



HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN RELATION TO LOCAL CONDITIONS IN FIJI

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Abstract:

Hidden curriculum is a concept that refers to a range of things which includes opinions, attitudes and values that students learn, not from a formal curriculum but are unarticulated and unacknowledged and learnt from experience of being in school. These stem from the unspoken messages conveyed through the composition and organization of the institution, the relations between students and teachers, the punitive administration, the appraisal structure and the various subcultures that are present. This presentation will critically evaluate the international concept of the Hidden curriculum in relation to local conditions in Fiji. It will provide an insight of the theorists' definition of the concept with supporting examples on which they agree that it is a very real phenomenon and is pervasive in the school system and then discuss how hidden curriculum is evident in the local context.

Keywords: hidden curriculum, school system, correspondence theory, Fiji, identity

1. Introduction

Hidden curriculum is a concept that refers to a range of things which includes opinions, attitudes and values that students learn, not from a formal curriculum but are unarticulated and unacknowledged and learnt from experience of being in school. These stem from the unspoken messages conveyed through the composition and organisation of the institution, the relations between students and teachers, the punitive administration, the appraisal structure and the various subcultures that are present. This essay will critically evaluate the international concept of the Hidden curriculum in relation to local conditions in Fiji. It will provide an insight of the theorists' definition of the concept with supporting examples on which they agree that it is a very real

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phenomenon and is pervasive in the school system and then discuss how hidden curriculum is evident in the local context.

2. Theorists View of Hidden Curriculum

Each of the following researchers has studied the hidden curriculum and its impact on students and the school system. These men and women understand the importance that the hidden curriculum plays in education. They may look at the issue of the hidden curriculum in different ways, but they all agree that the hidden curriculum is a very real phenomena and that it is pervasive in the school system.

Durkheim (1961: 148) observed that more is taught and learned in schools than specified in the established curriculum of textbooks and teaching guides and this is referred to as hidden curriculum. In a Marxist perspective, Parson, Jackson and Dreeben under the collective heading of consensus theory, hidden curriculum has been defined as the elements of socialization that occur in schools but are not part of the formal content. The consensus theory started in the 1960s as a sociological perspective in which social order and stability and social regulation forms the base of emphasis. The hidden curriculum makes the students form short-lived social relationships, suppress much of their personal identity and accept the legitimacy of categorical treatment.

Norms, values and belief systems are embedded into the curriculum, the school, the classroom life, imparted to students through daily routines, curricular content and social relationships. Socialising children to hold particular values such as those of 'achievement' and 'equal opportunity' is necessary to this consensus and is the primary function of education.

Durkheim (1922) states that '*society can go on only if there exists among its members an important amount of homogeneity; education achieves and supports this homogeneity by setting up the student from the start, the vital connection collective life demands*'. There is an entire organization of rules in schools that decide the students conduct. For example, he must come to class regularly, arrive at a certain time, behave in a certain way, do not disrupt things, learn the lesson, and do the homework and other things. This constitutes the discipline of the school, through practice; it inculcates the spirit of discipline in the child.

In the book 'Life in Classrooms', a typical ethnographic (1968), Jackson discovered features of classroom life that were inbuilt in the collective affairs of education. He saw that there were principles, outlooks and social and behavioural expectations brought rewards for students in schools and learning took place which is an element of hidden curriculum. There were explicit skills stressed in this functionalist view such as learning to wait in silence, applying self-control, attempting, finishing work, keeping eventful, working together, showing loyalty to both staff and other students, being tidy and prompt and being courteous. These experiences from formal

classroom settings not only taught the overt curriculum, but indirectly conveyed to students independence and achievement which was useful for the globalized world.

Philip Jackson's "The Daily Grind" (1997, p.99) persuades teachers to impede and reflect on what our students are actually learning because what they are learning is often very diverse from what we At times teachers assume that they are teaching students one thing however, they are teaching something else, this suppresses students learning. This makes students become passive learners complying with the rules and routines which are fixed in the classroom teaching.

Jackson (1968) continues to identify the psychological features of schooling whereby students socialize with their peers and the atmosphere of the classroom is unfriendly and viable. Schools teach conformity so that students are able to survive inside the classroom.

