

Literature Review: Hidden Curriculum and Student Progression



Literature Review

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LITERATURE REVIEW: HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND STUDENT PROGRESSION

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Recognizing the important and decisive factors that play in the school or teaching and learning environment is a rapidly expanding area of research. Hidden standards, key competencies, expertise, and societal factors can all contribute to or detract students from academic achievement and cultural beliefs (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). The unwritten or underlying values, behavioral patterns, practices, and social rules that prevail in the educational environment are referred to as a Hidden Curriculum. Hidden Curriculum is the unspoken encouragement and reinforcement of particular social behavior, professional conduct, and ideological views while traversing an educational atmosphere, even when such preconceptions are not explicitly mentioned. As a result, this paper will focus on the scholarly articles to demonstrate the Hidden Curriculum as among the most significant areas of contention in higher education (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). It will also demonstrate that the outcomes of the Hidden Curriculum are sometimes not disruptive and that Hidden Curriculum may have positive outcomes to student progress. Thus, the purpose of this literature review paper is to determine the impact of the Hidden Curriculum on the academic and social progress of first-generation students in higher education.

The Hidden Curriculum arose primarily from the literary work on instructional settings. One's educational experiences can either favorably or unfavorably influence their growth. A student's awareness of those observations, acquiring knowledge, or notions have nothing to do with this particular topic or formal education goals, but rather with the potential of an atmosphere to communicate signals and information that include future behaviors, attitudes, and belief systems (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). In summary, the Hidden Curriculum is an integral education program in schools since it has an effective and profound influence on students in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, it is possible that this is a problem with the school's instructors, particularly teachers who fail to put this type of Curriculum to good use (House et al., 2019). As a result, schools or professional education professionals should organize numerous courses on the significance of the Hidden Curriculum as well as how to integrate it in coursework and teach these skills and capabilities to teaching staff. Evidently, schools must realize the significance of the Hidden Curriculum, and its benefits and drawbacks, in order to make it work to promote students' values and norms via Hidden Curriculum. To mitigate problems that may occasion if the Hidden Curriculum is used without requisite consciousness, colleges should use it as an official school curriculum in their cultural contexts (House et al., 2019).

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In the context of higher education, first-generation learners are a unique group inside the education system, with specific challenges. They are typically characterized as individuals whose families did not go to college and have a high school diploma as the highest academic qualification in the household (Rubio et al., 2017). These students do not have family members who are familiar with the process of adjustment when joining colleges. As such, they get access to fewer role models to lead them during their pursuit to obtain a higher education. When comparing first-generation learners to generational university students, the individual need presentation by first-generation students across the whole of their educational journey divulge the structural challenges of becoming the student in their household to undertake the pursuit of higher education (Hailikari et al., 2016). According to Hailikari et al. (2016), the Hidden Curriculum plays a profound indirect role in the performance of first-generation and minority group students.

First-generation students' academic journey and challenges are similar to those of their fellow students; even so, they severely lack the conventional support systems that their fellow students whose parents earned college academic qualifications have. In the dearth of this support structure, first-generation students are frequently forced to make their own way through the higher education system, with a noticeable lack of the required assistance (Butler et al., 2021). Their parents or caregivers have little awareness of the process of earning a college diploma. Several public and educational establishments have employed innovative services and support programs to help guide students in completing their degrees. College preparedness sessions, for example, are provided to help and assist students in tackling the problems connected to not successfully finishing their college education (Butler et al., 2021). However, in comparison to their counterparts, first-generation students have shown lower completion rates for those enrolling in degree programs.

One of the areas where students are likely to encounter Hidden Curriculum is in the various mentoring programs. Numerous programs set up some form of integration program for new students to help them integrate into the school. Over time, however, these might be switched for mentorship programs as students begin to work towards their academic goals. These associations do more than just point students towards the correct career pathway (Brownell, 2017).

Mentor-mentee relationships are also a channel for cultural transfer between persons. The mentor will likely be well versed in the cultural norms of the school, and be an influential figure. As a result, pairing them with first-generation students will result in a unidirectional flow of influence and cultural exchange with the mentee absorbing the practices and norms of the mentor (Brownell, 2017). This is a channel for teaching the Hidden Curriculum to new students. Although the success rate of mentorship programs is high, there are inevitable occasion situations where the difference in cultures is too great to allow a successful relationship.

