



THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND SOCIAL STUDIES

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THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, 1993–94, was highlighted by newspaper articles pointing to the fact that students entering middle school as sixth graders were to graduate from high school the year 2000 (Athans, 1993). It was expected that the class of 2000 was to “be watched by the world and sent off into the world at the turn of the century” (Athans, 1993, 4B). How did this statement impress the students as it is not only the turn of the century, but also the turn of the millennium? Julie is reported to have said, “Well I heard on TV that’s when the world is going to end...I was watching *Beverly Hills 90210* and a commercial came on and said it. I know it’s not true but that’s what they say and it’s kind of scary” (Athans 1993, 4B). After having said that, Julie proceeded with her friend, Abigail, to sign up for cheerleading.

Clearly the expectations are high for the “class of 2000,” the expectation that something drastic is going to happen upon graduation. Yet schooling, including cheerleading, is expected to continue in the mode of “business as

usual." The key questions are what is the business of schooling and is this business going to continue undisturbed by outside events?

Schooling, in virtually all formal statements issued by departments or ministries of education, worldwide, is expected to prepare future citizens to meet changes, anticipated and unanticipated, in their environment. Does schooling really do that?

Formal schooling plays a rather insignificant role in students' ability to meet the challenges of their rapidly changing environment. Formal schooling, consisting of the authorities' declarations of educational goals and means for achieving these goals, normally provides certification of time spent in school; it does not provide, however, certification for knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed by the students, all students, to cope successfully with change and be ineluctably part of it.

What is referred to as the hidden curriculum or the informal curriculum is an extremely powerful force that impacts students, positively or negatively, depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves. Yet this force is largely ignored by school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the educational establishment, including textbook publishers.

We will discuss the key issues concerning the hidden curriculum as it relates to social studies teaching and learning.

1. Is the hidden curriculum in conflict with the formal curriculum? Should it be?

Many curriculum analysts "have focused on a discrepancy between what a curriculum says *ought* to be taking place in schools and what first hand observation reveals actually does take place. This discrepancy underlies the concept of the hidden curriculum..." (Gregg, 1988 p. 323). The hidden curriculum, what was once referred to by John Dewey as "collateral learning," consists of all learnings that take place in school as a result of actions by school personnel and students. These learnings are normally excluded from statements of what is to be learned through the formal program of studies specified in each school or school district.

One of the earliest studies of the hidden curriculum was conducted by Philip Jackson (1968) who established that elementary-school students learn to live with "crowds," "praise," and "power." To make it in school, students learn how to survive in the presence of many others, that is, students and teachers who also seek for themselves valued objects. In this process students learn to accept praise or reproof and they find out how power is distributed in school and what the role of the gate keepers is. In this environment students learn the "unpublicized features of school life" such as delay, denial, interruption, social distraction, and patience (Jackson, 1983, pp. 41-42). Yet the most

important skill the students learn in school is how to deal with authority—usually this to be done through passivity and conformity to the rules. In this type of setting the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in student 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 the hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1983, p. 56). Clearly the formal curriculum postulates the values of scholarship, academic learning, fairness, and democratic participation in decision making. The hidden curriculum, on the other hand, teaches students that those values are not quite realistic. To survive in school one needs to please the authorities, "apple polishing the teacher," and to comply with the institution's requirements. From this it is obvious that the formal curriculum does not contain realistic goals, while the hidden curriculum in fact delivers what students actually need to function in school effectively. The students soon learn that ignoring the hidden curriculum is a sure way to failure in school, both socially and academically.

Other authors assert that the hidden curriculum of the school, through the process prevailing in the classroom "militate against students developing a sense of community" (Giroux and Penna, 1983, p. 113). This happens primarily because "competition" and "individual striving" are emphasized. Although often schools through sections of their formal curriculum refer to the value of collectivity or the social good, the structure of the classroom, in actual practice, negates this objective. For example, students are always prompted to compete for good grades, for being the "teachers' pets," for being able to join the most desirable school clubs, and so on. Individualism is also fostered through the classroom seating arrangements where there is an attempt to have students be distanced from each other. In this milieu, the seats are arranged in rows, thus preventing students from establishing eye contact with other students, usually in the context of maintaining classroom discipline.

