

Assessing Students Socialization Processes through Hidden Curriculum in Schools

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Abstract

The hidden curriculum is acknowledged as the socialization processes of schooling that plays a very important role in character and moral development of school children as its outcomes emphasize values. The aim of this study is to explore the role and effects of students' socialization processes through the hidden curriculum in school which is providing support for the values in character and moral development. In this qualitative research study using case study, the focus is on school rules and regulations, examination and supportive activities. The data were gathered through document analysis, observations and interviews from the students. At the end of the study, it was determined that hidden curriculum aspects exist in school and may have great importance in students socialization processes by gaining and internalizing values for character and moral development.

Keywords Hidden curriculum, socialization, character development, moral development, values, case study, Malaysian Form 4 students

INTRODUCTION

School as a social institution is an important secondary agent in the process of socialization for every student. The socialization process that takes place in school can be very helpful in the lives of students because it emphasizes the norms and values of society. "Socialization can modify the early behaviour of an individual to coordinate with the requirements of current social life. Socialization has important functions to continue in the existence of a society" (Amir Hasan Dawi, 2006, p. 77). While the formal school curriculum emphasizes skills and knowledge, the hidden curriculum in school is more concerned with the character and moral development of the students clearly showing the elements of socialization. In this study the hidden curriculum is defined as lesson taught in school that are unrelated to academic learning (Carl, 2011, p. 94). Therefore, the hidden curriculum transmit to children a variety of non-academic values, norms, beliefs and attitudes plays an important role in the life experiences of students as they shape the character and moral values of students during their learning in school. Furthermore, the balanced achievement of the formal and hidden curriculum is very important for every student in their life if it is to be wholesome. The society gives importance and recognition to an individual who has acquired skills and knowledge in addition to possessing personal qualities such as character and moral values which are highly regarded.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the role and effects of students' socialization processes through the hidden curriculum in school which is providing a ground for the values in character and moral development. Specifically, it seeks to determine the hidden curriculum aspects that are being exposed daily in school by focusing on school rules and regulations, examination and supportive activities. The experiences and views of students who are directly involved with the thought of revealing the importance of hidden curriculum and to highlight the implication in students' socialization process.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Sari and Doganay (2009), the hidden curriculum includes everything which is not academic but has important influences on the academic outcomes of the schools which include values, attitudes, beliefs and communication styles of the individuals in the schools. Carl (2011) states that socialization is

the process that teaches the norms, values, and other aspects of culture to new group members. In this study, the hidden curriculum referred to as the learning and teaching concept that lies outside the context of the official curriculum focuses on the cultivation of values and attitudes which is greatly needed in character and moral development among the students. The students learn to be compliant and cooperative and to adapt to the schedule of the schools as established by the educational authorities. Socialization is referred to as the introduction and learning of the values and social norms by the students through the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum contributes to socialization by transmitting to children a variety of non-academic values, norms, beliefs and attitudes (Shephard, 2007). Socialization through the hidden curriculum in schools teaches students skills such as discipline, order, cooperativeness, and conformity which are necessary for their character and moral development and for success in a modern bureaucratic society.

Previous studies by Beng Huat See and Arthur (2011) show that values can be shaped by their school experiences outside the curriculum. According to Apple (2012, p. 62), “we see schools as a mirror of society, especially in the school’s hidden curriculum. A ‘society’ needs docile workers; schools through their social relations and covert teaching roughly guarantee the production of such docility. Obedient workers in the labour market are mirrored in the market –place of ideas’ in the school”. Thornberg (2009) indicates that school rules and their regulations of everyday social interaction in school can be viewed as a powerful hidden curriculum of values education. According to Halici (2005 as cited in Cubukcu, 2012, p. 1531), if students spent their time efficiently, they consume their energy in a right way, so they feel they belong to the school much more and because of this disciplinary problems in the school will decrease.

