

HIDDEN CURRICULUM

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Opening Paragraph: Introduction

In this essay, I focus on the idea of a hidden curriculum in society and education. This hidden curriculum is messages, values, and behaviours appropriate for our society. They frequently reinforce dominance and power like Christian rule, an inclusion that looks more like exclusion, ableist mentality and classism in practice. Sociologists first began to document how these implicit socialisation goals are for students to incorporate into the standardised ways schools are structured.

"Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulas, formulaic human beings whose behaviour can be predicted and controlled." (Gatto, 2017)

A secondary English teacher told me in front of my peers that "I should be excluded from partaking in the project in the classroom because I would slow the others down and hold them back." As an SEN (special educational needs student) I did not get to try. The predisposed ideals of the class teacher took it upon herself to exclude me so I would not disrupt the non-SEN learners. This treatment signals to all the other students that the convenience and comfort of the dominant class are much more critical than affirming that there was a different way for me to learn.

Another aspect of the hidden curriculum is when parents are forced to join the Catholic faith and have their children christened to get them a place in primary school. The catholic church enforces the hidden curriculum to coerce families to have their children christened to secure a place or worse to prevent other members of the community of different religions from partaking in education.

"School is a twelve-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned". (Gatto, 2017)

So, what can we do about the current Hidden Curriculum? First, we must name it now that we have the vocabulary to describe what we see in our educational settings. We can express why it can be harmful and advocate for change.

Main Paragraph 1: What is Curriculum?

What is Curriculum?

The Curriculum (Noun) comprises a course of study in a school or college.

Dr Angadi defines the term Curriculum. There is no generally agreed-upon definition of Curriculum saying that it is, perhaps, best thought of as that set of “*planned activities*” designed “*to implement a particular educational aim*”. (Dr G R Angadi, n.d.) The Curriculum is a list of objectives and assertions of the standards used to select the subjects that must be taught. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be actively encouraged, as well as the methods, resources, and evaluation options to be used. (Dr G R Angadi, n.d.).

Curriculum Authority used the term 'curriculum' to 'describe everything children do, see, hear or feel in their setting, both planned and unplanned. Wyse locates the pupils' 'self' at the heart of his Curriculum, which addresses text, images, numbers and environment. (Louise Cohen, 2010)

The Hidden Curriculum is what the student takes from the learning situation in school, not necessarily what was intended. Hidden Curriculum is those things students learn at school because of how the school planned and organised the Curriculum. An Irish example is where schools focus on the Catholic religion, primarily whether the student body is Catholic or not.

Kelly (Kelly, 2009). describes the hidden Curriculum as Implicit in any set of arrangements that the attitudes and values of those who create the Curriculum communicated to students in this accidental and perhaps even sinister way. This factor is of particular significance when the Curriculum is planned and imposed by the government or Religious organisation.

Kelly (Kelly, 2009) also believes that materials provided but which are not in themselves avoid overtly included in the planning or sometimes even in the consciousness of

those responsible for the school arrangements. Social roles, for example, are learned in this way.

This is the case in some schools that are fee-paying and are taught that a different set of rules may apply to them.

Teachers are enforcing these Hidden curriculums; it is about doing what is necessary and only what is necessary to get a better letter or number and, most recently, a sentence, "Yet to Meet", "In line with", "exceptional". This type of planning can be harmful to those students who cannot fit themselves into the mould that the teachers put them in so therefore they should sit and be quiet and it will not matter because the majority in the classroom can fit.

According to Gatto, (Gatto, 2017). there are seven lessons of school teaching: confusion, class position, indifference, emotional and intellectual dependency, conditional self-esteem, and surveillance. These lessons are excellent training for permanent underclasses, people deprived forever of finding the centre of their unique genius. Examining these lessons within the Irish school context, it is evident in the Irish school systems of today and in the past. A lot of school time is spent on sports or religion; even if the student does not engage with either.