The response to the original question, whether or not the hidden curriculum is inimical to the formal curriculum, is that, as a rule, the two "curricula" are antithetical to each other. The formal curriculum preaches democracy, but the hidden curriculum imposes autocracy. The formal curriculum stresses academic knowledge and understanding; the hidden curriculum stresses the political process as a means of school achievement. But school and classroom dynamics are not the only purveyor of the hidden curriculum. As we shall examine later, hidden messages are conveyed through the formal curriculum as well. Standard textbooks, for example, convey implicitly a stereotypical picture of America—a two-child, nuclear, middle-class, white family. This portrayal indirectly legitimizes an institution that may appropriately represent only a fraction of the citizenry. As a result of this hidden message, students of

the minority groups—or what is now referred to as microcultures—students of single-parent families, or students of low income backgrounds can develop feelings of inferiority, rejection, and loss of identity. In this context, then, the textbooks, as part of the formal curriculum, indirectly negate or contradict the traditional goal of American education, which is to provide equal opportunity to all children and youth to receive quality education and through it attain the “American Dream.”

A recent study of commonly used American history textbooks revealed that the history of minorities is conveniently left out or distorted (Sugnet, Yiannousi, and Sommers, 1993). Significant events, such as the Columbus landing omit important facts about the treatment of native Americans and Africans. “...Although Eurocentric notions of Columbus heroically discovering an empty New World are slowly changing, even the best available textbooks have serious limitations” (Sugnet et al., 1993 p. 224). When evaluated against a multicultural, gender-inclusive checklist, the texts indicated an “overall mediocrity.” In all, the diversity of American society and culture was not adequately presented. Given these hidden messages in textbooks, it is no wonder that many minorities feel excluded from the history of their own community and as a result begin to develop a sense of inferiority and a low self-concept. They feel that they do not belong.

It is apparent from this discussion that the hidden curriculum is generally in conflict with the formal curriculum. Naturally this conflict should not exist or, at least, it should be minimized. How can this conflict, however, be eliminated or reduced when the schools and their key players are resistant to any significant change? Through the additional issues that follow we will introduce some ideas about the changes needed to bring the formal and the hidden curricula in line with each other.

2. Is student learning affected by the hidden curriculum? Should it be?

Ever since formal schooling was instituted, educators assumed that teaching entailed learning. The idea was that teaching based on well-thought-out objectives and instructional methodologies would inescapably result in student learning. The studies referred to in this chapter, however, make this assumption unwarranted. It appears that the formal curriculum accounts for a relatively small share of learnings that students acquire in school. It is estimated that the share of these learnings is as little as 10 percent of all learning; the rest being attributed to the hidden curriculum (Massialas, 1989).

Student learning—as Philip Jackson, John Goodlad, Robert Dreeben, and others have demonstrated—is affected by the classroom and the general school climates in which students find themselves. After studying schools nationwide, one investigator concluded that inspite of the stated goals to this effect schools

“did not place a high premium on experiencing democratic processes, independent thinking, creativity, personal autonomy, and learning for the sake of learning” (Goodlad, 1988, pp. 340–341). What students experienced in virtually all subject areas was a condition where those behaviors were fostered that sought “‘right answers,’ conforming and reproducing the known. These behaviors are reinforced daily by the physical restraints of the group and classroom, by the kinds of questions teachers ask, by the nature of the seatwork exercises assigned, and by the format of tests and quizzes” (Goodlad, 1988, p. 353). The rewards and punishments observed in the classrooms studied were geared to reinforce these types of student conforming behaviors. Particularly acute was the condition of students who were doing poorly in their lessons. These students were forced by the school environment not to feel good about themselves. Minority students were most likely to be affected by the hidden curriculum. Among students in the schools studied by Goodlad, 15 to 25 percent were expected not to finish high school, minority students being “overrepresented in this group” (Goodlad, 1988, p. 354).

The hidden curriculum impacts groups of students differently. A study of schools catering to students of different social-class backgrounds found that the hidden curriculum affected the learning of these groups of students in a number of ways (Anyon, 1988). For example, students who attended “working-class schools” engaged in mechanistic learning based on rote work. Very little or no explanation was given by the teacher of the phenomena studied in the various subjects, whether the subjects were language arts, social studies, or math. In contrast were the “affluent professional schools” and the “executive elite schools.” In the former, student work is marked by “creative activity carried out independently. The students are continually asked to express and apply ideas and concepts” (Anyon, 1988, p. 378). In the latter school, students are taught to develop their “analytical intellectual powers...school work helps one to achieve, to excel, to prepare for life” (Anyon, 1988, p. 381). The investigator concluded that the hidden curriculum of the schools prepared students to enter the labor market: the working-class schools prepared students to be the laborers whereas the professional or elite schools prepared students to be the intellectuals and the professionals. Thus the students reproduced and reinforced the larger system of “unequal social relations.” The age-old idea that schools through their curriculum contributed to the erosion of fixed social classes, membership in which prevented students from upward mobility, appeared to be a myth. In fact, schools, through the hidden curriculum, made it very difficult for even the most motivated students to break away from their destiny as it is prescribed by society. One side effect of the hidden curriculum, however, was to develop the “abilities and skills of resistance.” Students resisted the monotony of the school, the day-in and day-out drill. Although this

prevented them from learning “socially legitimate knowledge,” they were able to acquire the methods that later on, in adult life, can be used to carry out a “slowdown,” “subtle sabotage,” or other forms of resistance in a place of work (Anyon, 1988, p. 385).

