

The Hidden Curriculum of Higher Education

Edited by Tim Hinchcliffe



Contents

The hidden curriculum of higher education: an introduction Tim Hinchcliffe	3
What hides beneath? An evidence-based take on the hidden curriculum of assessment feedback Ian Johnson	5
Higher education and the climate emergency: exploring the hidden curriculum of the campus Debby Cotton, John Bailey and Matthew Tosdevin	29
Academia in the cloud Paula Shaw, Alice Doherty, Pauline Green, and Justin Steele-Davies	41
Addressing the hidden curriculum during transition to HE: the importance of empathy Katharine Hubbard, Paula Gawthorpe, Lee Fallin, and Dominic Henri	59
Still the pedagogy of the oppressed? Going beyond the hidden curriculum to reimagine effective higher education provision for estranged and care experienced students Stella Jones-Devitt, Nathaniel Pickering, Liz Austen, and Alan Donnelly	77
Autism and higher education: a nested hidden curriculum Peter Hughes	93
Is the hidden curriculum binary? Stephanie Mckendry and Mel McKenna	104
Hidden in 'plain' sight: the ethnic minority teachers that seek to subvert dominant UKHE narratives Cath Camps	115
The hidden curriculum as doxa: experiences of the working class Neil M Speirs	130

The hidden curriculum of higher education: an introduction

Tim Hinchcliffe, Senior Advisor, Advance HE

Between the call for ‘expressions of interest’ in October 2019 and the writing of this introduction in June 2020 the world changed. So too did the importance of this publication. The Black Lives Matter movement is riding a mounting wave of momentum, swollen by the tragic death of George Floyd. The author of the highest selling book series in history, JK Rowling, is at the centre of a Twitter storm on transphobia. The world is still immersed in the Covid-19 pandemic that has significantly touched the lives of all, regardless of privilege. And let us not forget the raging bushfires that engulfed Australia and indicate that we are in the midst of a climate emergency.

Higher education, too, is intimately involved in these issues. The governors of Oriel College, Oxford University have voted to remove its statue of Cecil Rhodes, and large numbers of universities are moving towards decolonising their curricula. The sector regulator, the Office for Students, found it necessary to issue a 51-page guidance document on free speech, including on the subject of transphobia. Universities are engaged in a range of Covid-19-related activities, from advising governments on public health policy, undertaking research on vaccines and, not least, pivoting the delivery of their own taught courses to either blended or wholly online provision. Finally, to date, a double-digit number of universities have joined a growing community of public and private bodies that have declared a climate emergency.

This collection of papers is therefore both timely and keenly relevant for the sector. There is coverage of internal colonisation; the educational experience of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people; what your campus might say about sustainability; and strategic approaches to designing online courses from those who have been doing so for a significant number of years. But just because an issue is not currently under the spotlight does not mean that it is not deserving of our attention. Autistic students, estranged students and care-leavers are given due coverage here too, as is the omnipresent subject of ‘class’. And what publication would be complete if it did not have a word to say on the experience of induction or the matter of assessment, in this instance feedback practices.

All of these thought-leadership pieces and evidence-informed case studies touch on important aspects of the hidden curriculum that are pervasive in higher education. I resisted the urge for a uniform definition of the concept and have instead left it to individual authors to decide the context of the hidden curriculum to their subject. But each of these pieces does have something in common. They all speak to unspoken or assumed rules and norms that should be examined and challenged. Incidentally, the same is true of the aforementioned global events. The arguments put forward here are not intended as definitive solutions to all of these issues. But I do hope that they prove to be at the

very least thought-provoking, and if you will allow me to be aspirational, action-provoking too. The implications of the hidden curriculum in higher education are far-reaching, but they are not exclusively detrimental and so there is reason to be optimistic as well as pragmatic. The only tenet shared by every student in higher education is the curriculum, and so we should all relish and cherish our responsibility to nurture it.

Tim Hinchcliffe, Senior Advisor, Advance HE

June 2020

1.1 Further reading

If you are interested in reading more generally on the subject, then I have included a short bibliography below. It sparked my initial interest in the area.

Cotton, D, Winter, J and Bailey, I (2013) 'Researching the hidden curriculum: Intentional and unintended messages', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37 (2): 192–203.

Margolis, E (2002) *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education*. New York and London: Routledge.

Sambell, K and McDowell, L (1998) 'The Construction of the hidden curriculum: Messages and meanings in the assessment of student learning', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 23 (4): 391–402.

Semper, J and Blasco, M (2018) 'Revealing the hidden curriculum in higher education', *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, 37 (5): 481–498.

Snyder, B (1970) *The Hidden Curriculum*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

What hides beneath? An evidence-based take on the hidden curriculum of assessment feedback

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Introduction

Research perspectives on assessment feedback in higher education (HE) have shifted in the past decade but continue to raise as many questions as answers. The previous 'Mark 1' viewpoint of feedback as a production and transmission process has given way to the 'Mark 2' tradition (Boud and Molloy, 2013), concerned with learner agency, reaction, understanding and action (Carless and Boud, 2018). This has occurred against a backdrop of UK HE becoming increasingly marketised, with impacts including massified student numbers, a focus on serving the labour market, and students positioned as customers and evaluators (Collini, 2012). In combination, these forces have squeezed the time for, and emphasis on, meaningful educator-student dialogue, into a status often subordinate to more 'pressing' concerns. Therefore, dialogue clearly risks being diminished into an element of the implicit, or 'hidden' curriculum.

Written feedback is one area where these effects are visible. Cramp's (2012) study was the first and only to apply the 'hidden curriculum' construct to feedback in HE. In this work, I build on an idea explored there: in essence, that across teaching and learning, practices including feedback, meaningful tutor-student dialogue now tend towards being hidden behind more instrumental requirements. Cramp regards this as resulting from a pervasive neoliberal agenda for HE, which places students as consumers, and whose broad preoccupation is to prepare them for workplace-based evaluation processes. In relation to feedback, this implies that interested parties tend to prioritise surface concerns, such as grade justification and competency-based marking, over engagement in deeper discussion.