Kelly (Kelly, 2009) goes on to say that Teachers enforce societal ideas of adult supremacy, children's inferiority, and their experience of reality. Teachers are in a system designed to manipulate and coerce children into conforming to societal norms within which they have no choice.

The teacher's job is to systematically deny children their ideas and convince them that the only proper way to do something is the way somebody else has decided for them. (Kelly, 2009) This is Portraying the message that they have nothing of value to add to the world

regardless of whether they are telling children this explicitly or everything about the system tells them—school stripped children of their humanity and the teacher too.

Main Paragraph 2: The Hidden Curriculum

There's more to a school than just what's in the textbooks. In Ireland, the hidden curriculum refers to the unofficial lessons, values, and perspectives that students pick up during their time in school. Many different opinions exist about the hidden curriculum within Irish school systems. Some people believe that the curriculum is purposely hidden from students to control them. Some believe there are also positive things about the Hidden Curriculum that schools can teach students lessons that they might not receive at home. Examples would be CSPE, SPHE, and well-being. These subjects are providing students with a safe space to learn about themselves and the world around them. These classes are at the discretion of the school and the teacher on how these classes can work.

Gatto (Gatto, 2017). says that if do my job well, the kids can't even imagine themselves somewhere else because I've shown them how to envy and fear the better classes and how to have contempt for the dumb classes. Therefore, it can be so harmful to have a system that is potentially in the hands of the Government or a Religious organisation that it compromises the lessons and ethos of the school itself.

Gatto later goes on to say that it is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to sit in confinement with people of the same age and social class. That system effectively cuts you off from the immense diversity of life and the synergy of variety; indeed, it cuts you off from your own past and future, sealing you in a continuous present much the same way television does. (Gatto, 2017). I agree with Gatto that schools can be harmful places and that the way that students are placed into a classroom just because of their age is problematic. This Supports the notion that Ireland's hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often unacknowledged lessons, behaviours, and values that students learn in school.

The hidden curriculum is a powerful tool that can socialize students into the norms and values of a particular culture. In Ireland, the hidden curriculum has been used to promote Catholic values and instil patriotism. Considering Catholics were forbidden from receiving an education until the middle of the 19th century. The Catholic teaching orders established schools from the end of the eighteenth century, including the Presentation Sisters (1791), the Irish Christian Brothers (1802) and the Mercy Sisters (1828) (Walsh, 2016). According to (Walsh, 2016) It was also a product of the endeavours of the various religious denominations within Ireland to use schools to imbue the upcoming generations with their religious beliefs and ensure the survival of their faith.

“District Model Schools was a major source of concern for the Catholic Church as it exercised no control over their management or activities and an outright ban on attendance for Catholics was instituted by the Catholic hierarchy between 1863 and 1924” (Walsh, 2016)

In recent years, there has been a move away from using the hidden curriculum to promote Catholic values in schools with the separation of the catholic religion in schools with the introduction of schools such as Educate Together/Founded in 1978 and currently has 90 national schools in Ireland.

In relation to the schools Ireland President Michael D Higgins has said There can be no doubt that, as a society, we have travelled far from the Ireland of 1978 when the Educate Together movement first took root. Today, that pioneering vision has taken its rightful place in our education system, growing, flourishing, and enabling a further generation of citizens to benefit from the generous and participative ethos which defines Educate Together.” (Higgins, n.d.) this was said during a time when there has been an increase in interest from parents to send their children to a school that was not centred around one main Religion.

Educate Together schools' ethos is multi-denominational and multi-cultural. This type of ethos removes the catholic religion as an influence over the curriculum. However, this impacts how the school creates the curriculum and instils a different belief system, allowing for a more inclusive environment for different backgrounds and belief systems.

Main Paragraph 3: Hidden Curriculum Inclusion

Where do we learn what is normal and when and where do we learn this?