Although all schools offer promises of equality of opportunity for all, in actuality, as in the larger society, the school provides a system that treats students differentially. Social class, race, ethnicity, linguistic background, and gender are factors that impact the decision makers of the schools in organizing and delivering instruction. The hidden curriculum, manifested through the textbooks, the teachers, and the students themselves, affects what categories of students learn. Minorities learn to be obedient and passive. WASPs learn to be aggressive and involved.

Should the schools continue in this mode? Most educators would certainly abhor the status quo as described here and would recommend that the schools be restructured so that the cycle of schooling as a continuation and reinforcing element of the unequal distribution of opportunity be broken down. Attempts at this have been made, including such practices as designating certain schools with heavy enrollment of minorities and working-class youths as “magnet schools”—such schools emphasizing new areas of instruction such as telecommunications or global studies. Busing, of course, has been practiced for years, and its results on student learning are still disputed. The most important component in changing this stifling situation for minority students is the teacher because she or he controls the social dynamics of the classroom. To this teacher we turn our attention as we discuss the next issue.

3. Should “undesirable” elements in the hidden curriculum be replaced? How?

Knowledge or “cultural capital,” values, and attitudes that accrue to an individual as a result of being a member of a group based on social class, race, ethnicity, and gender are difficult to change in school. However, certain things within the power of the teacher can be implemented—things that can make a difference in controlling the negative effects of the hidden curriculum.

Henry Giroux and Anthony Penna (1983) suggested a number of implementation strategies to be employed by teachers to alleviate the ill-effects of the hidden curriculum. These strategies include (a) the elimination of the “pernicious practice of ‘tracking’ students;” (b) the substitution of intrinsic for extrinsic rewards, especially avoiding using grades as a disciplining tool; (c) introducing a larger scale of group work that “represents one of the most effective ways to demystify the traditional, manipulative role of the teacher...it provides students with social contexts that stress social responsibility and group solidarity” (Giroux and Penna, 1983, pp. 155–116); (d) altering the way

time is managed in schools, which is presently reminiscent of factory work, so that students can adopt a "modified self-pacing" procedure in the classroom—students can opt to work alone or in groups and develop a more personal communication line with the teacher; and (e) the establishment of "peer-leaders," students who are capable of fostering social relationships among peers so that the goals of the group can be attained without much teacher intervention.

A clearly defined strategy for using the hidden curriculum in a positive way was developed in connection with the application of the idea of the school being a laboratory for real-life experiences (Massialas and Hurst, 1978). Under this scheme students are to learn decision-making skills by actively participating in the distribution of power in the school. Students learn such participatory skills as proposing action, rule making, and voting. These skills are not learned theoretically, but rather they emerge from actual participation in school-related decisions that affect the student body, at large, or each student personally. Decision topics that emerge from the natural school setting include classroom seating arrangements, the grading system, disciplining, the use of passes, classroom assignments, textbook and materials use, school clubs operation, traffic movement in the halls, the quality and quantity of cafeteria food, the authority of the front office, peer relations, and so on. (See box). Teachers of all subjects, not only social studies, commit themselves to an in-depth involvement as part of their official task in the study topics that actually form the hidden curriculum. These decision topics change naturally every day and affect the students' lives. Thus students learn the skills they need to cope with their environment and participate in the major decisions that concern them. They learn how to identify the "gate keepers," or those who control power in the school (not always the principal), and how to deal effectively with them. As a result of this learning experience with the hidden curriculum of the school, students develop a relatively high sense of political and social efficacy, that is, they begin to understand how the system around them operates and feel competent in participating directly in that system and its decision-making mechanisms. Thus students, by being taught to not allow themselves to be manipulated by the system through the hidden curriculum, begin to control their environment rather than being controlled by it.

Needless to say, teachers for various reasons would be reluctant to apply a participatory program for students as a way of using the hidden curriculum for explicit learning. Teachers usually claim that the crowded school curriculum does not give them any flexibility to engage in such activities. If they do, they will be penalized by the system—by the administrators, the parents, the students. They will be criticized for not concentrating on academic subjects. Yet the demand for acknowledging the role of the hidden curriculum in learning and instruction is growing.

