

Hidden Curriculum and Its Implications for the Nigrian Education System

AGHA-OKO, Patience Uchenna^{1*}, NWAFOR, Naboth HA Ph.D²

¹Department of educational foundations Rivers state university, Port harcourt, Nigeria

²Department of educational foundations Rivers state university, Port harcourt, Nigeria

***Corresponding author**
AGHA-OKO, Patience
Uchenna

Article History
Received: 03.08.2018
Accepted: 13.08.2018
Published: 30.08.2018



Abstract: This paper addresses the inconsistencies that exist between the stated objectives of the National Policy on Education and the delivery of the content of the national curriculum in the educational system of Nigeria. This stems from the fact that what is intended in the curriculum is different from what is perceived by learners. This concept which has been identified as the hidden curriculum is what this paper strives to relate as the root cause of some unhealthy relationships in the society. It reveals ultimately the reason why education in Nigeria has not been able to provide the needed thrust visa-a-vis the three key values necessary for national development. In view of this exposition, recommendations are made towards a redirection of focus on the educational delivery to strike a balance between what the curriculum intends and the final outcome on the learners.

Keywords: hidden curriculum, values, national development, social stratification.

INTRODUCTION

In every educational system, curriculum is an indispensable ingredient or element in the teaching and learning process. It spells out in unequivocal terms what should be taught at every level of the system, with a view of equipping the beneficiary with the desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that are acceptable to the society.

These goals and the ways of realizing them are captured in the national policy of education. No policy on education however, can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation [1].

In spite of the well-articulated goals captured in the content of the curriculum, there is also a concept tagged "hidden curriculum" which also is inadvertently inherent in the curriculum, and which many philosophers, sociologist, educationist and analyst view as the invisible and implicit elements imbedded into the school mandate. In other words, it explains education that takes place in the classroom which extends beyond the curriculum or the philosophical principles and policies that it tends to cover. Much learning takes place outside the intended structural principles. It therefore means that within the educational process, there are significant evidence of interactions of symbols which influence learning, and these present outcomes which might never have been captured in the National Policy on Education. This is because learners attribute meaning to different levels of interactions. This is what Blooms Taxonomy of educational objective noted as the affective domain, which is the domain of learning that explains much of the growth in feelings or emotional areas like attitude or

self. This unintended outcome of learning occurs through receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and categorizations of symbols [2].

These syntheses of symbols that influence perspectives of students have been identified in teachers' methodology, prejudice of teachers, societal relationships among peers, school socio-cultural milieu, hierarchical social climate of the classroom, tracking and streaming method, etc. The list could be endless if one is to list what goes on in schools that collectively make up the educational process.

The federal government has been instrumental to curriculum development in the elementary secondary and tertiary institutions for the pursuit of centrally determined goals, while the proper implementation of the curriculum depends on the quality of the teachers for the provision and evaluation of educational goals. However the social cultural milieu of the classroom interactions defines some level of discrepancies evident in the learning process. Also, the multi- ethnic sentiments serve to undergird basic federal policies. This agrees with Olivia [3] opinion that when society becomes increasingly fragmented and the idea more illusory, the ascendancy of special interest groups served to highlight the uncoordinated, sometimes

chaotic nature of the federal activities. Thus, the Nigerian educational system has the mandate to provide education that can be tailored towards the goals or objective of the policy but in practice, there is a divergent outcome that can be implicated on the different perceivable elements in the classroom situations.

The utilitarian value of education in Nigeria has continuously become a concern to parents, educationalist and the society at large. This is because despite massive access that has been recorded in Nigeria schools, it has become euphoric to position the young learners in a competitive market where knowledge boosts economy. Supporting this assertion, Marsh and Willis [4] posit that if curriculum is to have utilitarian value, then it must lead the student not only to knowledge that can be applied to the external world for its own sake but also to knowledge that can be applied to the world of individual learners which could enable him to actualize himself in the context of his society.

