Hidden curriculum in the university

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Abstract. This article contains the results of two research projects in the faculty of social science of the University of Amsterdam into the hidden curriculum in university.* The results show that students do experience something like a hidden curriculum in university study. The article first goes into the question what the hidden curriculum in university is and what extra things are learnt in addition to the official curriculum. Then a second aspect of these projects is examined: that of study motivation and study attitude. There appears to be a tendency among students to study not only for the sake of a diploma (exchange value), but also to make the study more practicable in their personal lives and find a link with their own everyday experience (practical value). The latter attitude towards study appears to be an important factor to minimize the effect of the hidden curriculum and so to do more justice to the official curriculum.

Hidden curriculum

The concept of hidden curriculum is opposed to the concept of official curriculum in university. The latter is outlined in the Academic Statute and is divided into faculties and subfaculties. Each subfaculty works with a study programme, which is largely "the official curriculum".

The concept of hidden curriculum is often associated with primary education. This appears to be a fallacy, for "hidden curriculum" occurs in all forms of institutionalized education (Illich, 1971; Reimer, 1971; Snijder, 1973; Tillman, 1976). The fallacy probably stems from the fact that most research into the phenomenon has been done in primary education.

To judge by the name, hidden curriculum seems to refer only to curriculum aspects (content of curriculum, books, methods etc.). However, the term also denotes what is implied in the principles and organization of the education (e.g. the problem of order in class and group situations) and in the pattern of communication and interaction in school (e.g. reciting lessons — hearing, listening, do-
ing as one is told, etc.). Because of this, it would be better to refer to the phenomenon of hidden curriculum as "implicit education", as this term explicitly includes everything that is learnt beyond what is considered the official learning result.

The hidden curriculum in university can be described as the whole of informal and implicit demands of study and study achievements that are to be met for someone to complete units of study. The teachers' informal demands are made partly consciously and partly unconsciously. The students are not explicitly taught how to meet these demands; at first they have no idea at all, but gradually find out about them by feeling, by trial and error and failing exams. A well-known example is the professor who says in his lectures that what matters most is to see the broad outlines and understand the problems, but actually tests the students' knowledge of facts and details in the exam.

From their scientific learning the teachers regard the informal demands as a matter of course, which they are not really supposed to explicate to the students. Because of this, the students are placed in a position of uncertainty and dependence with respect to the teachers. Thus the students have to find out what is really expected of them with regard to behaviour and interaction patterns, formulation, argumentation, etc., as opposed to what is formally expected, such as the obligation of attendance during lectures and practicals, regulations and orders for tests, examinations and other aspects of study.

**Informal and implicit demands**

The informal and implicit demands mainly relate to skills and qualities that are supposed to give the student a proper study attitude, a good mentality and scientific outlook. Some of these informal demands are (Wagner, 1977):

- Firstly, to show a business-like and detached attitude with respect to the subjects of study. If feelings, intuition and interests are allowed to play a role, this expresses insufficient distance and lack of a clear and balanced view. Intellectual reasoning and logical argumentation are qualities that score points in university study. In this way study subjects are raised beyond concrete social reality and conflicting interests and at the same time beyond the students' personal world and position (Wagner, 1977; Hextall, 1977; Freire, 1972).

- A second informal demand is abstraction: students are supposed to work with theoretical constructions, use professional jargon and abstract concepts, etc. These are essential criteria for the assessment of extended essays, tests and examinations and are quite decisive of the evaluation of study achievements. This high degree of abstraction in the study (formulas, specialist terms, etc.) forces the students to steer the teachers' course in their study, because the subject is taught in these terms and concepts and the teachers wish to test