Decision Topics on Valued Objects

- Ways for students to earn points—decision allowing them to evaluate for themselves.
- Decision on what to do that day, especially on a Friday.
- Giving a certain amount of work every day.
- Decision on the seating they choose.
- Decision on what to do with students who don't show up—should they go to the assistant principal?
- Decision to carry on evaluation for next year and also for students to evaluate teacher.
- Decision to send to the principal the boy who allegedly stole \$15.
- Give assignments to draw up pictures that they may make into slides.
- Decision not to give free lunches—"no handouts."
- Decision to use "contract method" to individualize classroom activity—three levels of activities: (1) basic skills; (2) higher skills, 2-3 digits; (3) top group, fractions.
- Decision on raising hand.
- Decision on "good behavior contest"—every time a teacher sees a student demonstrating good behavior to give student an award, for example, a dinner at the Holiday Inn.
- Decision on disciplining—send them to the office, that's all you can do.
- Decision to lecture on Greek and Roman civilizations.
- Students don't like reading.
- Decision to give students a set of questions on worksheets.
- Decision to have a departmental syllabus.
- Decision to take three boys to the office.
- Decision to bring in older kids to tutor the younger.
- Decision to call parents on discipline problems.
- Decision to push for electives for younger kids.
- Decision to put on tape student rights and responsibilities so that nonreaders can understand.
- Decision never to send "discipline problems" to the front office.
- Decision to have kids police themselves, for example, peer ridicule if they don't watch out.
- Decision to give more options for student clubs or special-interest groups.
- Decision to give credit for everything students do.
- Decision not to use "home base" for anything important.
- Decision not to paddle students.
- Decision not to have clubs that are too structured.
- Decision to talk it out with kids on discipline problems and send them to the office only if I can't handle them.
- Call parent only when child is not doing well.

Byron Massialas and Joseph Hurst (1978). Social Studies in a New Era: The Elementary School as a Laboratory. pp. 150-151, New York: Longman.

An experimental program in Florida focusing on dimensions of the hidden curriculum found no appreciable interest among educators. The so-called Nims Project developed a series of 24 units on such topics as evaluation and grading, administrative decisions, student government, classroom rules, and so forth, which were to be used by teachers in involving students in direct decision making (Massialas and Hurst, 1978, pp. 367-368). Although the project evaluation established that the decision topics of the hidden curriculum provided students excellent spring-boards for learning participation and decision-making skills,

teachers, as a rule, did not go out of their way to use the published program, *Skills in Democratic Participation*. Without a demand for it, the program, published in the form of 24 booklets for middle schools was eventually removed from the Title IV Innovative Projects dissemination list.

This example indicated that elements of the hidden curriculum, including the “undesirable” elements, such as tracking and punitive grading can be used as natural springboards for negotiations between teachers and students, thus providing for learning decision making in the school. Once the decision-making process is learned by the students, it can be transferred to decision objects outside the natural school setting—to the family as well as community contexts. It follows that both desirable and undesirable elements of the hidden curriculum could and should be used to advantage, provided they are made explicit and students are asked to use them as topics for practicing decision making.

4. Are there linkages between the hidden curriculum and social studies? If so, should social studies focus on the hidden curriculum?

Earlier in this chapter we examined how components of the hidden curriculum enter the realm of popular history textbooks used in American schools. These textbooks have, as a rule, excluded the stories of cultural minority groups—Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans. Although the stereotypes of these groups have largely been removed from the textbooks, the exclusion of these groups from systematic treatment has produced negative effects on the students, especially minority students. These students experience a relatively low self-esteem; they feel as if they don't belong and that they are not part of the American culture and civilization. Ultimately these feelings can lead to such acts among these students as extreme deviant behavior, dropping out of school, engaging in criminal activity, and so on. “Members of racial and ethnic minorities are much more likely to drop out of school than white, Anglo students...” (Rumberger, 1987, p. 110). In-school factors such as poor academic performance and disliking school account for 56 percent of dropouts among Black, male students. Thus the hidden curriculum adversely affects the cultural minorities in the United States.

Earlier we discussed the overall influence of the hidden curriculum as it affects students in school catering to different social classes (Anyon, 1988). The way social studies was taught, however, appeared to make a significant difference on what students learned from the hidden curriculum in the different types of schools. In the working-class schools, social studies was taught in a mechanistic way, stressing memorization and copying from the teachers' notes on the board. For example, students had to copy the names of all the states, the state capital, the products of each state, and a “Fabulous Fact,” such as “Idaho

grew twenty-seven billion potatoes in one year...." (Anyon, 1988, p. 151). At times students would point to the geographic location of a state capital they were copying from the board, but no discussion of geographic principles ever took place. "Occasionally the children colored in a ditto and cut it out to make a stand-up figure (representing, for example, a man roping a cow in the Southwest). These were referred to by the teacher as their social studies 'projects.'" (Anyon, 1988, p. 151). In this class the teacher was clearly the authority and the authoritarian figure, continually issuing orders as to what students should be doing, using such words as "Shut-up," "Shut your mouth," "Open your textbook," and so on. All the courtesies that people use in everyday life were dispensed with by the social studies teachers in the working-class schools.