Clearly, feedback processes are a complex area meriting further investigation. Here, I tease out elements of the hidden curriculum across a large feedback sample on undergraduates' first written university artefacts (1000-word essays). Crucially, the methodology allows me to compare the feedback for three subsets graded at <50%, 50-59%, and >60%. Through this, I draw conclusions about how, and how much, the hidden curriculum of the feedback differs in its implications for students depending on their grade level. In doing that, I add to the knowledge bases in the literature bodies on feedback and hidden curriculum, but also strive to draw their insights together in making conclusions.

I analyse lecturers' summative responses to essays written as initial university assessment artefacts. Transitioning into university carries high stakes, as students grapple to belong (Meehan and Howells, 2018), relate to tutors (Yale, 2019) and attune to unfamiliar expectations about writing (Leedham, 2014). Through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) and critical genre analysis (Hyatt, 2005), my research explores what markers comment upon and how they construct those comments. The coding and analysis factors in several dimensions from the grammatical tone to the presence of dialogue. It is written from my standpoint as a learning developer, a group whose work as students' 'feedback interpreters' offers unique, practice-based insight (Gravett and Winstone, 2018).

Written feedback often shoulders the burden of what tutors and students would more naturally discuss in a conversation (Nicol, 2010). Thus, it encodes individual and institutional beliefs, such as about the natures of knowledge and power at university (Ivanič, Clark and Rimmershaw, 2000). These beliefs may be unintended, misinferred and obscured by implied objectivity in marking rubrics. On these bases, the beliefs are mainly detectable within the hidden curriculum. If feedback leaves learners to infer such elements, they can be particularly damaging for non-traditional students, who may quickly conclude they lack the knowledge to succeed (Burke, 2008). The point resonates with arguments that the hidden curriculum serves tacitly to reinforce societal inequities (Apple, 1975).

As Ivanič et al (2000) explain, if the producer of feedback attends mindfully to its relational elements, they can elevate those towards being more explicit, but at the potential expense of more directive elements. This paper will therefore consider the merits and drawbacks of dialogic and directive feedback tones. Dialogic feedback is regularly argued as beneficial (Ivanič et al, 2000; Hyatt, 2005; Nicol, 2010; Cramp, 2012). In roughly equal measure, other studies highlight the negative effects of less directive feedback, such as loss in translation (Busse, 2013), vagueness (Zhang and Zheng, 2018) or apparent conflicts with marking criteria (Dawson et al, 2018). O'Donovan (2017) notably identifies a trajectory – many students believe that knowledge is absolute, and in turn prefer directive, to-the-point feedback. If they receive that, then it predicts their reports of greater satisfaction on the National Student Survey.

Given these complexities, readers should not envisage that this paper will provide a one-size-fits-all solution for feedback practices. Instead, its insights should increase markers' mindfulness of the likely effects of ways of phrasing feedback, allowing them to make informed choices which align with preferred styles and intentions. Through such efforts, they can reduce the possibility that the relational dimension of feedback is subject to the vagaries of inference or lost in translation.

Literature Review

This paper sets out to apply the concept of 'hidden curriculum' to assessment feedback, a precedent set only once (Cramp, 2012). Therefore, this section will delve into historical literature on the 'hidden curriculum' in education, then flesh out how and why the construct has shifted in a UK HE context over 50 years. Thereafter, the focus will narrow onto feedback, drawing out indicators of subjectivity and relationships as those likely to have assumed 'hidden' status. Finally, I will critically explore the pros and cons of relationships being obfuscated.

Conceptualising the 'hidden curriculum'

The various constructs of hidden curriculum concur that it denotes gaps between explicit learning outcomes, and implicitly learned by-products. Giroux and Penna (1979, 22) conceptualise the hidden curriculum as "unstated norms, values and beliefs transmitted to students" through formal curricular content and classroom social relations. The hidden curriculum arguably acts to transmit ideologies as

uncontested, taken-for-granted knowledge (Apple, 1990). Bernstein (1977) saw this process as contributing to classrooms reproducing societal structures and values, especially those oriented towards producing 'good' industrial workers. Viewed this way, classrooms effectively act as miniature workplaces, fostering student behaviours such as respect, punctuality and conformity (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

However, the implicit classroom-workplace linkage merits critical scrutiny. The older literature discussed above holds that the correspondence once operated mainly through the hidden curriculum. In the UK HE sector, under growing governmental pressure, serving the labour market has become a far more explicit curricular objective (Collini, 2012). Therefore, a noteworthy question is "...at the cost of what else?" (Cramp, 2012).

Liberal vs. neo-liberal discourses

Collini (2012) explores how the explicit curriculum of HE has shifted in its framing, from a liberal discourse to a neo-liberal one. A liberal axiom is that teaching and learning should prioritise not only doing, but also moral being (Peters, 1966; Kohlberg and Mayer, 1972; UNESCO, 1996). The Robbins Report into UK HE (Committee on Higher Education, 1963) resonates with this understanding of the curriculum as ethos forming, calling for teaching to "promote the general powers of the mind ... produce not mere specialists, but rather cultivated men and women" (para. 26). However, Snyder (1970) speculated that universities' emphasis on personal growth was becoming outdated to students, who instead sought easier, 'credential-based' success cues behind assessment instructions.

Today, under labour-market influences, assessment instructions feature ubiquitous neo-liberal doing language, couched as standardised learning objectives (Zajda and Rust, 2016). These encourage students to understand curricula as "value-neutral systems for a fixed set of testable knowledge, performable skills and competences" (O'ron and Blasco, 2018, 482). As universities increasingly promote doing under 'student-as-consumer' models, so this invariably obscures more liberal aspects of being (Portelli, 1993). Students may instead seek and experience 'hidden' evidence of how these values operate. Cramp (2012) therefore redefines HE's hidden curriculum as: "the positive debate and dialogue around learning and teaching ... consigned to a kind of 'dark-art' status ... by a dumbed-down set of ideas about delivery to a business plan" (242-243). In an intervention, Cramp found that students used feedback conversations with tutors to fill gaps between assessment guidelines and wider messages about expected learning. The knowledge in question – difficult to pinpoint, but accessible through concerted dialogic effort – exemplifies the 'tacit knowledge' operational within HE (Jacobs, 2005). From a traditionally liberal viewpoint, Oakeshott (1989) saw such tacit knowledge as emerging longitudinally through dialogue. As the neo-liberal agenda has gained increasing purchase, those dialogues and relationships are perhaps at greatest risk of relegation to the hidden curriculum.