Conceptual Clarification

To understand the concept of curriculum, we have to look at the various modes of thought, pedagogies, political as well as cultural experiences that inform curricula contents. From the traditional points of view, curriculum is described as the body of subject matter prepared by the teachers for the students to learn. While the progressive see it as the totality of individual's experiences. According to Marsh and Willis [4], it is all the experiences in the classroom which are planned and enacted by the teacher, and also learned by the students. The term refers specifically to a planned sequence or a view of the students' experience in terms of the educator's or schools' instructional goals. Curriculum can also be seen as involving the planned interaction of pupils with instructional content, materials, resources and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives. Owen [5] posits that curriculum can be classified broadly into explicit and implicit. While the explicit denotes the overt or written curriculum which is planned, stated and documented by statutory bodies for the intentional instructional agenda of schools, the hidden, covert or implicit, curriculum embodies those inherent elements perceivable in school interactions which are not taught but which make impressionable, though silent marks on the learners. The explicit curriculum is always tightly standardized. The objectives are measurable by examinations and tests administered periodically at the end of a given sequence of the curriculum, whereas, hidden Curriculum as an unintended learning cannot capture or control any outcome or objective because it is not structured, rather learners arbitrarily internalize and synthesize ideas and behaviors presented by the learning environment or the school. This includes behaviors, perspectives, world views that are different from the formal curriculum intent.

This concept explored in the early 20th century by Dewey in his work on *Democracy and Education*, was popularized by Philips W. Jackson's *Life in the Classroom*. He posits that, education as a sociological process is determined by several factors of which learner's socio-cultural milieu occupies a significant position. Macionis [6] further strengthen this assertion when he asserts that hidden curriculum is the side effects of an education (lesson) which are learned but not openly intended such as the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs conveyed in the classroom and the social environment. Meghan [7] sees hidden curriculum as being taught by the school and not the teacher. In other words, it is an inferred attribute of schooling. Hansen in Haralambos [8] agrees with this when he asserts that Hidden Curriculum consists of those things pupils learn through their experiences in school rather than the stated educational objectives of such institutions. Ornstein and Levine (2008), see it as the key element in school control. The term 'hidden' implies that it is not stated in the school's mandate or policy; however it permeates the school milieu.

The critical theory on hidden curriculum will be adapted in this work, the critical theorist, an off shoot of the conflict theorists hold that students live within the framework of social, political and cultural relationships [9]. Thus, the curriculum is divided into two broad components: the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum. While the formal curriculum comprise of the formal skills and normal subjects, the hidden curriculum emphasizes values, views and behaviour. Apple [10] observes that the formal curriculum safeguards the current run of affairs and consists of the usual school subjects such as, the sciences, arts and social sciences. It advocates the existence of power structure and provides students with a knowledge that is a social construct.

Jackson [11] in his book entitled "*life in the classroom*" summed up education as the process of becoming a social being. He holds that the concept of hidden curriculum manifest through school rules and regulations, personal interaction, teachers and students relationship, teaching practices and the hidden curriculum relationships.

The hidden curriculum also involves the messages that teachers, books, educational resources (like audio-visual aids, charts and textbooks) and even school administration conveys to the students. It is pertinent to note that hidden curriculum can be deduced from the chart on the walls, the books that convey the cultural setting of the dominant class against the other, the physical architectural designs of the school blocks; the designations of who stays where in the school blocks all encapsulate the elements of the hidden curriculum. Thus, Alsubaie [12] posits that the major purpose of the hidden curriculum in public schools has

been noted to be cultural transmission or teaching students the routines for getting along in the school and the larger society. In other words, hidden curriculum usually serves to maintain the status quo, specifically the dominant culture and prevailing socioeconomic hierarchy. These messages conveyed by the teachers and school milieu, albeit unintentional, have functions beyond the understanding of the teachers. McLaren [13] posit that hidden curriculum is the implied teaching of the values and behavioral pattern in the context of relationships as well as the dominant ideology and norms in the name of moral behaviors. He concludes that unequal distribution of cultural capital in a society mirrors a corresponding distribution of knowledge among its students.

