punctual, and conducting oneself courteously (Jackson 1968, 10-33).

About the same time, Robert Dreeben (1968) examined the norms of school culture and concluded that they taught students to “form transient social relationships, submerge much of their personal identity, and accept the legitimacy of categorical treatment” (Dreeben 1968, p. 147). He focused on the identifiable social structure of the classroom -for example waiting before getting time to teacher- and argues that classroom structure teaches children about the authority. Dreeben maintained that the experience of formal schooling not only taught the overt curriculum, but also indirectly conveyed to students values such as independence and achievement, useful for their later membership in adult society.

Durkheim, Jackson and Dreeben sometimes collected under the heading of consensus theory, provide the foundation for the general definition of the hidden curriculum as the elements of socialization that take place in school, but are not part of the formal curricular content. These include the norms, values and the belief systems embedded in the curriculum, the school and classroom life, imparted to students through daily routines, curricular content, and social relationships (Margolis, 2001, p.6).

This approach provides the foundation for the general properties of the hidden curriculum and confirms that schools exist to serve the interests of the larger society. However, Lynch (1989) claimed that this approach has a number of limitations. First, it falls under consensus theory which stresses consensus and stability while rejecting changes caused by conflict. Second, viewing the norms and belief system the school is transmitting as unproblematic and unquestionable, this approach treats students as passive receipts defined in reductionist behavioral terms. Students are viewed only as the products of socialization without the ability to make meaning for themselves (Lynch, 1989).

Vallance (1973) suggested three dimensions along which these various labels may be read: (1) Hidden curriculum can refer to any of the *contexts* of schooling, including the student-teacher interaction unit, classroom structure, the whole organizational pattern of the educational establishment as a microcosm of the social value system. (2) Hidden curriculum can bear on a number of *processes* operating in or through schools, including values acquisition, socialization, and maintenance of class structure. (3) Hidden curriculum can embrace differing *degrees of intentionality*, and of depth of “hiddenness” as perceived by the investigator, ranging from incidental and quite unintended by-products of curricular arrangements to outcomes more deeply embedded in the historical social function of education. Vallance claims that an explanation for the peculiarly systematic, though allegedly unintended outcomes of schooling. These outcomes may not be nearly as unintended as we think. They may be hidden from the rhetoric precisely because they do work (Arieh, 1991).

Influenced by Marxism, so-called neo-Marxists, some branches of subsequent educational theorizing became more critical about the way in which schools serve for capitalism and state and function to mediate and legitimate the reproduction of inequality, including social class, racial and gender relations. The socialization process was analyzed in terms of its reproduction of stratified relationships, outcomes, and ideological belief structures (Ibid, p.6).

The most influential examination of the process by which schools reproduce these dominant interests was *Schooling in Capitalist America* by Bowles and Gintis (1976), which is one of the most well-known pieces of research pertaining to the unwritten functions of school life. According to Margolis (2001), their “correspondence thesis” is central to most current debates on the hidden curriculum of schools. The central tenet of the correspondence principle is that ‘a structural correspondence’ exists between the social relations of school life and the social relations of production. They argued that through formal and hidden curricula, schools reproduce the social relations necessary to maintain capitalism: competition and evaluation, hierarchical divisions of labor, bureaucratic authority and compliance. They also argued that the reproduction of these skills and attitudes through the educational system corresponds to and prepares students for future stratified work roles.

Paul Willis (1976) referred to the school’s role in social reproduction, Willis claims, resides not merely in some dominant and invincible institutional determinants, but also in the cultural forms produced by the ‘lads’ in their resistance to the authority of the school. According to Willis, the hidden curriculum of the school structure is important in determining the reproduction of class relations in schools; rather, it is the hidden curriculum of

pupil resistances (cultural production), which must be understood if the dynamics of social and cultural reproductionism are to be explained.

From another perspective, theorists including Michael Apple, Jean Anyon, and Henry Giroux engaged in the project of describing how hidden curricular practices provided qualitatively differential forms of schooling to students from different social classes. Apple (1982, 2004) emphasized that hidden curricula involve various interests, cultural forms, struggles, agreements, and compromises. Students are not simply passive receptacles but active players in the systems that attempt to socialize them. Students negotiate, accommodate, reject, and often divert socialization agendas. In that context, hidden curriculum occurs at multiple places and times during schooling. Students encounter norms, values, and beliefs through the rules and practices that form the daily routines and social relationships in the classroom and the extended school. This hidden curriculum, grounded in industry's attempt to control labor and increase productivity, must also foster faith in the putative 'neutrality' of schools and the supposed 'natural' environment of education and tolerance (Apple 1982).

Jean Anyon (1980) published an article entitled "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work", in which he reports the findings of a study in five schools. He investigated how children of different economic classes receive very different types of educations. Therefore, he compared two working-class schools, one middle class school, an upper middle class school, and an elite school. Anyon found a connection between the social class of the students, the type of education they receive in school, and the type of work that they are prepared to do. He observed that children in poor schools were prepared to become obedient laborers, while children in elite schools were prepared to become original thinkers and leaders. The article attempts a theoretical contribution as well and assesses student work in the light of a theoretical approach to social-class analysis. It is suggested that there is a 'hidden curriculum' in schoolwork that has profound implications for the theory - and consequence - of everyday activity in education.

Henry Giroux (1983) examined the roles of students and teachers in resisting curricula both official and hidden. He conceptualized students and teachers as active agents working to subvert, reject, or change curricula. He noted that 'curriculum' was not a unified structure but incoherent conflicting and contradictory messages. Henry Giroux (1983a, p. 61-63-110) linked the structure of hidden curricula to notions of liberation, grounded in values of personal dignity and social justice. Schools therefore become sites of domination and contestation. This does not mean that the terrain is evenly shared between the forces of domination and resistance, or that all forms of oppositional behavior have a radical significance. Given that acts of resistance vary, each oppositional act must be analyzed to see if it constitutes a form of resistance.

Another theorist Martin (1976), influenced by Elizabeth Vallance, argues that there are two kinds of hiddenness based on the question of intent. A hidden curriculum may be purposely hidden by someone or some group, or the hiddenness may be consciously unintended, but in either case a hidden curriculum is not openly acknowledged to the learners in a given setting (Martin, 1976). According to Martin, a hidden curriculum is not something one just finds; one must go hunting for it. Since a hidden curriculum is a set of learning states, ultimately one must find out what is learned as a result of the practices, procedures, rules, relationships, structures, and physical characteristic which constitute a given setting. Martin states that hidden curriculum can be found in the social structure of the classroom, the teacher's exercise authority, the rules governing the relationship between teacher and student. Standard learning activities can be found also be sources, as can the teacher's use of language, textbooks, tracking systems, and curriculum priorities.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the hidden curriculum is very much connected to and can be identified by the social interactions within an environment. Thus, it is in operation at all times, and serves to convey unspoken messages to students about values, attitudes and principles. An evaluation of the environment and the unexpected, unplanned interactions between teachers and students can serve to reveal the hidden curriculum as it operates within a given setting.

This study has revealed that every theorist has taken one important point into consideration and applied into new areas. Yet, there is a lot of area where hidden curriculum is conducted but not investigated. It is believed that this study has helped the researchers to see the whole picture of the studies on hidden curriculum, which has not done before and guide them to use hidden curriculum theories in new areas.

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