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The study of hidden curriculum situation in Kashan University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background and aim: There are other factors besides the formal curriculum in many respects that widely, sustainable and subtle impact in shaping experiences, thoughts, attitudes, values and behavior. One of this factors is hidden curriculum. The purpose of this research was the study of hidden curriculum components situation in Kashan University of Medical Sciences.

Matrials & Methods: Research type was descriptive- survey. Statistical population of research included all students of Kashan University of Medical Sciences in 2012-2013 academic year which by use Morgan table 425 students were selected as sample. To collect research data, used the hidden curriculum questionnaire with 36 items, which the reliability coefficient of questionnaire was obtained through Cronbach alpha as 0/86. Questionnaire content validity confirmed by experts. Data's analysis does in inferential levels (t-test, analyse variance and Pearson correlation cofficient) by SPSS statistical software.

Results: Findings showed that hidden curriculum components mean was lower than average (3). The highest average rate of personal traits component with 2.77. There is a significant and positive relationship between hidden curriculum components. Most relationship was between teaching method and physical space with 0.36.

Conclusion: The hidden curriculum in medical education can have both positive and negative aspects of particular in line values transition. Thus attention to using active teaching methods, formative evaluation methods, appropriate physical space, accordance with rules and regulations toward student need, positively influence the behavior of teachers and holding free seats to influence thinking in this area.

Keywords: Hidden curriculum, Students, University

Introduction

Explicit Curriculum is a kind of curriculum which is deliberately designed and planned to flourish and to foster various aspects of learner's characters. It contains compiled educational objectives, defined contents, and particular learning principles and methods proportional to predicted goals, contents and different assessment methods {1}. The set of leanings and experiences the learners acquire is not restricted to explicit curriculum, other factors also contribute inevitably in shaping experiences, conveying thoughts, attitudes, values, actions and behaviors to learners in a more extensive, permanent and pervasive way{2}. As an aspect of pedagogy, hidden curriculum involves some or all diverse qualities of education which are not explicitly included in formal curriculum framework.

As a concept, hidden curriculum verifies non-academic but significant qualities of school education and describes a wide range of unknown affairs based on descriptive standard systems including cause-effect dynamics in education. The concept of hidden curriculum gives the instructors the freedom to perceive the situations and conditions which cannot be examined through traditional research tools{3}.

Jackson was a scientist who firstly used the term "hidden curriculum". In his book entitled "life in classroom" he considered two curricula for schools including explicit and hidden curricula. He believed that crowds, praise and power are three components of hidden curriculum {3}. Hidden curriculum is the discrepancy between designed and experienced curricula experienced by learners and is known as learners' strategies in overcoming the obstacle "formal curriculum" successfully {4}.

Ayzenr asserts that hidden curriculum includes values and expectations commonly not predicted in formal curriculum but learners learn those concepts through their academic experiences {5}. Curriculum is likened to a glacier. The existent objectives, topics, time schedules, materials and technologies are like the observable sections of a glacier which can be likened to formal curriculum. Those non-noticeable sections which are larger with greater significance can be likened to hidden curriculum including those aspects definied by teachers, students, parents and lesson planners as set of opinions, tendencies, expectations and motivations. This part of curriculum is greatly unknown, discussed a little and mostly is neglected {6}.

Schneider was the first one proposed the hidden curriculum in higher education. He maintained that "hidden curriculum is a way through which different participants are engaged in a game, attend signs and adjust themselves to educational environment." Schneider believes that hidden curriculum is significantly determining factor for arousing sense of value and self-esteem in all participants in educational programs and hidden curriculum plays more influential role in students and instructors" adjustment than formal curriculum. In his view there is no kindergarten, high school or college in which a hidden curriculum is not imposed on the students and education board {7}.Ahola maintains that formal curriculum in higher education enjoys more freedom than formal curriculum and lack of full compilation of formal curriculum leads to more application of hidden curriculum in higher education {8}.

Hidden curriculum deals with implicit methods in which knowledge and behavior emerges and takes place out of common formal planned materials {9}. The extensiveness, stability and penetration of this apparent hidden learning is more than those of formal curriculum, but most studies is carried out in formal curriculum framework and less research have focused on the impact of hidden curriculum on learners' process of learning{10}.

Asbrog defines hidden curriculum as social atmosphere shaping educational atmosphere. Hidden curriculum is not kind of curriculum to be taught but is learned through educational centers' atmosphere. He has considered how both positive and negative aspects of hidden curriculum can support learner's growth and enhance their self-esteem or hinder their improvement consequently making education a cumbersome task. He believes that hidden curriculum is a knowledge body which is digested easily by learners through everyday presence in educational setting {11}.