Studies have reviewed hidden curriculum theories and focused on how students experience an ‘unwritten curriculum’. According to Lawson, Heaton and Brown (2009), functionalist sociologists claim that schools act as a form of secondary socialization that follows primary socialisation within the family. Feinberg and Soltis (2009), based on functionalism examination, saw that the concept of the ‘hidden curriculum’ helped to explain the indirect ways in which school serves to socialize students into the values and norms of modern, industrial society. Hence, the hidden curriculum should be seen as an instrument to transfer values and norms of society which support the socialization of students in the school from the functional perspective. According to Macionis (2012), the symbolic interaction approach is a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals. This symbolic interaction theory seems to attribute widely with in the school by interaction and interpretation symbolically in the management of student behaviours categorized as the hidden curriculum. Nurture theory states that our environment influences the way we think, feel and behave (Carl, 2011). Therefore the hidden curriculum as a socialization of schooling teaches or nurture students who they are and how they fit into their world by the social interaction within an environment. Thus, it is in process at all times, and serves to transmit hidden messages to students about values which help in character and moral development.

Yuksel (2005, p. 330), state the “hidden curriculum is more effective than the official curriculum in the process whereby values are learned. In spite of this, the number of researchers that focus on the issue of the hidden curriculum remains very limited ". Giroux (2001, as cited in Kentli, 2009, p. 84) identifies hidden curriculum as what is being taught and how one learns in the school and he also indicates that schools not only provide instruction but also more such as norms and principles experienced by students throughout their education life. This indicates that both the formal curriculum and hidden curriculum play an important role in socializing students in two different aspects but are interrelated and must be seen on the same wavelength.

To conclude, this study will seek to determine the hidden curriculum aspects that are being exposed daily in school by using a case study that focuses on school rules and regulations, examination and supportive activities.

METHODOLOGY

In this research study, a case study methodology is used which is one of the qualitative research methods. According to Yin (2003) a case study is focused on the investigation of current phenomena in the context of real life, especially taking into account deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Case study design will be applied in this research to study in depth a comprehensive view of the socialization through the hidden curriculum in schools.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) have stated that the qualitative researchers typically rely on four primary methods for gathering information: (1) participating in the setting, (2) observing directly, (3) interviewing in depth, and (4) analyzing documents. In this qualitative case study research, the basic data gathered through document analysis, participant observations and semi structured interviews. Document analysis and content analysis techniques are used for data analysis. The document review is done in order to identify the aspects and activities involving the hidden curriculum. Observation is used to describe in detail the existence of hidden curriculum in the school environment. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry which is used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings. In-depth interviews were conducted to put forth thoughts and feelings of students who are directly involved in the implementation of hidden curriculum in schools. According to Hays and Singh (2012), semi structured interview (also referred to as an in-depth interview), typically uses an interview protocol that serves as a guide and starting point of the interview experience.

Purposeful sampling method used involving Form 4 students in two secondary schools who had gone through a longer process of socialization in school. The purpose was to allow them to give their view and describe their experiences. A questionnaire was used to obtain additional information by identifying the views of students and the implications of the hidden curriculum of the students. In addition, it aimed to support and reaffirm the qualitative data from document analysis, observation and interviews which were collected and analyzed. Questionnaires involved 100 pupils in each participating schools which were analyzed for the frequency as percentage only. Therefore, the validity of the study was strengthened through the process of the data collection by triangulation. "Triangulation is qualitative cross-validation. It assesses the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures" Wiersma and Jurs (2009, p. 287). The purpose of this research is not generalizing the findings to all schools but to find out what kind of common points and similarities exist for these two Malaysian schools and these Form 4 Malaysian students.

RESULTS

The documents reviewed are the student's guideline handbook comprising of school rules and regulations, the school plan for the supportive activities and examination aspects. The analysis of the school rules and regulations was based on Thornberg's (2008) study 'A categorisation of school rules', resulted in five categories according to its functions: (i) relational rules on how to be and behave in relation to other people, for example, don't bully, don't be rude to teachers and don't tease others; (b) structuring rules on maintaining the activities and physical property, for example, taking good care of the school property, do not go out of the classroom without teachers permission, broken and missing items should be reported to the school authorities, do not scribble on the wall, save energy and water; (c) protecting rules refer to rules about safety and health, for example, do not go out from the school compound during school hours, do not ride or cycle in school compound, disposal of sanitary pads in proper container, do not bring junk food, chewing gum and explosives; (d) personal rules which calls for self-reflection, for example, be honest at all times and during examination, be responsible to enhance the school reputation and be polite at all times; (e) etiquette rules which manifest customs or traditions in school or in society, for example, do not use bad language, do no smoke, do not consume alcohol and drug abuse.