These characteristics of school life and requirements for consistency were necessary for an acceptable headway through school. As argued by Dreeben, the family alone could not sufficiently set up the student for indoctrination in the adult world. Without this indoctrination students would not understand how to function in our society

Under another the Marxist perspective, the Schooling in Capitalist America (Bowles &Gintis, 1976) examined the process by which schools reproduce dominant interests in what is termed the correspondence thesis. The correspondence thesis demonstrated the relationship between the norms of schooling and the maintenance of the capitalist system. Through the formal and hidden curricular schools demonstrated the social relations needed to maintain capitalism: competition and evaluation, hierarchical division of labour, bureaucratic authority, compliance and the fragmented and alienated nature of work.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) sees schools 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. The values and culture of middle and upper class are dominant throughout school life however, the low class students are lack of them and suppressed. Social inequality is reproduced through hidden curriculum.

In addition to the hidden curriculum, schools provide a compliant, submissive and regimented labour force in the country that has the appropriate skills, personalities and attitudes. This is one element of the hidden curriculum because teachers never clearly state that the purpose of this doings is to prepare students for the workplace whereby they may not even know themselves that this is the aim of education.

According to Valance (1980), "*the hidden curriculum is a deliberately vague term, referring more to an after effect (hiddenness) than to any particular process (of hiding) or content of what is hidden*". She suggests that it is just a part of the course of action of education,

which takes place through the contact done during classroom activities. She supports a syllabus of individual obligation which she describes as *surrounding educational rationalism and the self-actualizing viewpoint.....*(1986, p.27). It is the idea of education that wishes to see students continue through to the end of formal education.

There are three hidden dimensions of hidden curriculum that are being talked about by Elizabeth Vallance (1973) in her article titled, 'Hiding the hidden curriculum: An interpretation of the language of justification in nineteenth- century educational reform' another researcher who had done some work on hidden curriculum and identified its impact on the education system. The first dimension being the framework of schooling including the student-teacher communication component, classroom arrangement and the whole executive model of the school as a little world of the social value scheme.

The second dimension involves the procedures in use in, including values attainment, socialization and continuance of rank arrangement. The third dimension includes the levels of *intentionality and depth of 'hiddenness' by the investigator*. She asserts that there might be *unintentional results of education; however, these outcomes may not be nearly as unplanned as one thinks* (Arieh, 1991). Schools are considered as the spaces where educational beliefs are executed to uphold the way of life of overriding traditions.

Moreover, there are four approaches to the notion of hidden curriculum that are stated by Henry Giroux (1938: 48-60), these include customary, moderate, fundamental and dialectical analysis. The customary or the traditional approach is that of Jackson and Dreeben whereby there is a relationship between schools and the entire society. Anyon and Martin define the moderate or liberal approach which highlights forms of discourse that are resistant to discrimination and prejudice. The fundamental or radical approach of Bowles and Gintis focuses on the political economy of schooling which classifies schooling as the formative vigour in determining a school setting. Giroux's 'dialectical critique' approach which is sometimes seen as the resistance theory stems from Paulo Freire's work that suggests the hidden curricula being plural and challenges open spaces for students and teachers to oppose methods of social power and supremacy and to make substituted educational outlines.

Thus making a comparison with the work of Bowles and Gintis, Giroux believes that students have the potential to defy power in the schools and provide potential for societal organisation.

Most of the work of Talcott Parsons deals with the analysis of society, from a functionalist view, the significant aim of education is to teach culture across the different age groups and set up values and ideals in students as they progress in the school system. He continually advocates on the structural relationships that are evident in any society. *Each institution has a different set of purposes and education serves as a cushion between family and work* and the social system was Parsons' (1951, p.35) main concern.

This is society as a whole, or the various institutions such as the family and school within society.

Parsons' defines social system as a system that *consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a condition which has at least a physical or environmental portion, actors who are aggravated in terms of a tendency to the "optimization of gratification" and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols* (The Social System, pp. 5-6).