According to Gatto (Gatto, 2017) Education should make you a unique individual, not a conformist. Education should give you the creative spirit to face big challenges. It should allow you to find the values that serve as a roadmap for your life. It should enrich you spiritually and makes you a loving person in everything you do, wherever you are and whom you are with. This is a strong statement that is an idealized idea that can be incorporated into the classroom with the introduction to more student-led

“The truth is that schools don’t really teach anything except how to obey orders.”

(Gatto, 2017)

According to a report on Special Education Needs Curriculum Issues by the NCCA, *"During the first half of the twentieth century"*, there was *"little or no progress"* in the creation of educational opportunities for those with general *"learning disabilities"*, then called mental *"handicaps"*. The first voluntary organizations and religious orders to establish schools for kids with certain disabilities didn't do so until the middle of the 19th century. After that, the Department of Education recognized these schools as special national schools. (NCCA, 1999)

Most recently the introduction to inclusion within the classroom has become more widespread and is handled a lot better than in the past. For example, in the early 90s, it was standard that a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) was placed within a class and sat beside a student. this automatically labelled them. This is one aspect of the Hidden part of the curriculum. that those outside never noticed or felt it didn’t matter but for those students with the adult sitting beside them it can be upsetting. This situation segregates that student and in an attempt in creating inclusion, it creates exclusion. Before this, the steps taken to help

struggling students would have been to remove them from the school and exclude them. This was especially so with students that had outward behavioral issues or outbursts.

The introduction of The EPSEN Act (2004) promotes inclusive education for learners with SEN.

The EPSEN Act (2004) promotes inclusive education for learners with SEN. It outlines the duties and responsibilities of schools' boards of management and principal teachers with regard to education provision for learners with SEN. It deals with the assessment and identification of SEN and the development and implementation of education plans for learners with assessed SEN. It confers on parents a series of rights in relation to their child with SEN it covers the following specific issues:

1. inclusion with regard to children with special education needs and mainstream settings.
2. Preparation of individual education plans (IEP) for children with special needs
3. assessment of special needs.
4. Service provision for children with special needs.
5. Appeal

(Government of Ireland, 2003)

This act introduced a lot of changes for inclusion regarding children with special education needs. Part two states the child with SEN shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs. (The Government of Ireland, 2004) This means that SNAs are in the room but do not sit with or identify whom they are there to care for. This allows that learner with SEN anonymity and the ability to have a truly inclusive education. Although this is hard to enforce in all cases it's another step toward building a space for all learners which in turn helps to positively reinforce acceptance and understanding through the hidden curriculum and school system.

As a result of the policy of inclusive education, more children with special educational needs are being educated in mainstream schools with their peers.

Final Paragraph: Conclusion

The concept of a concealed curriculum in society and education is examined in this essay. Our society-appropriate messages, attitudes, and behaviours make up this hidden curriculum. They frequently support oppression and supremacy, such as Christian rule, an inclusion that appears to be exclusion, ableism, and classism in action.

While the Hidden curriculum is continuously evolving, the overarching message remains constant. That time spent in a learning environment will impact a student in some way, regardless of the school's specific goals or the states, was discussed.

"Schools teach exactly what they are intended to teach, and they do it well: how to be a good Egyptian and remain in your place in the pyramid". (Gatto, 2017)

Ireland's constantly evolving culture must develop to be relevant. If the way education developed changes, the fact that teachers are enforcing these Hidden curricula could be a good thing for establishing non-denominational schools that are not run primarily by a religious organization. The curriculum will be significantly affected by this alteration within the framework of Irish schools.

The implementation of SEN students in mainstream settings within schools has come a long way and is constantly improving. School environments are more accepting of SEN students now than in the past. The future looks bright for more inclusive classrooms for all students SEN, exceptional students ESL and all cultures and Religions.

I have sought to show how my experiences of the hidden curriculum should be different from the experience of my children. That society has changed so much over the last 30 years. However, the many points of the curriculum I have highlighted have been primarily negative. As a society, we are evolving, and this continues. I would classify my approach as driven by a willingness to see beyond discrete schools of thought and address their limitations rather than the Ableist Mentality and Catholic rule I experienced.

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