Chapter 58

Hidden Curriculum and School Culture as Postulates of a Better Society

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ABSTRACT

When considering the role of school as the most widespread institution among all social organizations, one cannot avoid the question of its educational role in the development of each individual, but also of its function as an instance of transfer of socially desirable values. In following the sociological and pedagogical perspectives, it is necessary to ask oneself which mechanisms within the school enable the adoption of attitudes and building of the value system in children and young people, how much can be systemized, prescribed, and controlled by pedagogical experts and teachers, to what extent they are aware of the entire process, which part of it belongs to intentional education, and which part belongs to the field of the hidden, implicit curriculum, and what the role of the institution (school) culture in the formation of value patterns in the contemporary society is. This chapter explores this hidden curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

According to Jacques Ullman, the education theory is necessarily normative. No matter how one defines it, it strives to define and achieve a human ideal. Yet, every definition of such a human ideal is necessarily linked to the attitude in relation to human nature. It is possible to believe that human nature must be adjusted to the teachings on nature or, on the contrary, that the purpose of the education is to influence the human nature. In any case, the theory of education presupposes a consideration in relation to man, to what he is, and what he is asked to be (Jacques Ullman, 1987; according to Polić, 1993, p. 101).

The starting point of the national curricula are the educational values and goals delivered through the educational structure consensus, as expressed in the national educational standards, which form the framework for drawing up of the school curricula. Apart from achieving the educational and academic outcomes, we expect schools to, by means of their educational work, respond to challenges of today's

time in which we are increasingly speaking of the crisis of values. We expect them to respond in a way that is most approachable to children and young people, and to help them adopt the basic human values. Human dignity, kindness, freedom, justice, social equality, solidarity, dialogue, tolerance, diligence, honesty, peace, health, preservation of nature and the human environment, and other democratic values represent the preconditions for the survival and development of the human community, and the basic premise for creating a better, more humane society. The systematization of values which represent the basis of the educational work in schools is one of the issues pertaining to educational systems in all modern countries. The national curricula place the same requirements before all schools, expecting respect for the same values and following of the same ethical and moral norms and principles, yet each school responds to these requirements in its own way (Male, 2012). The internal life of the school, apart from the legal regulations, curriculum documents, and school policies, is likewise determined by the behaviour of teachers, its administrative and auxiliary staff, and students, by the general atmosphere within the school, and the school ethos (Kasen, Berenson, Cohen & Johnson, 2004). The target approach to education cannot be reduced to teaching contents, methods, and forms of work, and the evaluation procedures because school also feature hidden, undefined, often unintentional influences because of which the process of adopting the values does not follow the same "rules" and patterns as the process of acquiring knowledge, i.e. academic achievement.

The school is a place where growth and social maturity take place, where children and young people spend more time than in their own homes, a place where they adopt working habits and socialize with their peers, where they accept the teacher authority and adopt the "rules of life," the system of values, and the culture of the society they live in. Perhaps for the first time in their life, school children are not just the children of their parents, brothers or sisters; they are a part of the society, a part of the community which functions according to certain rules, a part of the community which lives an organized life, a part of the whole in which they have to respect a specific organization and adapt to it. The educational system provides for the process of developing and nurturing personality traits which at simultaneously have a high frequency and instrumental value in social life. The school is an integral part of the social environment, reflecting the social events and changes (social, economic, political) which at the same time influence its functioning. Each school represents a specific social environment in which students and teachers adopt different social experiences. The famous Parsons's phrase – "School is a Society In Small!", in today's (post)postmodern world reveals all the importance, weight, strength, and responsibility encompassed by the creation and implementation of educational policies. The modern world is characterized by complexity and pluralism, globalization changes are unstoppable, scientific and technological development is increasing, the perception and functioning of the family – the fundamental unit of the society – are undergoing profound changes, the media are changing the ways of transferring information and communicating... The times we live are uncertain, full of everyday challenges, constantly changing, and the critical reflection on the meaning of education has become a social imperative. That is why the issue of determining the goals, contents, methods, forms of work, and the evaluation of institutional education presents the key and current issue of every modern society. The development of pedagogy, its disciplines and sub-disciplines such as the curriculum pedagogy, as well as their reflection on social frameworks, does provide the clarity of definition. Rather, it instigates new dilemmas and research fields. In the light of today's time, this is expected because the socio-humanistic sciences and their reflections must be altered alongside the changes that are taking place in the society. It is exactly these changes that are mirrored at all levels of the educational systems and which condition the interdisciplinary research of all their segments. The predictable and persistent system perspective is abandoned, while the need for

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