The Critical theorists believe that the hidden curriculum puts the dominant class at an advantage against the working class. This, Giroux [14] observes that it puts the school at the service of power structure without having an awareness of their true functions. The hidden curriculum therefore establishes a set of values and norms that are in consonance with the dominant class. The critical theory holds that the relationship between the school curriculum and the community must be required to make a distinction between the formal and hidden curriculum which leads to a better understanding of the dominant value system.

Implications of the hidden curriculum for the National Policy on Education

Nigerian Educational System took its organized focus from the colonial educational pattern. Prior to that, education was organized informally to reflect the ethnic and cultural needs and goals of the people. At the onset of colonization; the type of education that would provide a platform for easy communication between the colonial masters and the natives was highly sought. Therefore, the introduction of formal education was to cater for basic literacy, effective transformation and social exchanges. This form of education only emphasized the need for reading, writing and arithmetic. It was not extended to technological and scientific subjects. As the society grew, it became obvious that this type of educational provisions were inadequate. However, the imperialist were not willing to introduce a full educational programme that could compete with their home system of education, but rather offered education that could checkmate total emancipation of the mind. Hence, they resorted to educational programme that evolved as a Curriculum that served the selfish interest of the dominant British imperialists.

At post-independence, an educational expansion took place to make a stake at technological needs which was obviously neglected by the British whose reference to Africans as a dark continent justified their inhibitions and reservations. However, to ensure educational reforms in Nigeria, the 1969 National

curriculum conference saw the birth of a National Policy on Education 1977 revised, 1981, 1989, 2004, 2008, and 2013. This policy carries in all ramifications a colonial tinge; a reflection of foreign ideology, and a reflection of educational curriculum which maintained objectively a silhouette of the ruling class dogma – an ideology of producing men and women who will remain biddable, docile and acquiescent in the world of the ‘white man’; an implicit upbringing of a generation that will forever remain subservient to dominant rule. Okoli [15], described the National Policy of Education as ineffective, non-dynamic and myopic in nature. She argues that it does not make sense operating a policy which does not address the very nagging problems of the nation. Hence Nwafor, [16] views it as non – Nigerian oriented and elective in nature. The educational system of some nations of the world like Japan, China, India have helped them to emerge as world power despite the condescendingly conceived and supercilious reference to them as ‘third world countries by the imperialists. The reason for this could be because these nations’ educational system was adapted to reflect their specific developmental needs. For instance, India was also colonized by the British but at independence there was an avowed commitment to reposition education to meet the nation’s peculiar circumstances. This was articulated in their National Policy On Education [17] thus; ‘The preoccupation with modern technologies cannot be allowed to sever our new generation from their root in India’s History and Culture, De-culturization, dehumanization and alienation must be avoided at all cost [18].

However, Nigeria’s, education system has failed to eliminate the colonial vestige and, legacy, but have built a national system of education which did not take into consideration our ethnic mix and various social cultural and religious silhouettes. Hence, the current educational system has failed to address Nigeria’s educational problems. This has become a perennial challenge. The unquestioning acceptance of the British ideas of what educational needs of the people are has resulted to a cultural interweave called colonial mentality- a cloned mixture of dual personalities; a distorted mindset that has left a big question on the issue of confidence in the National policy on education [19].

The curriculum content of Nigeria’s educational system has failed to address the needs of an evolving and growing population. It is pertinent to state that behavioral changes which education seeks to bring about are not only formed by the stated curriculum, but also by the unstated; the unwritten, the implicit; the hidden curriculum. Educational process in Nigeria encapsulate hidden curriculum which is a reflection of our political past and obsequious values embedded in the philosophy of education. This can be seen in the major tenets of educational policy in Nigeria which is meant to transmit three values:

Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual

Respect for the dignity and worth of an individual as stated in the policy on education [1], lays a responsibility on the education system to deliver a process that will transmit the dignity and inherent worth of every person irrespective of family backgrounds, religion or ethnic considerations. The neglect of schools and governments refusal to allocate to education sufficient percentage of its gross domestic product has crippled the efforts of both teachers and learners. As a result of poor funding of education, the state schools structure which caters for a vast majority of the citizens has been left dilapidated. Ali in Suleiman [20] affirms to this when he asserts that problems have been reported in terms of underfunding, corruptions, and fraud in fund utilization. There are also undue delays in funding, super- inflation, over invoicing, misuse of due process in funds profiting, disbursement, and improper allocation of funds on the basis of sentiments and for political expectancy. The resultant effect is that the public schools have lost its glory. The rich segregate their children and wards into the affluent private schools where socioeconomic status determines access instead of merit. This has also promoted a bunch of substandard private educational providers who scramble in a rat race over what is left in education, by so doing watering down the standard and basic tenants of education by evolving their own private and selfish objectives. By implication, the educational system tends to be selective in according respect for the worth and dignity of individuals, and consequently, some individuals who have great potentials that could contribute to the overall development of Nigeria are unburnished and unidentified. In essence, our educational system does not give everyone the equal opportunity to showcase his or her creative qualities. It has become obvious that education has become an agent of social stratification and instrument of politicization. For example, the little segment of education under the control of the federal government like the unity schools, federal institutions, etc, has been bedeviled by the policy of the quota system which not only enthrone mediocrity, but also kills the spirit of meritocracy, excellence, creativity, and national unity [21, 22].

The implication is that social inequality is further enthroned hence; the widening gap of social stratification in the school system is firmly established. It therefore becomes difficult to realize a society where individual's worth and dignity are respected. If the worth of every child is respected, why should the schools be graded? Why should they be high socio-economic polarization of school types in the nation? Why should teachers be graded and assigned to different schools, reflecting prejudices and segregation? Do these reflect our educational priorities? These rather, support the claims that hidden curriculum reinforces existing social inequalities by educating students according to their class and status, and that the unequal distribution of cultural capital in a society mirrors a

corresponding distribution of knowledge among its students. Bourdieu in Agha- Oko and Nwafor [2] Indeed these trends create ugly pictures of prejudice and marginalization in the minds of the negatively affected students. Irrespective of what the state educational mandate spells out, the hidden curriculum as perceived by those negatively affected is injustice, distrust and a sense of insecurity and inferiority complex.

Incidentally, this has produced counter reactions of aggressions, violence and jungle justice to the system that generates such ill-feelings. Consequently, the system which is supposed to encourage creativity and rational mind turns out to be a breeding ground for social misfits, psychologically unbalanced, and emotional wretch in the society. Hence, respect for the worth and dignity of the individual is thrown to the winds, and cows are valued more than human beings

Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions

The second value education tends to instill in the young, according [1], is faith in man's ability to make rational decisions. If a man is to make rational decisions then such a man should be equipped early in the educational process with tools to articulate and organize his ideas. The educational system in Nigeria has held tenaciously to the traditional system of education where teachers are at the center of attention. Bowel and Gintis in Haralambos Holbons [8] assert that they assume an incorrigible authority and expect unquestioning obedience from the students, overlooking their sensibility as they employ the 'mug and jug' principle in the process of learning. Hence the learners are at mercy of the teachers who employ the 'omniscient' air of self-efficacy and unassailable pose. Atpor in Otewa [23] posits that in teaching and learning, as in other communicative activities, process is more basic than content; that is, without a minimally satisfactory process, content never get to look in. This means that emphasis should be laid on the process of communication more than the content. However in Nigeria, we see Classroom arrangement encapsulates and encourages hierarchy: Teachers give orders and students obey without questioning, they are passive recipients of orders and instructions. Thus Haralambos and Healds [24] assert that this 'silent' demand of classroom order conditions the students' and pupils' passivity and concomitant demeanor in adult life. A man that is to make rational decisions must therefore be able to think freely and rationally without external influences.

Nazzal [25] maintains that education should have cross- curricular connections, linking curriculum with life, emphasis on skill building, life skills, and values. It should be noted that Hidden Curriculum which our education system encapsulates is a contradiction from the formal curriculum, revealing hypocrisies and inconsistencies between what the

policies say and what schools actually teach. The method adopted in the teaching learning process, especially indoctrination robs the learner of the power to think independently and make rational decisions.