Hidden curriculum and assessment feedback

Assessment and feedback, without critical interrogation, risk being reductively perceived as ‘criteria compliance’ (Torrance, 2007), rather than part of the holistic learning experience. Sadler (2010) operationalised this dichotomy, identifying three tacit contributors to markers’ judgements: ‘compliance’ (does it answer the question?), ‘quality’ (to what degree? how?) and ‘criteria’ (constructs, eg ‘coherence’, that inform quality judgements). Sadler notes that marking rubrics foreground criteria, often leading students to similar beliefs; more general quality judgements are less readily articulated, but nonetheless influential. The example illustrates how seemingly objective criteria act to hide the human factors at play. O’ron and Blasco (2018) therefore recommend that we interrogate the hidden curriculum of assessment and feedback through querying what behaviours or dispositions it apparently promotes. Learners are likely to seek and experience these cues implicitly, if, as is likely, feedback does not state them directly.

Such positions accord with the feedback Mark 2 (Boud and Molloy, 2013) perspective. The older Mark 1 tradition saw feedback as transmission, examinable from a producer perspective. For example, Sadler (1989) specified three key feedback purposes: clarify expectations, benchmark work against those, and suggest gap-closing actions. While maintaining their spirit, Boud and Molloy (2013) reframed feedback around learner agency, saying it should help students “appreciate the similarities and differences between the appropriate standards ... and the qualities of the work itself, in order to generate improved work” (703). The Mark 2 perspective prioritises aspects less obvious from a transmission standpoint, such as learners’ emotional reactions, feedback literacy levels and ‘messier’, unintended learning. The hidden curriculum perspective gains traction as a means to interrogate these aspects.

What is hidden in feedback?

Analysing the hidden curriculum helps us explicate what is otherwise covert. Ivanič et al (2000) exposed how feedback – intentionally or otherwise – encodes the marker’s and institution’s beliefs about the fixed or contestable epistemology of knowledge, and about relative institutional and student power. Markers may consciously try to reduce power differentials. Regardless, because of their institutional status, they occupy hegemonic positions (Cramp, 2012). Additionally, students may misinfer messages, seeing feedback about a facet of their writing as telling truths about broader academic practices, or themselves (Ivanič et al, 2000). For example, the same authors note how readily a message like “your work is inadequate” may translate as “I am inadequate”. Here, feedback mechanisms erroneously conflate product and person (Shields, 2015), leading the recipient towards perceiving one correct way, outside their grasp, to write academically. Such inferences are especially likely and damaging for ‘non-traditional’ students (Burke, 2008), removed as they often are from a traditional ‘essayist literacy’ (Lillis and Turner, 2001). This realisation strikes at the heart of Bowles and Gintis’ (1976) point that the hidden curriculum has a proclivity to reproduce social inequalities.

We can perhaps partially solve such issues if we more overtly acknowledge the actors and relationships intrinsic to feedback. According to Ivanič et al (2000), effective tutor feedback comments invite students, literally or metaphorically, into dialogues. In so doing, “tutors construct student writing as part of ongoing communication between people interested in the same issues” (Ivanič et al, 2000, 61), in consonance with a liberal, person-centred pedagogy. Ivanič et al (2000) also recommend that markers tell students specific ways to improve and cast constructive criticism in forward-looking language. Pragmatically speaking, other studies note that markers face constraints to such actions, such as time and mass student numbers (Hounsell et al, 2008; Nicol, 2010; Hagenauer and Volet, 2014).

The role of grammatical tone

Relational elements of feedback’s hidden curriculum are implicated even at the level of the grammatical tone. Hyatt (2005) interrogated how grammar could acknowledge or obscure the involved selves. Imperative verbs (do this) and strong modality (should, must) can present comments not as opinions but indisputable truths. Passive constructions (it was done like this) disguise both writer and marker agency, while the pronoun ‘we’ used as in ‘here, we do it like this’ can function to exclude (Hyatt, 2005). Like Ivanič et al (2000), Hyatt contrasts these inherent dangers with the rich opportunities of dialogic feedback.

Despite the weighty evidence, not all studies favour a personal, non-directive tone. Weaker modals like ‘could’ can cause students to infer choice, where the intention is polite obligation (Lillis and Turner, 2001). While students have been found to value a personal but polite tone, staff often strike that by depersonalising references to ‘you’ to, instead, ‘your/the work’ (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Dunworth and Sanchez, 2016; Pitt and Norton, 2017). Negative reactions to personal tone may be increasingly likely among ‘weaker’ students (Carless, 2006) and second-language students (Ryan and Henderson, 2017). However, we must weigh the undoubted merit of these findings against claims (Young, 2000; Yang and Carless, 2013) that if markers over-hedge feedback for politeness reasons, they can encrypt their intended messages so deeply that recipients cannot decipher them.

There is, thus, a trade-off between clarity and politeness that markers might consider carefully. By example, we might situate two ways of saying the same thing at either end of a continuum – ‘you do it like this’ (second person, present tense) versus ‘it was done like this’ (passive construction, past tense), with many intervening variants. The second method respects politeness due to seeming less personal, but may appear obtuse, or as a completed action not warranting further attention. Meanwhile, the first method frames the action as something in progress, within the recipient’s gift to act upon and change in future. However, recipients are also somewhat more likely to read it as an attack on the person. In a climate of near-ubiquitous blind marking, tutors must make any such decisions about feedback style without the affordance of tailoring it to their knowledge of individual students.

Liberal and neo-liberal worlds collide

Despite the multiple delicate balancing acts explored, previous research generally concurs that feedback should portray knowledge as flexible and its producers and consumers as intrinsic actors. However, it is important to acknowledge that some studies disagree. For example, support has been found for specific, usable, criterion-linked feedback (Dawson et al, 2018), especially among lower-efficacy students (Busse, 2013), while Zhang and Zheng (2018) found that students conflated non-directive feedback with vagueness and mark fixation.