Education is like a link between the family unit and wider society setting up students for their adult roles in society. Today, the family unit is the principal means of socialization. *We are judged on particularistic terms because we gain ascribed status from the family. That is to say we are judged in terms of our status as brother, sister, daughter, or son.* Education is the main minor means of socialization. Teachers are critiqued according to what they achieve and schools prepare students for this transition. *At school, our conduct is measured against the universal school rules and our status is achieved through examination in relation to others.*

Education and Power by Apple (1982), emphasizes that hidden curriculum involves various interests, cultural forms, struggles, agreements and compromises. He points out the concept of hegemony which shapes the schools in many respects and defines schools as not just distributors but also producers of culture that is vital for the socialisation of students. It becomes almost visible that is becomes normal. Students encounter various norms and cultures through rules and activities to form the social life in the school. In another of Apple's works Ideology and Curriculum (2001), he recognizes that the hidden curriculum match up to the ideological requirements of resources.

Apple and other researchers oppose the *deskilling of teachers through some of the practices of the traditional approach, such as imposing a common curriculum on all teachers and students.* Beane and Apple (1995) share a democratic idea for schools but, in addition, offer a challenge against social injustice: *While social equality depends upon caring for the universal good, too many schools, enthused by the pressure of political agendas forced from outside, have stressed an idea of individualism based almost completely on self-interest. While social equality awards diversity, too many schools have largely replicated the wellbeing and goals of the most powerful groups and overlooked those of the less powerful* (p. 12).

The article "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" by Anyon (1980) presents the ethnographical research of a study of five schools that examined how children of different economic classes obtain very different forms of education. The article attempted to make a theoretical contribution to social class analysis. She makes a comparison between two working class schools, one middle class, an upper middle class school and an elite school.

She establishes a link amid the *social class of the students, the type of education they receive in school, and the type of work.* She observed that children in poor schools were

equipped to become submissive laborers, while children in elite schools were equipped to become original thinkers and leaders. She notes that her article attempts a theoretical contribution as well and assesses student work in the light of a theoretical approach to social-class analysis.

Hidden curriculum is evident in the social structure of the classroom; the teacher's implement power, the regulations overriding the connection between students and teachers. Typical learning activities can be found also to be contributors, as can the teacher's use of *language, textbooks, tracking systems, and curriculum priorities* (Martin, 1976). As a result, hidden curriculum cannot be found directly for seeking, the examiner needs to scrutinize it and explore the rationale behind the events.

3. Local Conditions of Hidden Curriculum

Whilst critically evaluating the international concept of the hidden curriculum above, there are features of it also found in the local context of Fiji's education system. Elite schools are introduced in Fiji in the 1900s to cater for Fijians and their children from elite backgrounds to promote Fijian culture, leadership and to train these young people as our future leaders in Fiji. These would be for the *Adi* and *Ratu*, titles given to chiefs signifying nobility who had strong social, cultural and political influence on our society. The British colonial government promoted leadership for the elite class and *Nawaicourted criticism and ostracism by holding chiefs responsible for the difficulties facing the Fijian people.* (Firth & Tarte, 2001). He added to say that the Fiji chiefs looked after themselves, irrespective of the state their people were in.

For example, in 1906, Queen Victoria School was established to provide education to the sons of Fijian chiefs. Similarly, in 1948 AdiCakobau School was founded by the Fijian government as a boarding school to provide a "refined" intermediate education for Fijian girls of rank.

However, in addition to the formal training provided at this all girls' institution, a *bure*, the Fijian word for a wood and straw hut where traditionally ethnic Fijians lived, was also built in the school. Three students would reside in the 'bure' for a week, exempting themselves from all the dorm duties and engage in i-Taukei women tasks of collecting firewood, cooking in an open fire, learning how to make traditional dishes and do traditional tasks like weaving and preservation methods. This allowed for preservation of the traditions and cultures of the i-taukei.

Furthermore, the British colonial government was unwilling to encourage higher learning for the natives. This was evident when the British government during World War I in 1915 introduced a policy refusing enlistment to Fijians to avoid exploiting the native people. Believed that Fijians would never gain the respect of their British rulers, without proving their worth on the battlefield, Ratu Sukuna, a Fijian chief, scholar, soldier and statesman enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. The British benefitted from

the involvement of the Fijian men in the war but promoted ranking and class again. *The colonial power augmented the supremacy of the European district commissioners and weakened those of the Fijian leaders* (Firth & Tarte, 2001).