Respect for the dignity of labour

The third value expressed in the National Policy on Nigeria Education [1], though omitted in subsequent editions, talks of respect for the dignity of labour. It is pertinent to note that dignity of labour is anchored on the philosophy that all types of jobs are of equal respect and repute. The work that carries more physical exertion is held in high regard than the one that demand intellectual prowess [26]. This should be not be the case because it could demoralize the learner from aspiring to greater heights in his chosen career.

In this regard, Sehse [27] maintains that every person has the right to choose the profession of his choice. A person should never be discriminated on the basis of his occupation. Education that inculcates in its recipients the spirit of independence should be education that allows individuals to synthesize information and come up with a definite choice of what they love to be engaged in. It is not the traditional system where the teacher dominates the classes, giving little or no opportunity for free expression and experimentations. Hence, Bowles and Gintis in Haralambos [5] argue that streaming and tracking system, fragmentation of subjects and courses, timetables and other school rules have been configured as hidden curriculum which education encourages. They further stress that through the use of external reward system like scores, a learner is induced by the curriculum not to focus on what gives him /her joy but what he has been made to learn. By so doing, he or she is 'alienated' from the learning experience. As a result, the school with no meaningful learning, no skill, and no palpable behavioural changes becomes clusters of national liabilities as the best student graduate without any significant economic advantage. This culture is passed to the adult life where people engage in what they do not really appreciate doing, but for the pay packet and other remunerations. Hence, they continue in it as a means of livelihood. This has been denounce as one of the causes of the failure of education to solve palpable problems in Nigeria. In this connection, Okoli [15] pointed out that developing nations seek an improvement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of their people through the eradication of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, disease, indiscipline, want and technological backwardness. They seek to inculcate a proper sense of value in the society, yet for more than fifty years of Nigerian's independence, with more than seventy federal universities, the nation has not been able to proffer solutions to the enumerated problems above. The consequences of alienation of the students from in-school experience do not in any way express the stated mandate's respect for the dignity of labour. There is no dignity in doing what the individual do not

like to do but they do it because the society indirectly imposed it on them on through the educational system.

Again, the teacher's body language, critical and uninformed perception of pupils and students performances, (self-fulfilling prophecies) and preferences of some students over others have a hidden curriculum undertone. The acceptance of students who perform better in some subjects over others infuses on those who are not doing well the negative perception of class preference. This sends wrong signals of prejudices against such students and denies them opportunity of expressing their uniqueness, and therefore, constitute impediment to respect for dignity of labour.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the educational delivery in Nigeria is tailored to reflect the foreign ideologies and perceptions. Nigerian Policy on Education is yet to integrate the cultural and environmental needs of the people in our educational curriculum. There is a great gap between what the curriculum states and what students perceive in the classroom interactions. Education in Nigeria has not been able to offer solutions to many scientific and technological issues as well as the threat to security and peaceful existence. Hence, our curricula produce engineers who cannot construct good and durable roads, who cannot use God given resources to minimize the sufferings of the masses. The thrust of the curriculum has continued to be more of mere wishes intensions instead of establishing good structures to achieve the objectives of true education with limited interferences of the unintended or hidden curriculum. Until the policy sees the need to integrate what is stated and what is experienced in the school system in Nigeria, the educational deliveries and the product of its product would continue to be a clog in the wheels of national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- If the educational system in Nigeria is be committed to the stated goals of the National Policy on Education, our education in theory and practice therefore should be tailored towards realizing the goals and values expressed in the policy.
- The teachers and the school administrators' objectives should be consistent with the goal of education.
- The implementation of the written curriculum should strive to take into cognizance the silent interactions and the symbols that could be assigned to it by learners so as to strike a balance between the cognitive and affective domains in learning.
- This therefore calls for educational reforms because the Nigerian society is changing. There is the need to expunge those obsolete aspects of the

curriculum that makes it ineffective and antithetical to societal needs.