In the "affluent professional schools," on the other hand, students were asked to be creative and to develop and apply ideas and concepts about society and culture. For example, a fifth-grade class was asked to recreate an ancient civilization. "The children made an 8mm film on Egypt, which one of the parents edited. A girl in the class wrote the script and the class acted it out" (Anyon, 1988, p. 156). Students had a choice from a list of topics to conduct a project, some of which involved "graphic presentations of ideas." In the executive elite schools, students were encouraged to develop their intellectual powers. Students were asked to express their own positions on various matters. "Social studies work is most often reading and discussion of concepts and independent research" (Anyon, 1998, p. 160). Students are asked to analyze current social issues. Reasoning as opposed to pure opining is stressed. Questions such as "Why do workers strike?," "Why do we have inflation, and what can be done to stop it?" prevail (Anyon, 1988, p. 160).

It is obvious that social studies, perhaps more so than other school subjects, contains a sizable portion of the school's hidden curriculum. In the working-class schools, students learn obedience and respect for authority. They learn through rote memorization, never or rarely given the chance to question the world around them. Thus social injustices that affect them as members of the lower class, more likely to be racial and ethnic minorities, pass them by unexamined. The status quo is, willy-nilly, accepted. The boredom often created by this type of curriculum will force many of these students to drop out. In the affluent and elite type of schools, social studies is presented in the context of critical thinking and problem solving. Students learn skills as they participate in discussions on current social problems. They are taught to look at the world as a series of complex phenomena, phenomena that can be described and explained. They learn that social phenomena such as taxation, social welfare, criminal justice, health provision and so on are phenomena in which they have a stake and which are of concern to them. These phenomena or societal occurrences affect them directly. Students in these schools are expected to take an active part in

supporting aspects or components of these social events that benefit them and in opposing components that are to their disadvantage. Thus the hidden curriculum of the school, especially the social studies, teaches the affluent students how to act out democratic principles to obtain their valued objects in life. Students from the low socioeconomic status and cultural minorities, on the other hand, learn how to follow orders, they learn how to recite the principles of democracy, but they are denied the opportunity to act them out. Thus cultural reproduction through the hidden curriculum is complete and realized in American schools. Social studies, more so than any other subject taught in school, is full of hidden messages that are constantly conveyed to the students. These hidden messages are contained in the textbooks and materials teachers and students use, in the culture of the school and the social studies classroom, and in the overall system of rewards and punishments. In a formal sense, social studies deals with such topics as social class, equality, democracy, political power, intergroup relations, culture diffusion, and the like. These topics are studied more often historically; rarely are they connected with the present. The hidden curriculum provides a golden opportunity for social studies teachers to connect the study of the formal content with the study of the nonformal or the hidden. When the different types of citizenship are studied, whether in classical Athens or Medieval Europe, the social structure of the school can also be studied to establish how students, themselves, are affected by this structure in the give-and-take of their daily routine. Are students from low SES treated differently from those in high SES? Why? What are the consequences of such treatment? Does it produce social inequality? If so, what can be done about it? How do factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and linguistic background affect how people are treated in society and in the school? What can we do to remedy social injustices? What action plans can we formulate? How can we mobilize support to implement our plans? When students are consciously engaged in investigating these matters they "do" social studies in the best sense of the word. Thus the study of social studies becomes tantamount to the study of the hidden curriculum of the school. Students not only reflect on the issues involved, within a historical-spatial dimension, but they are also engaged in action to change those aspects of their own social-cultural environment that affect them adversely. Students are empowered through social studies focusing on issues of the hidden curriculum to retain the rights of citizenship, that is, the right of individuals to participate in decisions affecting them. This right should be exercised whether one is a member of a cultural minority group or a member of the privileged class. In this manner students can be engaged in creatively undoing the hidden curriculum that forces the reproduction of the dominant society. They negate it through what one author calls, "emancipatory rationality" (Giroux, 1983, p. 339). "Emancipatory rationality...is based upon the principle of critique and action. It is aimed at

criticizing that which is restrictive and oppressive while at the same time supporting actions in the service of individual freedom and well being" (Giroux, 1983, p. 340). Students of the underprivileged classes in particular can benefit from school work that is based on emancipatory rationality, that is, they begin to think critically about their social conditions and then engage in calculated social action to bring about social and political change.

Social studies textbooks can be used by reflective teachers as springboards for students to identify and analyze authors' biases in describing historical or present-day events. These textbooks can be screened so that the hidden messages contained in them surface and are critically evaluated. A recent study of secondary-school student attitudes toward popular U.S. history textbooks found that students, when prompted, can identify biases and hidden messages in textbooks (Epstein, 1994). Although some students expressed believability in the content of the textbook, several detected lack of objectivity. Characteristically, one student said: "I have to believe the facts but sometimes they present them in a way that America is always right and never makes mistakes...." (Epstein, 1994, p. 43).