First-generation students have profoundly different experiences in higher education compared to their non-first-generation contemporaries. First-generation students are likely to be of minority origins and to hail from the bottom sixty percent of the population (Butler et al., 2021). The potential for college and university education to propagate talented students up the income and social hierarchy, seemingly in spite of their birth and upbringing, has been well documented. However, the most prestigious colleges are notable for shows of prestige. This is visible in the tendency of top colleges to favor the top one percent at the expense of the less fortunate divides of society during recruitment (Butler et al., 2021). Additionally, cliques that form in college are informed by legacies and heavily influenced by class and ties to famous alumni. This profoundly affects the students recruited from the bottom sixty percent of society.

According to the findings of Minicozzi and Roda (2020), to fully adapt and conquer first-year hurdles, students must fully comprehend the institution's specific norms and social hierarchies or the Hidden Curriculum. Learners who can adjust quickly to and acclimatize to the college's expectations and norms will fare better. Nevertheless, because first-generation students are trained to find their own way, they are expected to traverse the Hidden Curriculum of university life on their own rather than attempting to find advice and support from those around them (Minicozzi & Roda (2020). Non-first-generation students, on the other hand, are drilled on how to solicit help navigating the institutions or given tips that fit them right in with the Hidden Curriculum. The authors interviewed various first-year college students to determine their perceptions of the impact of the Hidden Curriculum.

Cao (2021) demonstrates how the Hidden Curriculum can negatively impact the progress of first-generation students in institutions of higher learning by encouraging discrimination. It is important to note that the author speaks from the perspective of a first-generation minority student, which fits the profile of most first-generation students.

Consequently, racial, economic, or class minorities can all relate to the treatment the author underwent. According to Cao (2021), first-generation students can all identify as a single minority group in education, bringing together indigenous peoples, racial minorities, and gender minorities. He states that one of the greatest challenges he encountered in school was a lack of peer guidance and discrimination. The lack of representation within the school structure resulted in a lack of structures that could help minority students to acclimatize to the school environment and teach them the nours of institutional culture (Cao, 2021). As a result, first-generation students find it difficult to settle into their institutions, which, more often than not, results in negative progression during their freshman year. This, according to Cao (2020), could have catastrophic results for first-generation students who bank all their hopes on college education.

Lack of social support in navigating the campus culture is a factor in the poor performances and completion rates of first-generation students. Per research done by Gibbons and Borders (2010), the views of college education and the campus environment differ greatly between first and second-generation students. For first-generation students, college is seen as a serious affair and possibly the only gateway to economic prosperity through a high-paying job. Second-generation students, on the other hand, view their time in college as much less of a responsibility and more of a period to make new connections and find themselves. Gibbons and Borders (2010) claim that the reason for most of the first-generation students dropping out before completing college is lack of support traversing the social environment. This, coupled with little understanding of the operations of a college, greatly disadvantages the students who lack a sense of belonging. They argue that for second-generation learners, the sense of belonging is ingrained, and this helps them to traverse all institutional settings with great ease. Conversely, first-generation students are profoundly aware of their shortcomings when it comes to an understanding of the Hidden Curriculum of the university. Without support traversing this facet of their college life, first-generation students never quite fit in, and some opt to drop out instead of staying in an untenable situation.

The researchers broadened their search to include prospective first-generation college students and observed them while in middle school. They report that even at this level, these students are faced with insurmountable barriers, including ethnic and racial discrimination, family problems, and financial hardships (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). Additionally, first-generation students do not have the luxury of proximity to a college-educated role model that can prepare them for life in college or offer guidance in planning for their next step in academics.

Further, they are surrounded by negative educational role models who do not help their pursuits (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). When these students transition to college, they find it difficult to disengage from their troubled backgrounds, and lack of preparedness, coupled with the unfamiliar Hidden Curriculum, hinder their progress both socially and academically.

