

Intended, implemented and experiential null curriculum

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Abstract: Curriculum development is one of the main parts of learning and teaching process in education. Curriculum development includes overt, hidden, and null curriculum. In fact, null curriculum refers to the omitted and neglected parts of a curriculum. This paper presents null curriculum as consisting of intended, implemented, and experiential parts. The intended null curriculum is that authors of school textbooks or politicians exclude some parts of the content and curriculum because of its incongruence with the needs of students and society. The implemented null curriculum is that teachers ignore or exclude some parts of the content and curriculum that is not fit to students' needs and interests in the course of instruction. In experiential null curriculum, students neglect or pay little attention to some contents because these materials do not relate to their life or it is incongruous with their needs. The main purpose of this research is to present theoretical views about three kinds of intended, implemented and experiential null curriculum. Finally suggest some ways to avoid content loss in curriculum planning or implementing.

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1. Introduction

The term curriculum has various definitions. Curriculum may equal all planned learnings in a school; 'planned learnings' can be long written documents specifying content, shorter lists of intended learning outcomes, or simply the general ideas of teachers about what students should know. (Portelli, 1987). The traditional view of the curriculum considered the content of learning; a curriculum referred to all courses offered at a school rather than a plan for learning to enhance and help learners to transfer their knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Another curriculum orientation is a reaction to the traditional content-based learning which is considered inadequate because it lacks the totality of learning experiences provided to students so that they can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites. (ERMENC, 2010). Oliva describes curriculum as "a plan or program for all the experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of the school" (Oliva, 1982)

In general, the curriculum document and whether either content or in a position to create learning experiences as the curriculums plan.

Types of Curriculum

Eisner (1986) believes schools simultaneously present three curriculums: the formal, hidden and null curriculum. Formal curriculum refers to all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, and it attempts to achieve certain ends in students. The curriculum will then be that series of

experiences which children and youth must have, so different methods of teaching and learning, and evaluating needs to be employed.

The hidden curriculum is the unintended curriculum- learning what is not openly defined in the formal curriculum- students learn from the school's culture, climate, regulations, and social environment (Fathi, 2002) students receive some unintended messages like "Mathematics is the most important subject or music is not vital" because they spend much time on mathematics but less or no time on music. The hidden curriculum can also refer to the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs conveyed in both the formal educational content and the social interactions within these schools (Apple, 1983). Through a variety of quiet communications, hidden curriculum focuses on what behaviors are appropriate, who is valued and other social and behavioral rules. Students who are properly taught the hidden curriculum improve their self-esteem and independence and are better able to navigate the barriers to social acceptability. (FACE, 2011). The hidden curriculum can lead either to negative or positive education; many of education's positive teachings can be conveyed in the hidden curriculum. If a spirit of fairness penetrates every corner of a school, children will learn to be fair. (Ryan, 1993). Silver et al (quoted from Mehrmohammdi, 2002) believe that all schools, institutes and universities offer hidden curriculum to the students.

The third type is the excluded curriculum that Eisner (1979) terms this the "null curriculum,"

which refers to what is not taught at schools either intentionally or unintentionally, thus giving students the message that these elements are not important in their educational experiences or in the society. For Eisner the major point is that schools have consequences not only by virtue of what they do not teach, but also by virtue of what they neglect to teach. What students cannot consider or are unable to use have consequences for the kinds of lives they lead. Since it is physically impossible to teach everything in schools, many subject areas must be intentionally excluded from the formal curriculum so these excluded parts will have less effect on identity formation of students. Some communities add or exclude some parts based on the effects they prefer to have or not to have on student's identity formation. (Maleki 2000). Eisner (1985) contends that 'subjects that are now taught are part of a tradition, and traditions create expectations, they create predictability, and they sustain stability'. Eisner considers that schools ignore or minimize visual, auditory and metaphoric ways of knowing that leads to having fewer options to consider, and less alternatives that students can examine, and the perspectives from which they can view a situation or problems.

Writing about a curriculum that does not exist is hard. The author of this article believes that the null curriculum can be divided into three types: intended, implemented, and experienced. The intended null curriculum refers to a kind of curriculum in which policymakers of an education system, textbook authors, administrators, or politicians remove or exclude some topics and what they remove are not appropriately aligned to meet the needs of learners.

The implemented null curriculum refers to excluding some parts of textbooks by school officials or teachers due to lack of interest and need in students.

Finally, the experiential null curriculum refers to that student themselves do not consider some parts of textbooks that are not in their areas of talent and interests

The content of an education system is determined by regional history, administrators or government control and environmental factors (Short 1982). Attitudes of programmers, policymakers, and decision makers are the most important ones to be considered. Textbook authors consider national interests and party politics. In addition, Policy makers attempt add or remove some parts of the content of textbooks. Specific part of content is removed in a particular period of time. Sometimes, the excluded parts are not aligned with the needs of students and it may lead to information gap in the future.

The intended null curriculum is influenced by a general policy of the education system and interests and abilities of programmers and dominant party politics. For example, the curriculum of some countries does not involve religious belief, or sex education is not a part of school curriculum in Iran (Shariatmadari, 1990). It is claimed that between Singapore, Japan, UK, Australia and the United States the only country that followed the real standards of teaching science was U.S. and other countries followed national curriculums. According to the past studies, the content of teaching science in Iran does not change after the progress and fostered advances in various fields of sciences. The poor state of scientific literacy and reluctant learners illustrates the intended null curriculum in Iran. (Badrian 2006).