It is interesting to note that in spite of several studies on the importance of the subject, social studies educators tend to ignore the hidden curriculum, as such, as a powerful component of social studies. For example the NCSS *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (NCSS Bulletin 89, 1994) issued by a task force of well-known educators does not mention directly the hidden curriculum and its influence on student learning. Only indirectly can the teacher glean from the handbook material on how to handle messages and practices delivered through the hidden curriculum. For example, one content standard proposed by the task force for in-depth study is "Individuals, Groups, and Institutions" (p. 25). In this section students are asked, among other things, to find out "how institutions are formed, what controls and influences them, how they control and influence individuals and culture, and how institutions can be maintained or changed" (p. 25). The examples or performance following the thematic strands seem to suggest procedures and skills that students can use in their in-depth study of the subject. Students in the early grades, for instance, are asked to "give examples of and explain group and institutional influences such as religious beliefs, laws, and peer pressure on people, events, and elements of culture" and "identify and describe examples of tensions between and among individuals, groups, or institutions..." (p. 60). When engaged in this enterprise students in the early grades are expected, among other things, to strengthen their decision-making skills, that is, "recognize the values implicit in the situation and the issues that flow from them" and "identify alternative courses of action and predict likely consequences of each" (p. 149). The end result of this process is taking social action based on

informed decisions. It should be noted, however, that though all these are related ideas and skills recommended by the task force, it is up to the teacher to draw examples primarily from the school and community environments that clearly demonstrate both positive and negative influences of the hidden curriculum student learning.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed various issues connected with the hidden curriculum of the school, focusing on the hidden curriculum of the social studies. We established that the hidden curriculum permeates all aspects of school life. This curriculum, which may account for as much as 90 percent of all student learning, can have both positive and negative effects. The effects can be positive when teachers acknowledge its existence and focus their instruction on an in-depth reflection of the hidden curriculum and its impact on students. For example, students discussing critically the absence of minority histories in social studies textbooks. Why are such histories absent? What are the effects on students who are members of minority groups? What can they do to have their histories become part of the formal curriculum? What actions must be taken by each student and by the group? Historically, what actions were taken by disenfranchised groups? What lessons can we learn from studying the actions of these groups?

The hidden curriculum has negative effects when it is ignored by teachers and administrators. For example, don't teachers know that minority students are bored and are likely to drop out of school when there are no references in the school curriculum to the contributions of their group to the American culture? Don't teachers know that academic tracking creates insidious distinctions among students, favoring the dominant class? Don't teachers know that the system of rewards and punishments is differentially administered to students? (Students of minorities and low SES are more likely to be punished than WASP students who are of high SES). Teachers who tacitly allow the hidden curriculum to exercise its influence on students without any intervention are contributing to the malaise that currently exists in schools—the school operating as a microcosm of the larger society reproduces and reinforces the social and cultural inequalities. Recent events nationwide centering on violent acts of youth, inside and outside the school, attest to this societal phenomenon. Schools are not considered safe anymore. The sanctuary that once these schools provided to children and youth has now been violated. Drugs, guns, fights, suspensions, arrests, massive drop-outs, and so on are common daily occurrences. Armed guards are policing the school premises. The hidden curriculum of the larger society has permeated the academy walls with far-reaching and often devastating consequences. The revolt of the

masses has been reproduced in the nation's schools. Youth is now explicitly or implicitly crying for recognition by the adult society, for having attention paid to their needs for communication in human terms. Yet most teachers and administrators remain aloof to this call and operate on the assumption of business as usual. As this attitude by teachers continues, the alienation between youth and school personnel will grow to the point where schools will no longer be governed by the rule of reason and compassion, but rather by the rule of force and retribution. Schools will be like armed camps or prisons where only power relations prevail.

It appears that we are quickly approaching the breaking point within the school walls. Unless we make a complete turn around and attend immediately to the issues embedded in the hidden curriculum, we will witness a complete system breakdown. More and more violent acts in schools will be leading features in the local press. For example, front-page headlines in the *Sun-Sentinel* of October 21, 1993, proclaim: "Violence Erupts at School, on Bus" and "Teachers Protest Mayhem, Lack of Contract" (Athans, et al., 1993 and Daniels, 1993). The first article details two incidents in local schools: The first involved the stabbing of one student by another over an argument. The second incident involved a student who poked a bus driver in the face and threw away the bus keys, thus stranding the bus with 43 students for some time. The second article refers to teachers' demonstrations over the abuse teachers are receiving, and the demand to take new measures for "disruptive students."