Another key consequence of the Hidden Curriculum is that minorities are expected to assimilate to the majority culture. According to Hextrum (2018), academic researchers developed the Hidden Curriculum to connect schooling methodologies to the perpetuation of wider social inequalities. One framework investigated the connections between school and family influences on behavior, describing how the Hidden Curriculum is a sociocultural process in which learners inherently recognize, without direct instruction, how to fulfill class assignments. Learners who understand this facet quickly advance in academic achievement. Meanwhile, those who find it difficult are marked as lacking or incompetent, as having fallen behind on tasks and assignments, and are moved to simpler classes. The researchers have attributed the Hidden Curriculum to the reproduction of greater inequality by demonstrating how the behavioral patterns necessary for educational performance directly associate with patterns of behavior integrated by society into the dominant groups in society. For example, descriptive studies of areas of town demonstrated how schools endorsed and embedded linguistic practices integrated into middle-class society, giving middle-class students an inherent benefit. Another framework investigated the ideological element of education, or how the school curriculum is similarly value-laden and imbued with meaning. This seeks to demonstrate how the official Curriculum reinforces the ideology of static, objective knowledge as opposed to a dynamic paradigm influenced by separate factors.

Many first-generation learners hail from low-income and minority households and, as such, do not benefit from the inherent advantages discussed by Hextrum (2018). The author considers a review of the current school framework from the perspective of Marxists. This approach claims that contemporary educational systems, especially in public institutions, serve to maintain rather than break down existing class divisions (Hextrum, 2018). For first-generation college students, who look to education to propagate them out of poverty, this is a negative that damns them to their original situation.

According to Herrmann and Varnum (2018), the academic performances of first-generation students suffer because of their inability to adjust to the cultural dictates of the Hidden Curriculum.

According to this research, over 50% of the population of all university students fall under the category of first-generation college (FGC) students. The authors infer from research data and review of existing research and statistical data that a majority of these students exhibit poorer performance when compared to non-first-generation students. They go as far as to submit that these students also present problems with adjusting to their new schools (Herrmann & Varnum, 2018). Additionally, the achievement gap between first-generation students and students whose parents completed degree courses persisted despite controlling for demographics, suggesting an underlying factor.

According to cultural mismatch theory, inequality occurs when a school's cultural values do not complement the social conventions of racial and ethnic minority groups within that educational establishment (Stephens et al., 2012). First-generation students, for instance, who possibly come from low-income backgrounds, may encounter a cultural incongruence with the middle-class way of life of the higher education institution context, in which they are unsure about the appropriate behavior, and may start doubting their ability to succeed there (Stephens et al., 2012). This cultural mismatch may demonstrate why first-generation students struggle with adaptation, get poor grades, and have relatively low completion rates in colleges. Although all learners, regardless of cultural origins, face difficulties in making the progression to college, university middle-class social conventions are aligned with non-first-generation students' cultures (Stephens et al., 2012). As a result, first-generation students face considerable challenges as they attempt to navigate a foreign cultural environment.

By identifying the challenges that first-generation students face through their academic journeys, proper support strategies can be developed to help them complete their degrees. According to Rubio et al. (2017), when contrasted against other students, first-generation students demonstrate a clear lack of access to resources that are intrinsic to non-first-generation students. Additionally, they also exhibit reservations in using resources available to them through the school. This is because of systemic barriers and a lack of guidance on how to access these resources and generally get around the school. Although these resources may be present, lack of awareness of the Hidden Curriculum and the cultural norms can greatly disadvantage these learners by acting as an insurmountable barrier to access.

On the other hand, some first-generation students are successful in traversing the Hidden Curriculum and adjusting to the prevailing norms that exist within the college context.

This means adapting completely to a different set of norms different from those propagated in the household and community back home (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). In situations where this is the case, and the values taught at university do not match the student's cultural background, they suffer a cultural mismatch upon returning home from school. Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) argue that this introduction to a new culture causes feelings of guilt towards the family achievements when students return home. The authors add that this might also manifest as a conflicted feeling regarding abandoning the family in their current state and contributes to mental health issues (House et al., 2019). In contrast, students from families with greater academic accomplishments do not experience these kinds of conflicting feelings because their cultural backgrounds more than likely match those taught at school (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). This means they fit in well both at school and at home with virtually no need for transition.

In conclusion, a review of available literature proves that the Hidden Curriculum within different institutions of higher learning does affect the progression of first-generation students (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). The Hidden Curriculum, which is an underlying set of norms that are transferred to students subliminally as opposed to directly during class has indirect influences over every facet of the student's academic and social life while they are at the institution. For instance, the ability of the student to fit into society at the institution is determined by how quickly and how well they understand the Hidden Curriculum (Hailikari et al., 2016). More often than not, first-generation students find it difficult to adjust to the norms dictated by the Hidden Curriculum resulting in catastrophic outcomes in relation to both academic and social progress.

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