

# Chapter 62

## Teaching Teacher Agency in an Era of Standardization

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explains the roles of self-study, teacher agency, and co-teaching as tools of critical pedagogy, to uncover and address hidden curriculum in the era of standardization. The authors provide examples of how critical pedagogy and teacher agency have been effective in teaching for social justice and counter-ing hegemony. The authors also argue and support the idea that teacher agency and co-teaching must be fostered and practiced in teacher-preparation programs. Specifically, they argue that if future teachers are to enact and utilize critical pedagogy, teacher agency, and co-teaching in their own classrooms, they need the opportunity to learn about and practice those skills as student teachers. The authors also detail an experience in which student teachers had the opportunity to collectively engage in co-teaching and teacher agency, with immediate and direct consequences. Finally, they detail the benefits and detriments of implementing teacher agency in the teacher-education capstone course.*

### INTRODUCTION: HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Education at all levels and of all varieties has both implicit and explicit components, intended or not. Explicit education includes clear educational standards or goals, usually presented through well-developed curricular materials such as textbooks, using appropriate pedagogical techniques that teachers utilize in a defined system, such as a classroom in a school. However, unseen in each of these levels of education (i.e., standards, assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, teachers, and systems) are implicit practices, or “hidden curriculum.”

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## Teaching Teacher Agency in an Era of Standardization

Hidden curriculum is defined as the *unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life* (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 22). It consists of some of the outcomes or by-products of schools or of nonschool settings, particularly those states which are learned yet not openly intended, and must be actively hunted (Martin, 1976, p. 137).

Although hidden curriculum is often viewed negatively, it can be viewed positively (Alsubaie, 2015). Specifically, a hidden curriculum could suppress opposing or minority viewpoints and perspectives. Alternatively, a hidden curriculum could value and support dissenting viewpoints, or promote a diverse set of viewpoints. The positive–negative valence of these aspects is clearly dependent on the culture and constituency of a school or a society. Accordingly, society, teachers, students, knowledge, and awareness can also influence hidden curriculum (Cornbleth, 1984).

Hidden curriculum is often used in the context of primary and secondary institutions, but can also exist in other educational nonschool settings such as private lessons, religious institutions, and community organizations. Hidden curriculum also persists in postsecondary institutions and in teacher-preparation programs. Although teacher-preparation programs tend to be vigilant about hidden curriculum, it persists. Consequently, the focus of this chapter is to:

- Discuss how hidden curriculum exists in teacher-preparation programs;
- Describe how teacher agency and co-teaching can aid in exposing hidden curriculum in teacher preparation;
- Detail an example of teacher agency and co-teaching in action, and;
- Analyze the benefits and detriments of teacher agency and co-teaching in teacher preparation.

## HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Hidden curriculum can “hide” or be hidden in various ways. It can be hidden in *what* a teacher teaches (i.e., content). For example, a teacher may be explicitly required to teach students how to compare and contrast narrative points of view (i.e., Common Core English Language Arts: Reading: Literacy: Craft and Structure 4.6) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). However, that teacher would have great latitude in the actual narrative texts he or she uses. The teacher could choose to use a progressive or a traditional text to meet the same standard.

Hidden curriculum can be hidden in *how* teachers teach (i.e., pedagogy or andragogy). For example, the same teacher could emphasize the content and outcome through lecture or direct instruction, to illustrate the differences between narrative-text types. Conversely, the teacher could emphasize student experience and process through inquiry-based methods.

Hidden curriculum can be hidden *where* teachers teach (i.e., in the classroom, through homework, or online). Classroom instruction generally enables direct and synchronous interpersonal interaction between student and teacher. Conversely, homework fosters independence in problem solving, and online instruction relies on asynchronous communication.

Hidden curriculum can also be hidden in *who* does the teaching (i.e., licensed teacher or a professor with no instructional training). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) included an initiative for highly qualified teachers who were both competent in their chosen content field and in pedagogy (NCLB, 2002). More

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