A potentially very powerful instrument that has recently entered systematically the school scene is the philosophy and the methods of "cooperative learning." Cooperative learning is based on the idea that "if students want to succeed as a team, they will encourage their teammates to excel and will help them to do so." (Slavin, 1995, p. 4). Belonging to a group that is faced with a task or a problem to be solved contributes to an enhanced sense of camaraderie among students, which, in and by itself, promotes learning. "Team rewards, individual accountability, and equal opportunities for success" are the basic concepts of cooperative learning (Slavin, 1995, p. 5). Several research studies, summarized by Slavin, clearly support "the use of cooperative learning to increase student achievement, as well as such other outcomes as improved intergroup relations, acceptance of academically handicapped classmates, and increased self-esteem" (Slavin, 1995, p. 2). Although in the past educators have used some types of group learning techniques—that is, discussion groups, laboratory learning groups, and the like—group processes, for the most part, were not focused and there was an absence of clear-cut directions for completing the task. Under cooperative learning, students rely on each other, instead of competing with each other, to complete a task. Students "buy into" the objectives and the procedures of the cooperative learning group as they engage in positive social interaction with each other (Stahl, 1994). Thus the hidden curricu-

lum of cooperative learning teaches students, among other things, the values of cooperation, interdependence, personal and group responsibility, and equal opportunity for success. This approach is in direct contrast with classroom approaches that emphasize competition, individualism, conflict, and, in many ways, discrimination against students who are members of minority groups or physically handicapped. The teacher who is seriously considering using the hidden curriculum in a positive way should carefully examine further the potential of cooperative learning strategies and their effects on students' values and behaviors.

Another promising tool for minimizing the destructive effects of the hidden curriculum—in so far as judging student performance in the classroom is concerned—is the use of “portfolio assessment.” Portfolio assessment is based on a collection of a pupil's work. The term derives from “an artist's portfolio, which is a collection of the artist's work designated to show his or her style and range” (Airasian, 1994, pp. 262–263). In the classroom, the purpose of portfolios is “to collect a series of pupil performances or products that show the pupil's accomplishments or improvement over time” (Airasian, 1994, p. 263). Portfolio assessment deviates significantly from traditional types of assessment, such as paper-and-pencil tests based on multiple choice, true and false, and identification and matching questions. The traditional way of testing focuses on evaluation as a group process, based on group norms and or achievement at a point in time. Portfolio assessment, on the other hand, is based more on individual efforts, focusing on performance over a period of time, emphasizing self-assessment and self-improvement. Portfolio assessment is more likely “authentic assessment” in that it “looks more like a real-life task rather than an activity constructed as a test that does not resemble much what happens beyond the test—let alone, beyond the classroom” (Farr and Tone, 1994, p. 10). This type of assessment, if properly practiced, encourages the students to control their own performance rather than being controlled by others. Teachers who use this assessment approach are more likely to reduce the tendency to make invidious comparisons among students; instead they judge each student's performance individually.

To avoid total mayhem in schools, social studies teachers must take the leadership and attend directly to the issues revealed by studying the school's hidden curriculum. Teachers must abandon the traditional curriculum—and the culturally obsolete textbooks and evaluation instruments used in it—and replace it with a curriculum based on current social and political issues, issues in which the students are personally involved. Teachers need to engage all students into programs that aim at learning decision-making skills in the natural settings of the schools. In other words, teachers of social studies need to become teachers of the hidden curriculum so that they can offer their students a true version of emancipatory rationality.



Reflective Questions

1. *What are the basic premises underlying the theory of the hidden curriculum? Explain.*
2. *Do you agree or disagree with the proposition that the formal curriculum is antithetical to the hidden curriculum? Take a position on the issue and refer to examples that clarify your position.*
3. *Is student learning affected by the hidden curriculum? If it is, present examples other than those given in the chapter to demonstrate the point.*
4. *Do textbooks used in schools convey hidden messages to students? If you agree, provide some of these messages after carefully examining a social studies text used in grades 1 through 12.*
5. *Do you agree or disagree with the claim that minority groups (such as religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic, social, or gender-based) are most likely to be adversely affected by the hidden curriculum? Explain.*
6. *How can "undesirable" elements in the hidden curriculum be removed or replaced? For example, what parts of the classroom physical and social environments should be changed so that students have more of a chance to learn?*
7. *Are there connections between social studies and the hidden curriculum? If so, what can the social studies teacher do to uncover these connections and encourage his or her students to reflect on the issues and problems involved?*
8. *Is the practice of "tracking" part of the hidden curriculum? What are some direct and indirect effects on student learning?*
9. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of employing cooperative learning strategies in your classroom? Who is likely to benefit or be adversely affected by these strategies?*
10. *Does portfolio assessment help students escape from the tyranny of the hidden curriculum? Explain.*