Marquis emphasizes on hidden curriculum in higher education system and by criticizing critical theoreticians which have put their focus on hidden curriculum merely at elementary and secondary levels, has regarded higher education context as a main stage for skill learning, socialization and making social change {12}.

Some influential factors on shaping hidden curriculum in higher education centers are rules and regulations, interpersonal relationships, the relationship between learner and instructor, and the teaching methods {1}.Gatzol also writes "the physical structure of classroom can be described in different types of educational centers. For instance,

the rectangle-shaped classroom with learners' desks and chairs located in direct and connected rows and the teacher's table in front of them in the middle of classroom inculcates the idea that learners are creatures without mind just controlled by the teacher as the only source of learning. Following this, Sambol and Mcdown by inferring from research findings on hidden curriculum, hold the view that university students orient their study strategies and their interaction with scientific contents based on the feedback they receive from the exams and the assessment methods {13}.In line with significance of physical atmosphere in forming hidden curriculum, Montasori as quoted by Mortazavi says: "Those learners who do not move and finally are just dependent beings can be likened to pinned butterflies" {14}. In fact, this type atmosphere can suggest the view that students are not seekers of knowledge. He considered some effective factors in forming hidden curriculum like educational rules and regulations, disciplines, physical atmosphere, non-scientific aspects , atmosphere perveiling on pedagogies, cognitive environment and various lessons contents.

Among all the influential factors in hidden curriculum, the instructors' role can be considered as the most outstanding one{15}. as Adamz considers the significant function of professors in a college in conveying a predominant cultural system(in particular higher education) and regards them as individuals everything practically returns to them, that is they directly control teaching topics, assessment and curriculum{4}. Considering the current trends and approaches on students' assessment methods, students can also be considered as contributing element among the influential factors in forming hidden curriculum. In other words, the methodology applied by professors (curriculum executives) in measuring and assessing students' learning plays considerable role in forming hidden curriculum {16}.

Critical thinking can also be regarded as one of the significant component of hidden curriculum. With this respect, Eisner puts significance on this important aspect of educational system and maintains that educational centers has not to be restricted just to reading, writing and accounting skills, as they are worthless in essence. It is not important the person be able to read, but what matters is what and how he reads. In fact, the value of educational system is hidden in fostering a sophisticated human but unfortunately this issue has been the focus of less attention in nowadays educational system. To improve the situation, Eisner suggests the need to reinforce some elements like curriculum balance , mind independence, problem outlining, senses growth, love to lesson, excellence in teaching and more significantly nurturing critical thinking{5}.

Amini and et al in a research entitled the study of relationship between hidden curriculum components and students' scientific spirit found that there is a relationship between all components of hidden curriculum and students' scientific spirit. The significant difference also found between female and male students' views just in one component (the relationship between science board members and students){17}. Fallah found that schools' rules and regulations, interpersonal relationships, student and teacher interactions and teachers' awareness are among effective factors in students' learning in hidden curriculum {18}. Bayanfar and et al in a research concluded that school's social and physical environment is not significantly associated with academic improvement{19}.The students were also influenced by negative and undesigned impacts of hidden curriculum which directly and indirectly exerted unfavorable and constant effects on their actual learning.{19} Taghvaei and et al found that there was a positive and significant correlation between hidden curriculum, teaching method, assessment, physical space, rules and regulations components and emotional intelligence. Only the teaching method component could predict emotional intelligence. No significant difference was observed between students' views about hidden curriculum in terms of their gender, academic field, university and entrance year {20}.Taghvaei and et al in their study on hidden curriculum in Kashan university of medical sciences found that hidden curriculum mean was higher than average. There was also no significant difference in students' views about hidden curriculum {21}.Amini and Rahimi in their research on hidden dimensions of curriculum found that there was significant difference between students' view about hidden curriculum in terms of gender and academic field {22}.Mehram and Mehrmohammadi conducted a research in Mashhad Ferdousi University to investigate the role of hidden curriculum in students' identity. They found that professor, student, physical place, teaching method, assessment method, content and rules and regulations were among curriculum components which their roles in reduction of national identity were examined. The findings indicated that students' academic identity significantly reduced in which hidden curriculum component played a fundamental role {23}.