O'Donovan's (2017) work notably attends to how these matters intersect with today's neo-liberal HE context. She found that most university entrants saw themselves as 'authority-dependant' and knowledge as 'certain and uncontested'. Only the 13% of entrants she assessed to have more relativist beliefs tended towards satisfaction with dialogic, process-oriented assessment and feedback; the remainder preferred unambiguous, directive comments. O'Donovan (2017) deems these findings to have profound implications for National Student Survey (NSS) responses, upon which universities' reputations heavily depend. She concludes that universities might best work with (cf. on) students' beliefs to influence their satisfaction, thereby rendering the debate between directive and dialogic feedback still firmly open. Forsythe and Johnson (2016) reached slightly different conclusions. Although they assessed the beliefs of sampled university entrants' as broadly congruent with O'Donovan's respondents, they found that if students moved towards a 'growth mindset' (Dweck, 2002), they reduced defence behaviours, in turn engaging more honestly with feedback.

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Forces shaping the contemporary HE context, then, have seemingly acted to place relationships and dialogue largely within the hidden, rather than explicit, curriculum of feedback. The merits of what we find there are more challenging to evaluate. A key question surrounds the extent to which implied power-heavy, positivist messages are harmful, or inevitable and even helpful. One's answers may vary based on beliefs about whether HE should prioritise students' growth, or satisfaction. I have argued that this paradox has itself underpinned the changing, almost reversed nature of the explicit and hidden curriculums since the 1970s, in respect of the liberal and neo-liberal ideologies present in each. The remainder of this paper will hold these issues in focus, but alight on the degree and nature of hidden curriculum variation in feedback on work at different grades, acting here as proxies for entrants' 'levels'. Accordingly, attention turns to two research questions:

- 1 How, and to what extent, does the hidden curriculum of feedback vary by grade level?
- 2 What are the potential implications of any differences?

Methodology

Sample and context

I examined all available feedback on the initial undergraduate essays (n=114) written in 2017 by one cohort in a social sciences department of a post-1992 university. Students entered courses on relatively low tariffs from 96 UCAS points. On each essay, one of five module lecturers wrote electronic feedback using Turnitin. Before transferring the data to the NVivo textual-analysis programme, I removed all potentially identifying information. Each lecturer granted permission to use their feedback anonymously, as did the university's ethics committee.

The data selected was the six summative comments per essay, divided between headings 'what you did well' and 'what can be improved'. Simultaneously, the students received marks, in-text comments and graded rubrics. Beforehand, they had in-class instruction on interpreting feedback, based on the Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT)¹ (Winstone and Nash, 2016); subsequently, they partook in 15-minute tutorials with markers. I must therefore acknowledge that the analysis captured one element of a holistic process, which served to prepare students for, not replace, in-person dialogue. Future research could beneficially examine all elements of the process longitudinally, and draw insight from human data collection with involved parties. While the narrower focus here inevitably tempers the strength of conclusions, the summative comments are nonetheless vital, in representing – grades aside – students' first impressions of how tutors formally evaluate their work, and acting to scaffold the tutorials.

¹ www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/developing-engagement-feedback-toolkit-defit

Approach

The research was an unobtrusive content analysis of pre-existing documents (Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis allowed the systematic deconstruction of a large dataset, “to reveal ... characteristic elements and structure” (Dey, 1993, 30). It examines not only the literally ‘manifest’ content, but also what sits ‘latently’ behind and is inferable from it (Newby, 2010). By considering both dimensions, I maintained linkage between the data and its institutional and social contexts (Krippendorff, 2004). Following O’Leary (2017), I used a two-step approach: initially systematic coding and quantification, then a process akin to ‘interviewing’ the data for underpinning themes. Towards that, I also used tenets from ‘critical genre analysis’ (Hyatt, 2005), on how the grammatical tone of feedback can reveal its hidden curriculum.

Analysis process

I selected ‘proposition’ – signifying piece of advice to student – as the recording unit on which to focus coding (Robson, 1993). Many sentences encoded multiple propositions, as exemplified:

“Your reference list is in the wrong format and you do not have any books or journals, and you also have YouTube as a reference which is not an academic reference.”

I classified the data in NVivo through iterative coding cycles (Newby, 2010). This firstly involved inductively coding 10% of the comments. From that, I gradually established a hierarchically organised tree, of which Figure 1 shows a segment. The lowest level ‘nodes’ should map transparently and unambiguously to the data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), in effect meaning that alike propositions receive the same codes. The second level ‘categories’ (green) acted as four distinct lenses on the data. Throughout, I added to, subtracted from and re-configured the tree based on insights from the data, and revisited earlier coding for consistency.

Wherever possible, I sought mutual coding exclusivity by allocating each proposition to only one node per category. For example, some propositions could serve, to varying degrees, all three purposes in the blue nodes on Figure 1. However, I regarded the purposes, from left to right, as progressively more ‘useful’ to students (Sadler, 1989), and coded data only for its most useful function. This illustrates the inherent subjectivity of coding: codes do not await discovery in data, but rather arise at the researcher-data interface (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015).