- Educational planners should therefore not be reluctant to make a stake at changing old patterns of inherited traditional classroom order but rather should explore many innovative ways of learning.
- Much emphasis should be given to what happens in the classrooms; teachers' role should be to focus on creating a social and democratic environment in the class where everyone is free to interact.
- Students should be actively engaged in the learning process through critical thinking, while teachers should also focus on every child as a person rather than on daily lesson plans.
- Rewards and punishments for good or poor works done by students should not be overused so that teachers would not discriminate or be prejudiced against students or their social-cultural classes. It is only in a trusting and conducive environment that a child's personality can grow, flower and blossom and thereby burnish the potential power of creativity and critical thinking in him or her.

REFERENCES

1. Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos.
2. Agha-oko, P. U. & Nwafor, N.H.A. (2018). Impact of Social Stratification on the Nigeria Educational System. *African Journal of Professional Research in Human Development*. (312).
3. Olivia, P. (1997). *The Curriculum: Theoretical dimensions*. New York: Longman.
4. Marsh, J. & Willis, G. (2007). *Curriculum: alternative approaches, On Going Issues*. New Jersey: N. J. Pearson Merrill Prentice, Upper Saddle Rivers.
5. Owen, L. M. (2004). The Second Principle <https://thescondprinciple.com/intstructional-designs/types-of-curriculum>. Retrieved 10th May, 2018.
6. Macionis J. (2007). *Sociology* (11th edition), Pearson Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
7. Dretske, F. (1981). Knowledge and the Flow of Information.
8. Haralambos, M. & Holborns, M. (2008). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (8th edition) London: Harper- Collins Publishers.
9. Sager, M. (2013). Understanding the hidden curriculum. *Portland State University: Leadership for sustainability education, comprehensive papers retrieved from*
10. Apple, M. (1979). *Ideology in Curriculum*. London: Routledge.
11. Jackson, P. W. (2007). *Alive in the Classroom*. New York: SAGE.
12. Alsubaie. M.A (2015). Hidden Curriculum as one of Current Issues of Curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 33(116).
13. McLaren, P. (2005). Paths of Decent Teaching. *Contemporary Scholars*. 1,(46-58)
14. Giroux, H. & McLaren, P. (1986). Teaching Education and the Politics of Engage the case for Democratic Schooling. *Harvard Educational Review*. 56, (3), 10-35.
15. Okoli, J. N. (2005). *History of Education: Port-Harcourt An Overview*. University of Port Harcourt Press.
16. Nwafor, N. H. A.(2018). Is there any Basis of Educational Policy and Practice without Philosophy? *International Journal in Management and Social Sciences*. 6 (2), 117-128.
17. Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1989). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Printing Press.
18. Kosemani, J. P (1995). *Comparative Education, Emergent National System*. Port Harcourt. Abe Publisher.
19. Agha-Okó, P. U. (2014). Sociological implications of public and private Participation in education: unpublished M.Ed. *Dissertation*: University of Port Harcourt.
20. Suleiman, R., Tijani, J., & El Ali, B. (2010). Palladium (II)-catalyzed catalytic aminocarbonylation and alkoxycarbonylation of terminal alkynes: regioselectivity controlled by the nucleophiles. *Applied Organometallic Chemistry*, 24(1), 38-46.
21. Achebe, C. (1983). *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers Ltd.
22. Nwafor, N. H. A. (2011). *Handbook on Policy and Design*. Port Harcourt: Dot Solution Printers and Publishers.
23. Otewa, J. (2015). Constructivism in teaching preparations in Kenya, *Baraton*. <https://PDXscholar.library.pdx.edu> retrieved June. 2018.
24. Haralambos, M. & Heald R. M. (1980). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*: New York. Oxford University Press.
25. Nazzal, J. (2014). Open Education- General Oversight of Open Education at an Institute. Open Education Policy Development. Implementation of Open Education Policies Retrieved from <http://www.education.UCI.edu/phd-nazzal-j>.
26. Singh, Y. K. (2007). *Sociological Foundation of Education*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, Darya Ganj.
27. Sesha, K. (2015). *Data Innovation Conundrum in Higher Education*. Pearson Education. Meheswaramma, Kenya.