Salehi in his study on students' experiences of hidden curriculum found that this program leads to stable behavior in students, and instructors as individuals playing the greatest role in students' learning can be considered as a significant source of transmitting hidden behavioral massages {24}.
Taghipour and Ghaffari in their study concluded that there is significant relationship between hidden curriculum components like physical structure, encouragement ,punishment mechanisms and students' disciplinary behavior{25}.Brogheni findings revealed that among curriculum components, teacher and teaching strategy component had the most impact on students' feelings{26}.Lamp and Seel in their investigation on hidden curriculum and the way the medical students were exposed to it, found that there is high degree of professors' commitment and loyalty to teaching and to communication with students, patients and colleagues{27}. Geliken believes that there is fundamental distinction between what are taught to students and what they learn in educational environments representing the existence of hidden curriculum and learning at interpersonal interactional level. In his research Ricky revealed that schools' physical atmosphere, provides an appropriate supportive atmosphere and is effective in learning quality, capabilities growth and learners' skills{29}.Sterlin also indicated that physical atmosphere and pervasive policies and rules in classroom is influential on learners' learning{30}.
Therefore the aim of present study is to find response to the question that what is the position of hidden curriculum components (teaching method, assessment, physical space, rules and regulations, personality trait and critical thinking) in Kashan university of medical sciences? To what degree the hidden curriculum components are related to eachother? And how big is the difference between the hidden curriculum components in Kashan university of medical sciences from students' perspective in terms of demographic properties?

Methodology

Considering the topic of research about the position of hidden curriculum components in university of medical sciences, the present study adopts descriptive survey approach. The statistical population of the present study included all students of kashan university of medical sciences(2031 subjects) among which 425 subjects were selected based on Moorgan table using random sampling. To collect data, the standard hidden curriculum Questionnaire was used. Hidden curriculum included 36 close test with 5-item Lickert scale ranging from completely disagree(1 point) to completely agree(5 points) designed based on following six components: research method, assessment method, professor and student interactions, physical space, rule and regulations and critical thinking.
Questionnaire's reliability for all six components was calculated to be 0/86 by Cronbach's alpha. The content reliability of questionnaire was also confirmed. The data were analyzed at inferential level using Pearson correlation coefficient, T-test and variance analysis

Results

Table (1) The position of hidden curriculum components in university of medical sciences

Significance level	t	mean/standard deviation	components
0/000	-15/01	2/66±0/458	teaching
0/000	-11/41	2/67±0/581	assessment
0/000	-7/53	2/76±0/64	atmosphere
0/000	06/79	2/77±0/69	character
0/000	-16/94	2/40±0/72	rule
0/000	-10/19	2/59±0/81	thinking
0/000	-17/57	2/64±0/41	total

Table (1) indicates that the mean of each component of hidden curriculum in kashan university of medical sciences is lower than average(3), so the researcher's hypothesis was confirmed.
The highest mean is for personality trait component (2/77) and the lowest mean is for rules and regulations (2/40).

Table (2) The relationship between components of hidden curriculum

thinking	rules	personality	space	assessment	teaching		
0/225	0/274	0/197	0/358	0/334	1	correlation	teaching
0/000	0/000	0/000	0/000	0/000		significance	
0/374	0/103	0/164	0/334	1		correlation	assessment
0/000	0/35	0/001	0/000			significance	
0/334	0/309	0/322	1			correlation	space
0/000	0/000	0/000				significance	
0/242	0/341	1				correlation	personality
0/000	0/000					significance	
0/253	1					correlation	rules
0/000						significance	

Tale (2) shows that there is positive and significant relationship between each component of hidden curriculums. The highest relationship is found between physical space and teaching method is equal to 0/358.

Table(3) the comparison of position of hidden curriculum components in terms of demographic properties

Significance level	Observed f	Squares average	Degree of freedom	source
0/000	1/92	0/29	56	Revised model
0/000	328/43	502/16	1	Constant value
0/256	1/29	0/19	1	gender
0/385	1/06	0/16	7	field
0/773	0/55	0/08	5	entrance
		0/15	368	error
			425	total
			424	Corrected total

In Table(3) the multiple variance analysis indicates that there is no significant difference between students' views to the position of hidden curriculum components in Kashan university of medical sciences in terms of demographic properties, gender, academic field and entrance year.
In other words, the male and female students'(with different fields and different entrance years) views to hidden curriculum components is the same in Kashan University of medical sciences.

Discussion

Contemplation in complexities of educational environment make it possible to recognize and perceive the realities of hidden problems in educational centers like universities and higher education centers more deeply. The realities which have not been put into focus of much attention in current analyses on explicit and official forms of education.Hidden curriculum as one outcome and implications of educational organizations is a concept ,if considered scientifically and seriously by policy makers , higher education planners and university professors, would

create the context to raise efficiency and efficacy of university centers and to make them enabled in encountering successfully with their challenges and inefficiencies.