Figure 1: NVivo coding tree example

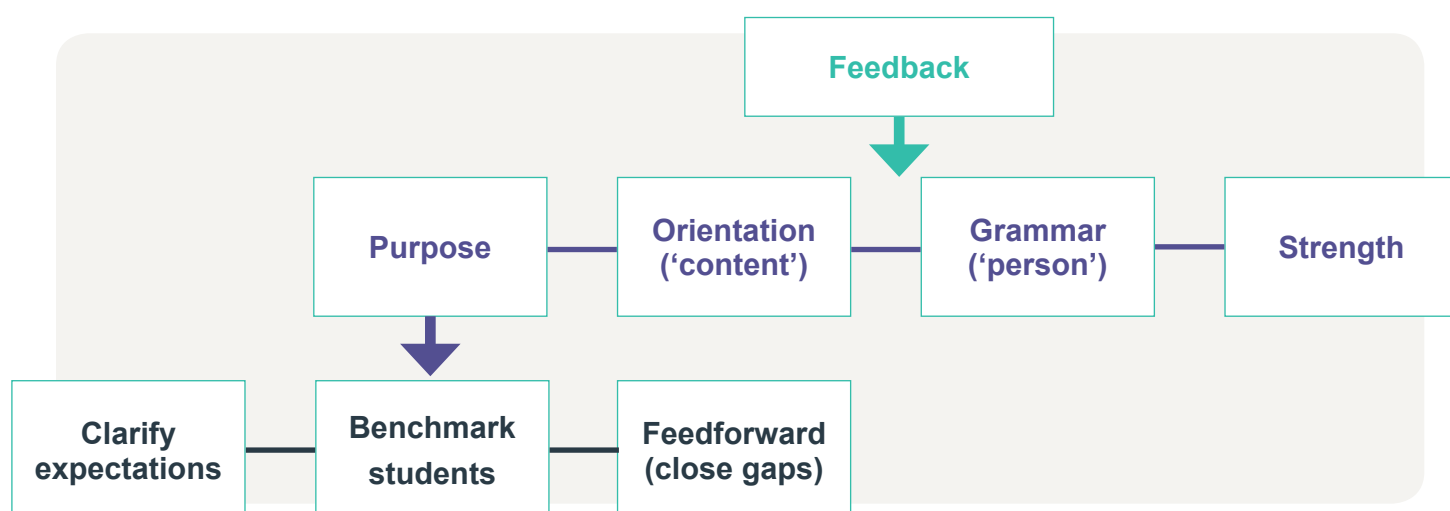


Table 1 illustrates how the categories represented ‘interview questions’ (O’Leary, 2017), with their contained nodes signifying distinct possible ‘answers’, while Table 2 exemplifies how I operationalised the approach:

Table 1: Questions, categories and nodes

Guiding question	Category	Nodes (examples only)
What is the intended effect of the proposition?	Purpose	clarify; benchmark; feedforward; dialogue
What content is the proposition about?	Orientation	content; structure; referencing; reading; grammar
How (in what grammatical aspect) is the proposition expressed?	Grammar	‘I’; ‘you’; ‘your text’; ‘the text’; passive; imperative
How strongly is the proposition expressed?	Strength	softened; neutral; strengthened

Table 2: Coding propositions to nodes

‘There is evidence of good use of literature; you have at times shown a good ability to compare and critically analyse literature - well done!’		
Category	Nodes allocated	Why?
Purpose	benchmark > general dialogue > relate	‘good use’, ‘good ability’ related to general, not specifics ‘well done’
Orientation	source use criticality	‘use of literature’, ‘critically analyse’
Grammar	there + be you	‘there is...’ ‘you have...’
Strength	soften > hedge-adverb	‘at times’

In addition to nodes, NVivo allows ‘classifications’ to be applied across the data. By creating two attributes (see table 3), I could stratify on the variables of ‘grade’ (low, medium, high) and ‘polarity’ (‘what you did well’ vs ‘what could be improved’), allowing quick comparisons between subsets of either or both attributes. For example, if I wished to investigate how the praise compared at low and high grades, I could expediently crosscut the dataset to isolate those subsets.

Table 3: Classifications

Attribute; Grade			Attribute: Polarity
Value	Student’s mark	Number of essays	Value
Low	>50%	47	Praise
Medium	50-59%	31	Criticism
High	>59%	36	

Results and discussion

To answer the research questions, I firstly consider the findings from the coding streams against the four categories (Orientation, Purpose, Grammar, Strength) individually. Because of the nuanced interplay, the section thereafter synthesises and analyses the findings to reach a holistic view of the hidden curriculum and its effects.

Orientation – what is the feedback about?

The ‘orientation’ category divides into nodes related to distinct aspects of academic writing. The following examples demonstrate, in superscript, how the nodes were used to code feedback propositions:

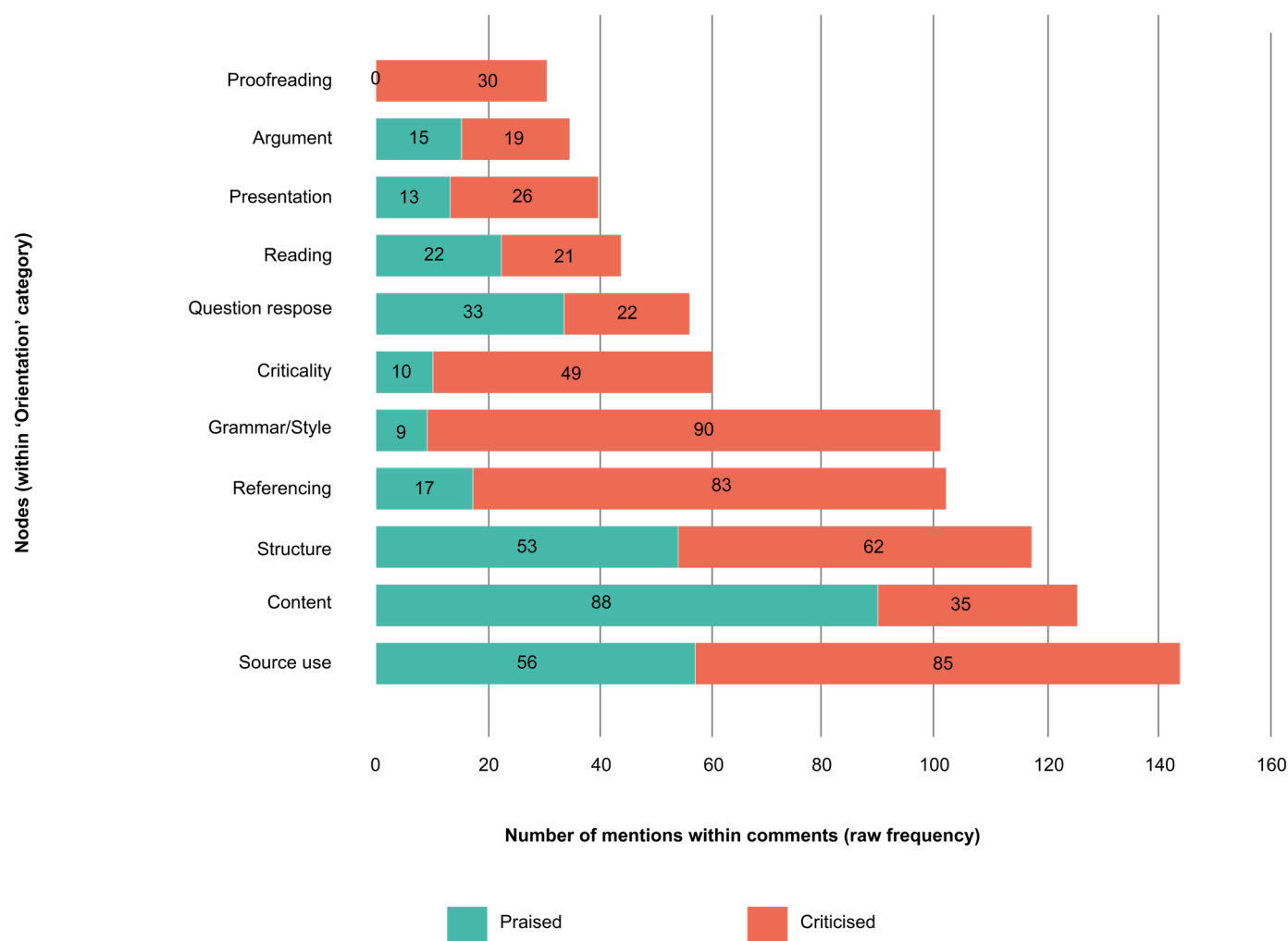
clear evidence of wider reading ^[reading] which is used to enrich ^[source use] what you are arguing ^[argument]