This class and ranking continued in when the Gold Mining began in Fiji in 1946, chiefs decided on how many men would go the mines, who would they be and how much of their wages would be retained for communal projects. *This system was a strange fusion of custom and modernism, and it illustrated the extensive difficulties of reuniting a shared social order with the individualistic attractions of the money economy and working for wages* (Firth & Tarte, 2001) The Chiefs wanted the Fijian miners to think of the mining company as their benevolent superior.

The British colonial government introduced the common roll in the elections of 1963 in Fiji; the common roll was for all representation based on race. They also nominated those to be in the Legislative Council in 1937. This created a disagreement and conflict between the Indo Fijians and the i-Taukei which further contributed to the coups of 1987 and 2000.

What is the purpose of education, is education perceived as a cost or an instrument and the value standard assessment as suggested by Noam Chomsky, a famous American linguist. Young people have been placed into a framework – INDOCTRINATION. They become obedient, passive, do not raise questions. If you ask questions – that is a behavioural problem (people are filtered out for obedience)

Since the introduction of History into the secondary school curriculum in 1985, topics of study included Cultural Interaction, Social Welfare, Economic Development, Nationalism, Imperialism (it was a comparative study). In 2013, there was a change in the topics which included Fiji's legal system, Cultural Interaction prior to independence, Types of government, Origin of Fiji's people, and Religious groups in Fiji. It was clearly seen as a move by the then government to promote the understanding of the local context which was vital for this generation.

The curriculum was censored to control the students thinking and what they study. One major area of the hidden curriculum is censorship because it limits what and how students are taught. *“Educational materials are governed by an intricate set of rules to screen out language and topics that might be considered controversial or offensive. Some of this censorship is trivial, some is ludicrous, and some is breathtaking in its power to dumb down what students learn in school”* (Ravitch, 2003, p.3). Textbooks and the curriculum were designed to avoid any objection to the government.

Furthermore, the assessments indirectly taught students to work hard; if they did not, there is a price to pay which was dropping out. According to the Fiji Education Commission (2000), examinations was conducted to select students for further education, certification of individual student achievement, motivation of students to study diligently and for teachers to teach them well. This promoted rote learning which was important at this time and was good as students learnt the winning and losing

notion whereby those who did well were rewarded. Rote learning was again introduced in 2014 when Internal Assessment was again replaced with examinations whereby teachers were overly mindful of their performance assessment and rarely discussed innovative learner centred pedagogies. Fijians prioritised social, cultural and religious obligations which were part of the Fijian way of life, the concept of communalism or 'solesolevaki' assisted them. This was carried on to the schools, with iTaukei students having no problem of working in a team.

Having said that, race has taken over the working distinctiveness because besides making a sense of belonging, it holds far greater potential for radical involvement and supremacy. This strengthens that race is perpetual and we can move in and out of a certain class (Fiji Education Commission, 2000).

With that in mind, in the 1960s, students could exit at Form 4 and be absorbed straight into the workforce such as clerical positions in some government departments. Many of them had excelled whilst some continued to just be employed in similar positions. The rural secondary schools introduced post Form 4 students to vocational courses

Beginning from 1997, schools had shifted their focus from selecting students who should be able to succeed to actively recruiting students who would enhance the reputation of the school. They had set their own cut off marks for entry which would mean that the school would select only the best performing students

The school's tradition is firmly embedded in the physical school environment, and more specifically, in space as an element of the hidden curriculum, and in space as the hidden curriculum itself. Students sit behind a desk, keeping students away from others and respecting the space of others and moreover being the passive learner and being passive workers in the future.

To a large extent, the formal education system introduced by the Christian missionaries and subsequently by the colonial government in the early nineteenth century, destroyed traditional educational patterns. In particular, it shifted the prominence of education away from vocational type education to academic studies and from traditional methods of collecting facts to modern styles of enquiry. In the post-independence era, *the education system continued to be centralised, academically-oriented and highly dependent on modern models* (Thaman 1993).

Indifference was certainly fostered in today's educational system through standardization and testing, media, and other policies, and as a result becomes a function of the hidden curriculum. Classes ran on a bell schedule which taught students that no matter what they are doing or what they are discussing that they must move on to the next teacher and class to begin something new. Students have very little opportunity to get really vested in any discussion; teachers bred indifference in their students even though it is not their intention to do so.