Information and the plan of the school supportive activities which are carried out by the students indicates the involvement and learning process of the students outside the formal curriculum. Supportive activities of hidden curriculum in this study are constructed in four main headings: (a) sports activities which focuses on athletics; (b) 13 games such as badminton, basketball, netball, hockey; (c) 5 uniform bodies (St. John Ambulance, Joyful Vanguard, Girl Guides, School Cadets and Band); (c) 10 societies, for example, Buddhist Society, Islamic Society, Young Christian Society, Science and Mathematics Society, Language Society; and (d) 21 clubs for example Choir, Environmentalists, Welfare, Catering and Consumer, Anti Doping Badge Scheme and Peer Group Counselling.

Observation was completed on the aspects of hidden curriculum in the school. Studies show that the students abide by school rules and regulations which has become the regulating order in the school context. Students are influenced to be punctual, reaching school before the school hour starts; behaving appropriately in the canteen during recess for example, queuing to buy food, maintaining the cleanliness; preventing all kinds of conduct that can cause injury and damages outside the classroom for example in the science lab, living skills workshop, during sports activities and the computer lab; behaving well during the school assembly, respecting the teachers; following the rules and regulations during examination and actively involved in school supportive activities. This study indicates that school rules and their regulations can be viewed as a powerful hidden curriculum and the process of socialization in the character and moral development of the students.

In this study, students expressed themselves during the interviews stating that school rules and regulations are important and necessary. According to the students, they need to follow the rules in order to function well within the school and keep out of trouble.

The following are the responses from the students regarding the school rules and regulations:

- Student 1: *Peraturan sekolah mendisiplinkan dan buat pelajar lebih bertanggungjawab. (School rules are to discipline the student and also to be more responsible.)*
- Student 2: *Mematuhi peraturan memang penting kepada kami. Kalau tidak imej kita terjejas dan cikgu mempunyai pandangan yang tidak baik terhadap kita. Ia juga adalah sebahagian daripada tanggungjawab pelajar untuk mematuhi peraturan sekolah. (Obeying the rules is very important for us. Failing to do so will affect our reputation as a student and teachers will have a bad impression on us. It is our responsibility to strictly obey the school rules.)*
- Student 3: *Kalau pelajar tidak mematuhi peraturan banyak masalah timbul di sekolah. Mereka akan buat apa yang mereka suka dan susah nak control. (If students do not obey the rules, a lot of problems will arise at school. They will do whatever they like and this will make it difficult to control.)*
- Student 4: *Suka tak suka, kita perlu mematuhi peraturan kerana ia adalah untuk kebaikan kita dan dapat belajar dalam satu keadaan yang selesa. (Whether we like it or not, we have to abide by the school rules as it can provide a conducive atmosphere to study.)*

In this study, supportive activities for hidden curriculum in the implementation process, views of students participating in these events are examined. The participation of students in supportive activities is compulsory. When asked about the supportive activities, the students felt that their character and moral development could be influenced by what went on in school outside the classroom rather than what is being taught. Supportive activities are seen as a combination of interests and needs; creating definite learning experiences which is an important tool in the hidden curriculum.

The following responses represent the students view on supportive activities:

- Student 1: (Attended the Outstanding Student Award, member of Environmentalists Club) *Saya dapat memotivasikan diri dengan melihat pelajar-pelajar mengambil sijil dan piala pada*

hari anugerah di sekolah. Ini memberi satu inspirasi kepada saya. Kelab pencinta alam mendidik saya tanggungjawab kita terhadap alam sekitar. Projek-projek menanam pokok di sekitar kawasan sekolah banyak mengajar saya untuk menghargai ciptaan Tuhan. (I was able to motivate myself by witnessing the students receiving their achievement certificates and trophies at the Outstanding Student Awards at the school and it has been an inspiration for me. Environmentalists Club educated me to show responsibility towards the environment. Tree planting projects around the school also taught me to appreciate God's creation.