Use sources to frame what you say ^[source use]. This will allow your writing to develop a critical lens ^[criticality]

do not make unsubstantiated statements; It is better to use more references than less ^[source use]

The use of NVivo’s ‘classifications’ allowed comparisons of the varied extents to which markers commented on each aspect of writing, in praise versus criticism. As Figure 2 illustrates, ‘source use’ received most mentions (141, or 1.23 per student), of which 60% were developmental, illustrating its over-arching importance as a threshold concept for academic writing. ‘Structure’ followed a similar pattern and can be regarded likewise. Markers commented upon certain aspects, such as grammar and proofreading, almost exclusively critically, indicating that those elements are rarely regarded as praiseworthy. Rather, they attract attention only when making reading problematic (Hyatt, 2005). Language remains largely hidden unless it deviates from norms (Lillis and Turner, 2001), a point taken up further in the analysis section.

Figure 2: Elements of academia writing praised and criticised in feedback



The lesser attention to 'argument' and 'criticality' are initially surprising given their emphasis in previous studies (Norton, 1990; Chanock, 2000; Wingate, 2012). Comparing the grading levels helps to illuminate why this may be. At high grades (60%+), markers mentioned 'argument' or 'criticality' in 14% of the praise, and 22% of the developmental comments. At low grades (<50%), markers discussed the same things relatively less than half as much, in 4% of the praise and 10% of the criticism. 'Source use' had a roughly inverse distribution, mentioned most frequently at low grades despite its high overall prevalence.

Wingate (2012) identified three keys to markers' tacit judgements of writing: references, structure and argument. In analysing sampled feedback, she found that markers often couched comments as directed, linguistically, at referencing or structure, where more intuitively they seemed to call for argument development. Wingate therefore problematised how feedback treats 'argument', bolstering Norton's (1990) claim that tutors and students seldom reach consensus about its meaning. My data adds support, since 'argument' featured frequently only in responses to higher graded work. At lower grades, its role and importance is somewhat hidden behind comments about reading and source use, and thus diminished. This indicates a grade-related difference in the explicit and hidden curricula, but not one that we should rashly dismiss as bad practice. A counterpoint is that feedback which mentions concrete actions, such as reading and using sources, may well be more useful to lower-graded students, than mentions of more abstract constructs. There are, perhaps, lower-level skills that students must have already catalysed, which then scaffold the higher-level ones. Before that, the latter represent battles scarcely worth picking for markers.

Purpose – what does feedback try to achieve?

As mentioned, I based the 'purpose' coding on Sadler's (1989) three feedback functions: clarify, benchmark and feedforward. From Ivanič et al's (2000) work, I added an additional node, 'dialogue/relate', to encompass direct questions, content-based engagement, and phatic propositions like 'well done!' (this code appeared infrequently - only 30 times – implications of which I discuss further under 'analysis'). Table 4 summarises the results.

Table 4: Frequency of feedback functions

Function	Frequency	Percentage
Clarify expectations	27	4
Benchmark	499	69
Feedforward	163	23
Dialogue/Relate	30	4