By noting the role and significance of hidden curriculum in various aspects, the present study has attempted to investigate the position of its components in university of medical sciences.The results with regard to first question reveal that the position of hidden curriculum components (research method, assessment method, professors' personality trait, physical space, rules and regulations and critical thinking) in kashan university of medical sciences is rather in unfavorable situation. The highest mean is related to personality traits(2/77) and the lowest one is for rules and regulations(2/40). The findings of the present study is not consistent with those of Taghvaei and et al {21}, Amini and Rahimi{22}. Taghvaei and et al in examining hidden curriculum in kashan university of medical sciences Found that the position of hidden curriculum is higher than mean. Amini and Rahimi indicated that the position of hidden curriculum in engineering college is rather favorable. Lamp and Seel in their study on hidden curriculum contents and the way the medical students are exposed to it, concluded that professors' commitment and loyalty to teaching, to communication with students, patients and colleagues is very high{27}.Therefore, it can be said that the positive impacts of hidden curriculum in statistical population are more than its negative outcomes. In this respect, some factors like applying active teaching method, using formative and summative assessment methods, appropriate physical space, rules and regulations proportional to students' needs, positive impact of professors' behaviors and holding seats of free thought are greatly influential.

With regard to teaching method component it can be said that the professor is regarded as facilitator of education process and as developer of cognitive, affective and behavioral characteristics of students, so in choosing relevant teaching method, the consequent nurturing and social outcomes should also be considered.

By applying active educational methods, necessary context for developing students' personal and social skills and reducing their solitudes and passivity would be provided in line with enhancing society health. Undoubtedly, the character the learners picture in their mind of their professor would play significant role in their relationships, interactions and treatments which consequently have outstanding influence on learners' academic improvement.

In fact Professors' behavior is rooted from their motives and motivations and capabilities. A successful professor regulates his behavior and teaching method based on the number of learners, their features, thought levels, emotional, social and cultural growth and also based on the lesson subject. He endeavors to act in a way that learners trust him and find him as powerful, sincere, benevolent and honest source.In this regard, it is necessary for professors to reveal their capabilities and skills to learners by particular sophistication {31}. the finding is consistent with Lamp and seel's study {31}. Findings of Bayanfar and et al{26}, Brogheni{17}, Amini and et al{27} also confirm the role of teaching method in shaping hidden curriculum{19}.

Assessment methods and professors' reaction to effects and outcomes of assessment results is one of these factors. If the professor reprimands weak learners, in fact he reinforces negative attitudes in them leading to low confidence to one's competencies and lack of hope to compensate for failures. These negative imaginations are part of hidden curriculum. In this line, Silver and et al also confirmed that assessment methods like tests and scoring methods for measuring learners' academic performance should be put into focus of attention as elements entailing hidden educational values. In these circumstances, inappropriate assessment methods, imposes harsh stress on learners so that incorrect views to learning would be shaped, on the other hand, the existence of intensified mental stress and anxiety disturbs process of learning and make the students not enjoy their learning. With respect to assessment method component, it should be maintained that assessment task leads to incontinious attempt of students, lower self-confidence and lack of hope to success. Assessment methods have the potential to intensify mental stress, anxiety and impulsivity in students.

With regard to component of professor and student's interaction it should be noted that learners implicitly learn values, norms and particular thinking from their professors and by recording their behavior in their minds, try to interpret and internalize them. Therefore, by considering the professor and student's interaction as the most significant effective factor in students' learning, the professors need to create an open atmosphere with more independence and freedom for students and to provide an opportunity for their active contribution through which their self-confidence and learning would be flourished. By executing flexible education without any particular orientation and by applying some active educational methods like problem-solving, discussion and classroom

debates, necessary contexts for group activities, effective learning and enhancement of students' self-esteem would be provided and educational relationships in classrooms would be organized more fruitfully. Fallah found that schools' rules and regulations, interpersonal relationships, teacher and student's interactions and teacher's awareness are among influential factors on students' learning in hidden curriculum {18}. Gliken believes that there is fundamental distinction between what are thought to students and what they learn, and it represents hidden curriculum considering learning at interpersonal interactional level {28}.

With respect to physical space, it can be said that appropriate physical space can create positive feelings in students. Insipid Educational environments with no liveliness and inspirational and visional attractions, not only inculcate the idea that students are passive empty-mined beings, but also do not provide necessary environmental contexts for students to emerge and to nourish their emotions. The finding corresponds with similar studies conducted by Taghipour and Ghaffari{25}.Taghipour and Ghaffari in a research concluded that there is significant relationship between hidden curriculum components like physical structure, encouragement and punishment mechanisms and disciplinary behavior of students.