Student 2: (Member of swimming club, Anti Doping Badge Scheme and attended anti doping program) *Program ini mendidik pelajar untuk tidak melibatkan diri dalam aktiviti menagih dadah dan perlu ketahui kesan-kesan menagih dadah. Kita dapat tahu jenis-jenis dadah di dalam masyarakat yang disalahgunakan. Dengan menjadi ahli dalam kelab renang membolehkan berasa sihat. (This programme educates the students not to get involved in drug addiction and to be aware of the effects of drug addiction. We get to know the types of drugs in society which are misused. Being a member of the swimming club has enabled me to lead a healthy lifestyle.)*

Student 3: (School athlete, school prefect and member of consumer club) *Saya sebagai pengawas dapat tunjukkan rasa tanggungjawab dalam melaksanakan tugas saya. Kalau pergi bertanding dalam sukan saya berasa bersemangat untuk menang tapi kalau tak menang tidak apa saya tidak putus asa sebab boleh cuba lagi. Bila keluar ikut pasukan dapat jumpa ramai kawan dan dapat wujud semangat setiakawan. (As a school prefect, it enables me to show a sense of responsibility in carrying out my duties. If I participate in a sports competition and I feel the passion to win and if I don't win I will not give up but continue trying again. Going out with my teams will give me the opportunity to get to know more friends and create a good sportsmanship.)*

Student 4: (School prefect and member of St. John Ambulance) *Sebagai seorang pengawas saya mempunyai tanggungjawab untuk menjaga disiplin sekolah dan menjalankan tugas saya dengan penuh dedikasi. Pada masa yang sama, saya jaga disiplin saya kerana perlu menjadi contoh yang baik. St. John Ambulance pasukan uniform yang saya suka kerana atas dasar kemanusiaan. Saya bantu orang yang dalam kecemasan. Penglibatan dalam aktiviti-aktiviti ini membina keyakinan saya. (As a school prefect, I have the responsibility to maintain the school discipline and carry out my duties with dedication. At the same time, I intend to be disciplined and become a good role model. St. John Ambulance is a uniform body that I like as it is based on humanitarian grounds. I help people in distress and it helps me build my confidence.)*

The findings of this study indicate that students learned about much more through their experience with examinations as sites for socialization. Motivation for achievement and effort through examinations whereby the hidden curriculum is delivered, telling the students that if they tried hard enough they would pass the examination (a growth mindset). The students point out that they had to prepare for the examination by doing more revision and the importance of their paying attention and listening to their teachers in the classroom during lesson. Doing one's best was also connected to showcasing 'what kind of person' the student was and describes the student's behaviour towards examinations. This study demonstrated the possibility that the Form 4 Malaysian students learned and experienced the social categories of 'passers' and 'failures' (Jennings, 2008) through examination and understood as their own best efforts. These social categories enable the students to shape and reconstruct their behaviour towards examination and develop their social categories as a result.

The students quoted the following responses about the necessity of examinations:

- Student 1: *Kalau exam baru saya belajar dan saya tahu prestasi saya. Sudah ada cita-cita, nak capai cita-cita perlu belajar untuk exam dapat keputusan yang cemerlang sebagai usaha untuk mencapai cita-cita. Saya ada beri perhatian dalam kelas.* (If I have to sit for an examination I will have to study to know my academic level. To achieve my ambitions, I must make it a point to study hard to produce an excellent result. I pay attention in the class.)
- Student 2: *Exam penting kerana untuk ketahui sama ada kita lulus atau gagal. Dapat result baru dapat tahu kedudukan saya, perlu baiki dan berusaha lagi.* (Sitting for an examination is important as it decides whether we pass or fail. Only by sitting for an examination, I am able to know where I really stand and this will help me to strive and improve further.)
- Student 3: *Habis exam dapat markah baru tahu level saya. Nak dapat markah tinggi perlu banyak masa digunakan untuk ulangkaji.* (Once an examination is over I get to know my marks and know my ability. To get high marks I spend more time on revision.)
- Student 4: *Bila exam baru saya rajin buat ulangkaji tapi saya beri perhatian penuh masa cikgu ajar, baru boleh lulus. Walaupun exam ini menyusahkan tapi kalau tidak dijalankan ramai tidak belajar bersungguh-sungguh mungkin termasuk saya.* (When an examination is approaching, I have a tendency to work very hard and to do revision to pass the examination. I do pay attention during the lesson. If an examination is not carried out, most of the student will not make an effort to study, including me.)

In addition, over half of the pupils surveyed (78%) indicated that they learnt good values in schools such as self-discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, courage, courtesy, obedience, conformity, hardworking and respect for authority. They see schools as places that help to shape their values and character which influenced by what went on in the school such as school rules and regulations, supportive activities and examination.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to clarify the importance of the hidden curriculum to developing values within the context of character and moral development. The discussion is organized in three central themes of this paper: the hidden curriculum aspects in school; the students' experience and view involving in this curriculum; and the implications to the students' socialization process.