Another aspect of the intended null curriculum goes to the special interests and abilities of textbook authors' group. For example, a change in the authors group in an academic year results in a change in the content and teaching methods of that year in Iran.

Specific interests and expertise of textbook authors affect education system, course materials, and teaching methods covered in Iran that leads to adding or excluding specific parts of the content.

School officials or teachers exclude some parts of textbooks due to lack of interest and need in students that can be called implemented null curriculum.

Chinese students typically outperform U.S. students on international comparisons of mathematics competency. Paradoxically, Chinese teachers receive far less education than U.S. teachers -11 to 12 years of schooling versus 16 to 18 years of schooling (Li Ping Ma, 2010). This shows that efficacy of Chinese teachers in teaching mathematics is more than U.S. teachers. The above study shows effectiveness of Chinese teaching and that Chinese teachers not only consider deep understanding of mathematics but also organize a well developed lesson plan and implement it carefully (Yeping, 2003). In addition, it shows that they use very special valuable and responsive techniques in teaching. Another survey claims that Chinese teachers spend more time working with students than do Americans.

We need to remind Chinese teachers use 85.1% of class-time use and American teachers use 69.8% (Stigler and Stevenson, 1991). Furthermore, Chinese teachers ask and solve more complex mathematical problems with more sophisticated training (Kail & Zolner, 2005).

Yeping (2003) adds there is a strong relationship between teachers' understanding of course materials along with techniques offered in teacher guide books. This survey was done on pre-

service teachers studying primary school teaching in China. The results state that they are concerned with teachers' knowledge of content, deep understanding of materials, and methods.

Another study also investigated the role of increased age/experience of teaching and its impact on presenting materials in class (Krull, Oras and Sisask, 2006). It illustrates that young teachers have more maintenance of discipline and control and older teachers pay more attention to events and changes. Furthermore, older teachers prefer to explain subjects with more details. Interest in teaching and job experience play an important role in motivating or de-motivating students.

According to Cheong Cheng (1994), in order to achieve planned educational aims and curriculum targets, there is a relationship between curriculum development, and teacher competence and attitude in teaching. A curriculum can be developed and implemented in three phases: first, the individual level in which a teacher plans or performs it; second, group level in which the cooperation of teachers or faculty members are considered; third, school oriented approach in which different views of all faculty members of a school are included. These researches indicate that the importance of materials covered in schools is influenced by different views discussed above.

The experiential null curriculum refers to that student themselves do not consider some parts of textbooks that are not in their areas of talent and interests. The researcher tries to highlight ways to prevent this type of null curriculum.

The experiential null curriculum highlights several salient features: first, effects of intended and implemented null curriculum are significant. Different studies show that in countries with a centralized system many teachers tend to implement a curriculum through pre-defined policies and students are expected to follow the policies (Mehrmohammadi, 2004).

The second factor is capability, talent, and interest of students. Zeidner and Schleyer (1999) confirm that gifted students who attend special gifted classes have more achievement than the time they attend regular classes- along with non-gifted students- and are more satisfied with class environment. It also showed the relationship between student achievement with students' school satisfaction and teacher collaboration. Group learning has a pivotal role in experiential curriculum. Group learning makes students interested in learning (Hanze and Berger, 2007). Being and feeling interested helps to increase cognitive abilities and individual knowledge of learners (Ainley, 2002). Individual interests, responsibility for learning, effort, values

and perceived ability are the major principles in improved learning (Ainley, 2002).

For Williams, values can be used to refer to interests, pleasures, likes, preferences, moral obligations, desires, wants, goals, needs, aversions and attractions (quote, Matthews, 2007). Individuals and groups have associated value systems but different preferences.

Values are also related in various ways to different approaches to learning. Thus, students who have low Integrity values show a preference for surface learning with a strong positive correlation to achievement motivation whereas students who are low in values associated with the Confucian ethos indicate a strong positive preference for the deep strategy and achieving motivation approaches to learning (Matthews, 2004). Talent and intelligence is also very important in motivating a student; when a student has the capability to learn a course of study, he is motivated to select it and tries to advance.

Personal values influence students' learning approaches and academic achievement (Lietz, 2009). Matthews, Lietz and Ngurah (2007) show there is significant interrelationship between individual personality, internal values and learning.

4. Discussions

Being aware of the importance of the null curriculum is helpful in planning an education system, its course materials, and its content. It is vital for any national education system to compare its own with the global one or with enlightened and flourishing nations. When some parts of a curriculum fails to be covered either by the system or teachers or even by students, it should be noted that there will be irresistible consequences that a country will witness that goes back to lack of required education. As we spend time to consider what should be taught in classes, administrators must care for what students won't learn and what the outcomes will be. When students are reluctant to learn some parts that are essential, schools must plan ways to make students both involved and interested. It is also suggested to evaluate curriculums regularly to measure the current effectiveness. So, countries will learn whether their students have reached international benchmarks or no.

It is recommended to pay more attention to evaluations of UNESCO or Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and other international organizations that underscore and discuss the importance of information literacy within a global context; they provide policy makers and educational practitioners with information and indicators about their national education systems from an international perspective.

Each country must seek reasons for improvements or decreases must try to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its education system. Complex educational problems will be solved by contributing to informed decision making by both national and international educational authorities and practitioners.

Learning about the relationship between intended, implemented and experiential null curriculum leads to identifying the components and then to avoiding them or finding solutions. All these will lead to planning well-developed curriculum.

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