Considering the rules and regulations component, some factors like university employees' treatment with students, learners' contribution or no in class schedules and university programs and the way the lawbreaker students are treated all play inevitable roles in shaping students' belief about their capabilities and skills. The findings also accord with results of similar research conducted by Taghipour and Ghaffari{25}, Amini and et al{17}. Hence, by revising the rules and regulations, we would be able to manage various university affairs and to replace negative imaginations with positive attitudes so that the students can reinforce their self-confidence and their learning. About critical thinking component, it is expected that it makes ground for students to discover realities through criticism, discussion and problem posing.

The results related to testing second hypothesis about to what degree the components of hidden curriculum(teaching method, assessment, physical space, rules and regulation, personality traits and critical thinking) are related reveals that there is positive and significant relationship between components of hidden curriculum. The highest relationship is found between physical space and teaching method (0/358) and the lowest relationship is related to assessment and rules components (0/10).

Lamp and Seel in examining the contents of hidden curriculum and the way medical students are exposed to it reached the conclusion that there is high degree of professors' commitment to teaching and to communication with students, patients and colleagues {27}.Taghipour and Ghaffari in a research found that there is significant relationship between hidden curriculum components like physical structure, encouragement and punishment mechanisms and students' disciplinary behavior{25}.Sterlin in his study revealed that physical environment and rules and policies prevailing in classroom is effective in learners' learning{30}. Ricci in his research showed that physical environment of schools might provide an appropriate supportive atmosphere which can be influential on learning quality and on development of learners' capabilities and skills {29}.

It is evident that creating an appropriate educational atmosphere in classroom, greatly promotes education quality. It can be mentioned that classroom physical environment even contributes significantly in nourishing critical thinking.

In a classroom that chairs are usually located in a direct row and behind each other , the students can see the teacher easily and might consider him as the source of all significant issues, while they can not see their classmates which leaves no space for critical thinking. But the teacher can amend the class situation and provides an atmosphere in which the students can interact their thoughts easily {32}. seatings arrangement, atmosphere and class capacity as effective components of physical space provides a ground for instructor to select the appropriate teaching method. The number of students is influential on classroom appearance and the classroom appearance in turn can orientate the professor's teaching method which can lead to passivity, hopelessness, superficiality, rote memorization and even cheating in students in contrast with enthusiasm and excitement for learning. Based on it, current teaching methods in educational system are principally directly through speech leading to unfavorable outcomes like surrender, submission, reluctance to training and learning {33}.

The results of third hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference between students' view about hidden curriculum components in Kashan university of medical sciences in terms of demographic properties, academic field and entrance year. In other words, female and male students' views in different fields and in different entrance years

about hidden curriculum components in Kashan university of medical sciences is similar. The findings correspond with Amini and et al's research {21}.They concluded that there is no significant difference between female and male students' view.

Considering the findings of the present study it can be suggested that with respect to efficiency of hidden curriculum in various aspects of educational and nurturing levels in universities and higher education centers, it seems necessary that more precise attentions be given to this type of curriculum by poly makers and higher education planners and professors (the main executive of curriculum) so that the curriculum would be controlled and managed in a way to help educators to use constructive capacities of hidden curriculum to enhance efficacy and efficiency of university centers. It is essential that necessary planning and required measures be taken to create fundamental changes in teaching methods used by professors. In this respect, holding courses and qualitative educational workshops about teaching-learning methods, empowering professors about applying collaborative active teaching methods based on students' participation provide necessary context to make learning process more appealing and to prohibit the emergence of negative mentality in students. The universities should consider the aesthetic and artistic aspects of classrooms and also the overall atmosphere of university and realize the positive impacts of changing seating arrangements and reducing tough aspects of regulations. Amending and improving dominant educational and administrative rules and regulations and attempting to reduce the pervasive bureaucracy in a way to facilitate executive and administrative procedures makes it possible for students to soften and consequently revise their attitudes to educational programs and research activities in university.

Conclusion

The concept of hidden curriculum suggests that what happens in hidden curriculum is unpredictable and can not be controlled by instructors and educators. Hidden curriculum in medical education can have both positive and negative aspects particularly with regard to transmitting values. Therefore, considering some influential factors like applying active teaching method, formative and summative assessment methods, appropriate physical space, rule and regulations proportional to students' needs , noting the positive impact of university instructors' behaviors and holding seats of free-thought can be fruitful in this regard.

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