A typical school day is six to seven hours, where students in secondary schools are experiencing the 'hidden curriculum' which is taught in school but unrelated to academic learning. School attempts to socialize students by setting rules and regulations that provide structure for the character and moral development of a student. School rules and regulations are implemented to coordinate, regulate and organise the student and their activities as a part of their daily life of schools. Students must show up on time, get along with others, wait in lines, be polite, full of responsibility and follow the rules. According to Thornberg (2007), school rules are about how to behave in school situations, standards by which behaviour in school is officially judged to be appropriate, right and desirable, or in appropriate, wrong and forbidden. Therefore, nurturing the students to follow the rules from beginning helps to create a society that has self-discipline and fewer law breakers. This study indicates that to keep society functioning well, students become socialized when they learn and accept what a society expects of them through institutions such as the school hidden curriculum.

In terms of supportive activities for the hidden curriculum in the process of socialization, these activities enable students to enhance communication between students and have important roles in

actualizing the purpose of education. Such supportive activities which are mentioned in this study can be seen as tools in value creation to internalize and implement values. Students develop new behaviour patterns through their experiences of different friends within a group and interaction provides the students learning of social behaviour. Moreover, respect, fairness, cooperation, reliability, honesty are acquired by students as social gains within the concept of activities supporting the hidden program (Cubucku, 2012). The hidden curriculum through supportive activities conveys messages to students to determine issues such as behaviour, decisions, group relations, human relations and organizational behaviour. As regards, supportive activities are important tools for hidden curriculum in character and moral development of students and should be planned and organized in useful way in accordance with education principles.

According to Sambell and McDowell (1998), at a general level students hear and understand the explicit communication about examinations offered by their teachers but they are also aware the embodied sub-texts and have their own individual perspectives all of which come together to produce many variants on a hidden curriculum. This description makes clear that examinations becomes a component of students' schooling experiences and as sites for socialization and reinforced students' socialization in the achievement. It teaches the students about motivation and the achievement is viewed as the hard work and individual effort. Therefore, behaviours and attitudes towards the examination which the students believed were solely responsible for their failure. Furthermore, students received the messages about what they should be learning and how they should go about it, in order to fulfil their perception of the examination requirements. The hidden curriculum of examinations prepared students to focus their attention in the classroom, time management, early preparation, behave, listen and work harder in order to pass the examination. According to Turner (2012), examinations are an important element of secondary schooling and they seem to carry a hidden curriculum of their own.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the findings, the hidden curriculum in school can be summarized as conducting and implementing a curriculum that is not expressed in writing but works to nurture the students to be a good citizen by developing moral, character and social skills which are essential to ensure social and cultural systems can be preserved, protected and matched in the current development of society. This study identifies the hidden curriculum as what is being taught and how one learns in the school and indicates that schools provide character and moral values experienced by students throughout their education life. It also shows that the educational system performs an integrative and regulative function by transmitting norms and values through hidden curriculum such as school rules and regulation, examination and supportive activities. This suggests the effectiveness of the school as an agent of socialization is important for students and the learning of the hidden curriculum may be as important as the formal curriculum because schooling is a way that activities, interactions and social relationships are structured. In addition, the early socialization experiences of students through the hidden curriculum may be important in affecting the later course of their lives. This instilling of values and attitudes may also be effective in the subtle and hidden ways in which values are transmitted and thus may have a clear message for future workers linked to the world of work.

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised, however, for similar schools with similar Form 4 Malaysian students the findings may possibly be used to promote the importance and awareness about hidden curriculum among the teachers in order to contribute to a good society. For this reason, the implementation of hidden curriculum in Malaysian secondary schools could be highlighted for its role in students gaining attitudes and values which must be lived rather than taught and where the students may learn the necessary knowledge and skills which are required for their real life situations. Thus, the promotion of the hidden curriculum in the formal curriculum could possibly be integral in the process of teaching and learning. In this case, all the plans that came from outside of the formal curriculum of the school were interpreted in the context of the culture and climate of the school and could continue to permeate and influence the development of character and moral values. Therefore, it may be

important for secondary Malaysian teachers and school administrators to create a healthy learning system by making the hidden curriculum more explicit as it may be more effective in the character and moral development of the students.

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