11. *How do the curriculum standards developed by various social studies groups, for example, NCSS, as well as organizations of historians and geographers, view the role of the hidden curriculum in social studies learning and instruction?*
12. *If you were advising a school board on strategies to deflect the negative influences of the hidden curriculum, what would you say? What would be your priorities and why?*

GLOSSARY

collateral learning An expression originally used by John Dewey to refer to learning that is not clearly part of the formal program, that is, what is now referred to as the "hidden curriculum."

cooperative learning In both its theoretical and practical dimensions, an approach to learning that emphasizes cooperation among members of a group of students as they identify and pursue common goals and processes. Cooperative learning groupings have a democratic base because participation in them is not centered on such factors as ethnicity, linguistic background, gender, or religious beliefs.

cultural capital Knowledge that each individual accumulates as a member of a group or groups when ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, linguistic background, and so on play a major role.

emancipatory rationality Procedures based on thinking and acting that empower individuals to participate directly in decisions affecting them.

formal curriculum A statement of purpose and an outline of content themes and sponsored activities that presumably serve as a guideline of what is desirable in school. The formal curriculum is in direct juxtaposition to the hidden curriculum in that the goals or objectives of the latter are rarely spelled out.

hidden curriculum Consists of experiences and learnings that are not contained in the formal pronouncements of school districts. These pronouncements include goals, objectives, programs of studies, instructional methods, materials, assessment procedures, and so forth.

peer teaching A process by which students help others and learn from each other in carrying out the task of the school.

school-as-lab A process whereby the political and social structure of the school is used as a basis of learning how to make decisions on valued objects and how to implement these decisions through reasoned action.

tracking The process by which students are placed in classes or courses of study on the basis of an external criterion, usually academic performance or IQ scores.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anyon, Jean (1980). "Social class and the hidden curriculum of work." *Journal of Education* 162:67-92.

Reports a study of different types of schools that cater to students from different socio-economic backgrounds. "Working class" schools prepare future blue collar workers whereas "executive elite" schools prepare future professionals in leadership positions. The hidden curriculum imparts different values for students in these schools. The first type of school stresses drill and recitation in instruction whereas the second type stresses reasoning and analytical thinking.

Dreeben, Robert (1969). *On What Is Learned in School*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

This classic book presents the theory of the hidden curriculum as it is implemented in the classroom and shows how the set-up of the school and the traditional classroom impart such values as individualism and competition.

Farr, Roger and Bruce Tone (1994). *Portfolio Performance Assessment*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt, Brace.

A good handbook of how to use portfolio assessment as a means of authentic assessment, that is, a process that helps teachers recognize the true potential of students in their quest for learning. Provides numerous examples for teachers after discussing the concept of portfolio assessment.

Goodlad, John (1984). *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

A comprehensive study of schools based on visits to one-thousand classrooms across the country. For each subject area, the book shows how the hidden curriculum imparts certain values that are different, often antithetical, to the values stated in the formal curriculum.

Henze, Rosemary C. (1992). *Informal Teaching and Learning: A Study of Everyday Cognition in a Greek Community*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

An anthropological study of children in a community in Greece that discusses "learning without teaching." Provides excellent examples that demonstrate the process of how children learn how to express emotions, how to use language, and how to learn about the political process.

Jackson, Philip (1968). *Life in Classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

A classic study of interactions between students and teachers in the elementary school classroom. Jackson found that there is strong evidence of the influence of the hidden curriculum on all activities taking place in the classroom and in the school. Students learn through experience how to manipulate their informal curriculum to their advantage.

Nieto, Sonia (1992). *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. New York: Longman.

An excellent resource for teachers for learning about the influences of the hidden curriculum on ethnic and linguistic minorities. Provides practical examples for use in the classroom to combat discrimination that is ingrained in the traditional curriculum. Proposes a model of multicultural instruction that is based on tolerance, acceptance, and respect. The end result of such instruction is "equity and social justice for all people."

Slavin, Robert E. (1995). *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research and Practice*, 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Presents the philosophy of cooperative learning and clearly summarizes the research related to applications of cooperative methods in the classroom. Provides case studies of teachers who have used these methods in their classrooms. Suggests strategies for "team building," cooperative problem solving, misbehavior, and so on.

Stahl, Robert J. (1994). *Cooperative Learning in Social Studies: A Handbook for Teachers*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

Shows how a teacher can use cooperative learning strategies with heterogeneous groups to enhance learning. The approach is based on the assumption that such an arrangement minimizes the traditional instructional mode based on competition and invidious comparisons of students. Values and attitudes learned through cooperative learning methods include "positive interdependence," "positive social interaction behaviors," and "individual accountability."