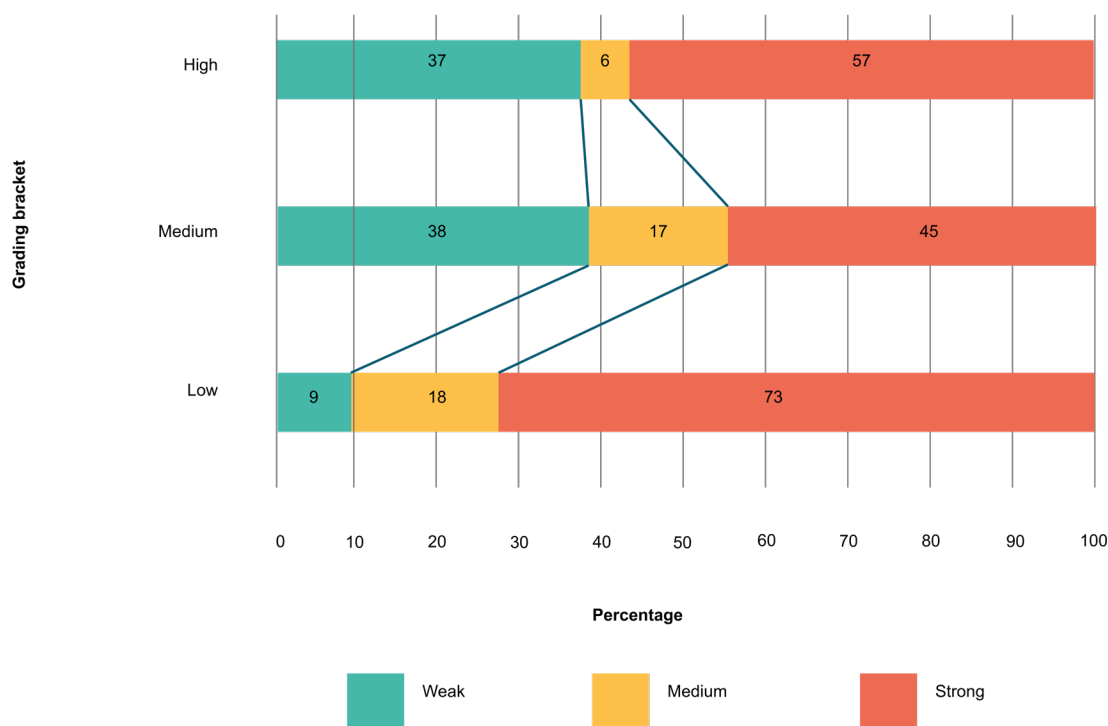
Encouragingly, 96% of the comments went beyond clarifying expectations, into suggesting how the student had performed or could perform better. Less positively, benchmarking was present at an incidence three times that of feedforward. The ratio seemingly conflicts with the marking framework's structure, which locates half of the comments under 'what could be improved?', itself a predictor for feedforward. Drilling down, only 54% of comments there used language that signalled feedforward, with this being less likely at lower grades (45%), than middle grades (57%) and higher grades (64%). From this, we can reasonably conclude that the higher the grade, the more likely that the comments directly indicated feedforward actions. For the lower-level writers, such comments, even under 'what could be improved', were often benchmarks against standards: what they weren't fully doing more than how they could do it differently. A benchmarking comment may well imply the corrective feedforward, be clarified by in-text comments, or emerge in the follow-up conversations. Nonetheless, within the summative comments, there is an apparent level-based difference.

Grammar

The next variable investigated was grammar, which works in tandem with the 'functions' discussed, in that the grammar of a proposition – such as its expression in past or present tense – shapes whether it reads as a backwards-looking evaluation, or as a take on performance in progress. Several grammatical elements were investigated. Following Hyatt (2005), these included modality and imperatives. Additional relevant sub-categories emerged from skim reading the data, including tense, and personal pronouns (eg second-person, third-person or passive/no pronoun).

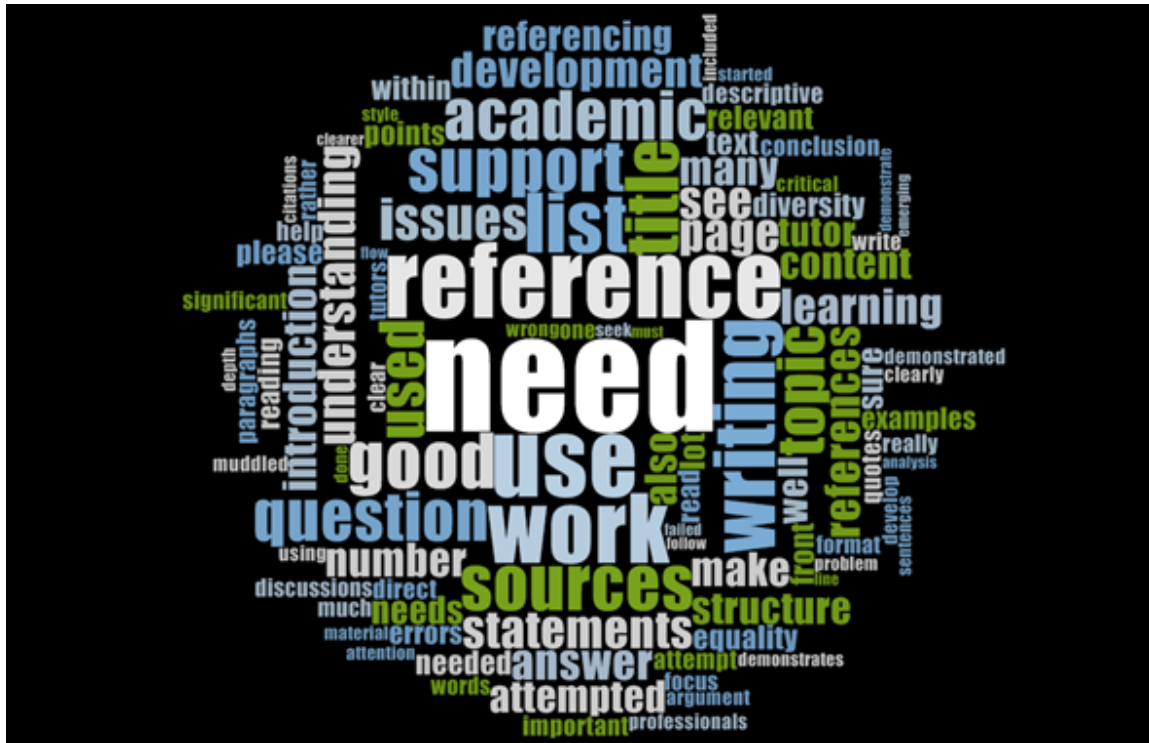
Modal verbs (eg could, should, must) featured more in the feedback on low-graded work (18 times per 1000 words), than in mid-graded (13) or high-graded work (12). While coding, I sub-classified modals as strong, medium and weak, reflecting a continuum between obligation and suggestion. This sub-categorisation illuminated an especially salient grade-based difference. As Figure 3 displays, 73% of the modals in feedback on the low-graded work were strong, telling students that they 'need to' or 'must' do something, as elaborated in Figure 4, which starkly highlights the pronounced presence of 'need' in this sub-group. Conversely, weaker modal verbs including could, can and might had a fourfold relatively higher prevalence in feedback at middle and high grades than low grades. By implication, weaker students are more 'told' what to do in a positivist fashion. We could view this finding as largely inevitable, even positive, for working with students' ability levels and language (O'Donovan, 2017). Others would take a dimmer view, since it treats students differently, and potentially leads to incorrect inferences about fixed states of knowledge and 'good academic writing' (Ivanič et al, 2000) to the detriment of non-traditional students especially (Burke, 2008). Whichever viewpoint we accept, this data shows compelling evidence of ability-level variation in the hidden curriculum. While higher-level learners receive choices and suggestions, lower-level learners are nudged towards rule compliance in pursuit of success.