Students have become much like zombies, and as a result they demonstrated what they have learned in order to move on to the next grade, but often do not take pride in educational issues. They took very little interest in the curriculum, and students were indifferent to school because it was difficult for teachers to compete with the super toys and television. Gatto (2005) states: *That rich or poor, school children who face the 21st century cannot concentrate on anything for very long, they have a poor sense of time past and time to come, they are mistrustful of intimacy like the significant parental attention; they hate solitude, are cruel, materialistic, dependant, passive, violet, timid in the face of the unexpected, and addicted to distraction.*

Students experienced intellectual dependency in school because they must constantly wait on the teacher to tell them what to study, write, read or do next. They are not allowed any freedom to choose the material that they would like to study. Students must be trained to listen for someone to tell them what to do because our entire political system depends upon students learning to listen and obey what they are told. This is also training for the workplace/industrialized society that demands a steady stream of workers who do not have to think to do the job and do not question authority.

With the introduction of Christianity in Fiji in the nineteenth century, a new light came into being, darkness in the form of ancestral worship, cannibalism, and other related cultures were abandoned by the people. Whilst thinking about the introduction of this new religion, was it beneficial to the i-Taukei, thus analysing this new form of religion, was it necessary to be promoted to the Fijians who had their own unique form of worship, was it done to allow the Fiji to adhere to the colonial policies.

English language was a hindrance in moving forward for the Fijians during the colonial times in the 1950s, they had to learn English to be able to work alongside the white colonial men. In addition, this same language resulted in the poor performance of students particularly those in the rural areas (Fiji Education Commission, 2000). Who was to benefit from this new language, was it the colonial powers? Pondering on this idea and thinking of other more developed countries like Japan who provides scholarships to Fiji. Before the commencement of your program, it is compulsory to learn Japanese in the first year of the being there before beginning the program of your choice. Japan is seen to be one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world.

Was it necessary for children to suppress their own language in order to master another language or was it important that the Fijians reclaim, own and value their language for the purpose of creative expression, research and scholarship. When children are unable to master English, they become insecure and demotivated and do not excel in school. According to the Education Commission (2000: 293), *teaching and learning should continue strongly in the mother tongue, that is, in the dialect of the particular locality.*

The curriculum used in Fiji was seen as 'irrelevant to the lives of children in the rural areas and teachers had to lament the fact that children could not relate to many areas of it' (Education Commission, 2000). This also meant that teachers had no control of the curriculum and the lack of training and confidence made the curriculum more closed and static.

Over the years, the traditional way of life had been marginalised and overlooked; there was dilemma of the traditional vs modern goals of education. Did the colonial powers contribute to this when they introduced the policy of the preservation of the Fijian cultures and traditions and made them stay in their own villages and continue with their communal activities? A new philosophy of education argues to build a cohesive Fijian society and promote the one national concept that all children must learn and understand Fijian cultures and traditions.

The architecture of the classroom, teaching practice or the spatial design are elements of the hidden curriculum. Students sit behind a desk, this keeps them away from other students, teaching them to respect the space of others and also not question the teacher. In this setting, we are training the students to be passive learner and later become passive workers. *Educators need designers to become more open to changes and designers need educators to keep them closer to the needs of the education process.*

According to Lingam (2015), the government has gone out of its way to ensure that no child is left behind in education with the provision of bus fares, free textbook initiative, school fees grant and provision of lunch in remote schools. The child is promoted to the next level irrespective of failing to meet the marks; this can be seen as having a negative impact on the child as filtering will be done when the child reaches the upper levels of secondary school. Not only that but, whether the child can read and write is another issue that many secondary schools are met up which again has resulted in the promotion of rote learning and memorization.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the hidden curriculum as a socialization of schooling can be identified by the social interactions within an environment. Thus, it is in process at all times, and serves to transmit tacit messages to students about values, attitudes and principles. Hidden curriculum can reveal through an evaluation of the environment and the unexpected, unintentional interactions between teachers and students which revealed critical pedagogy. Hidden curriculum bridges any simple attempt to distinguish social from cultural reproduction to define a special zone of creativity and freedom. The greatest question one should ask when researching hidden curriculum is who will benefit and what is the purpose of education.

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