Figure3: Strength of feedback modality compared by grade



The frequencies of imperative verbs in the feedback are intriguing. Unlike strong modals, imperatives, which function similarly to ‘tell’, were more frequent in feedback on high-graded work (19 per 1000 words) than at mid (13) or low (10) grades. The results may indicate that markers are intuitively more comfortable interacting with high-level learners in these most direct imperative terms, while stronger modality offers a palatable alternative with lower achievers. Carless (2006) has noted that politeness is most desirable for learners at lower levels; in keeping, markers used ‘please’ before 24% of the imperative feedback on low, versus only on 9% of the instances at high grades.

Figure 4: NVivo word-frequency cloud for feedback on work graded <50%



In looking at the grammatical variable of 'person', markers rarely used passive constructions and first person. The feedback mostly deployed one of three voices:

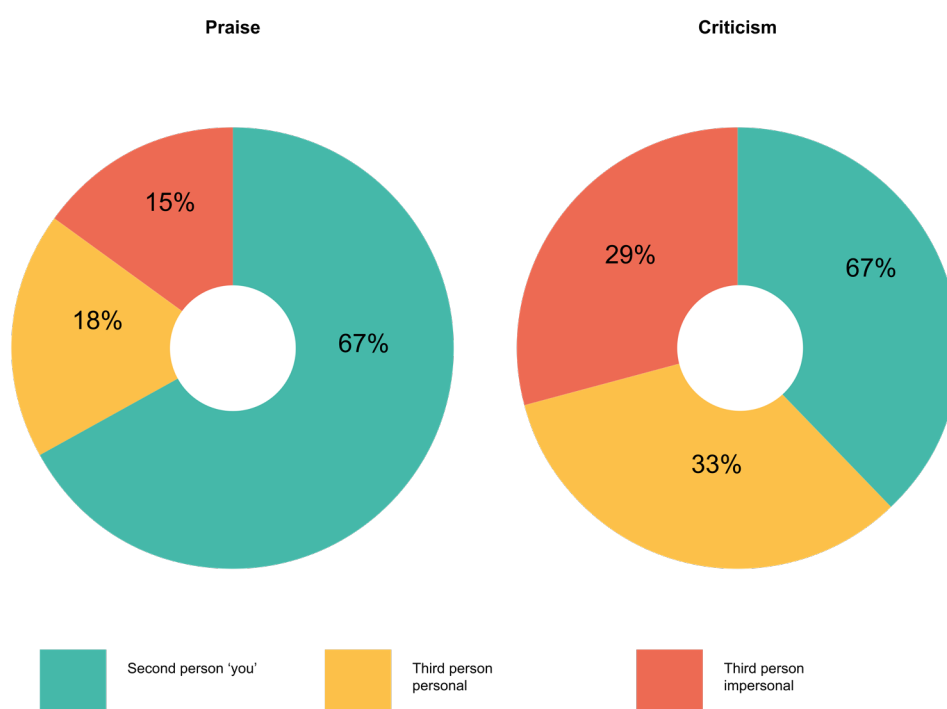
second person: You + verb

third person 'personal': Your 'text' + verb

third person impersonal: The 'text' + verb

Here, there was little grade-based variation between the feedback, but a thought-provoking disparity between the praise and the criticism, as Figure 5 visualises. 67% of the praise was addressed directly to the person, with the criticism more evenly distributed between personal and impersonal framings. The result may reflect the preferences of the five markers concerned, but instinctively seems likely to replicate, as politeness concerns augur for addressing the work, not the person (Dunworth and Sanchez, 2016; Pitt and Norton, 2017), and these will weigh less heavily on praise.

Figure 5: Praise and criticism compared for 'person'



On another variable, verb tense, 79% of the criticism, compared to 45% of the praise, was in present tenses (your work does this, versus your work did this). This result seems counter-intuitive until considering the probable intersection between tense and person. With the third person already distancing many comments from mentioning 'you', markers can perhaps more comfortably write them in present tenses. In contrast, the lesser-spotted 'you + present tense' would convey a judgement uncomfortably oriented towards the person. The tense and person seemingly mitigate one another, allowing markers to balance politeness and clarity (Yang and Carless, 2013). The results also lead us to see that relationships are not entirely nested in the hidden curriculum.

The final category, exemplified in Table 5, considered devices which serve to **strengthen or soften**, or 'hedges' (Hyland and Tse, 2004).

Table 5: Strengthening and softening devices - examples

Strengthening devices		Softening devices	
Adverbs	mano	Adverbs	some
	often		generally
	clearly		somewhat
	really		fairly
Adjectives	clear	Adjectives	basic
	excellent		emerging
	signigicant		minor
	thorough		reletively
		Verbs/ Nouns	try
			attempt
			start
			begin(nings)

Noticeably more statements (322) were softened than strengthened (188). The praise featured was twice as much softening as strengthening, and the criticism, 1.5 times as much. On normalised frequencies, in the praise, 45% of softening occurred at low-grades, 38% at mid-grades and 17% at high grades, with the results for strengthening essentially a mirror image (19%, 33%, 48%). In the criticism, most softening and strengthening (40% of all instances of each) occurred for the middle-graded writing. Less of the criticism at high levels was strengthened, and less of it at low levels softened. We can therefore infer that weaker writers tend to receive direct criticism, and more 'tempered' praise, for example about 'attempts' to do things, or aspects 'sometimes' evident. Stronger writers, meanwhile, frequently receive amplified praise and neutral or hedged criticism. The middle group receives relatively the most hedged comments overall. There are two key implications regarding the hidden curriculum. Firstly, writers at either ability level often receive 'double reinforcement' of the polarity of their feedback. Secondly, middle-ability writers receive the most comments open to personal inference, which is interesting in the light of frequent difficulties this group experiences in moving upwards from the 50% bracket. Concluding from the 'hedging' results alone is challenging and tentative, so they are perhaps more interpretable in combination with others.

Analysis and conclusions

The results indeed suggest that a student's academic level acts as a predictor for the type of feedback they receive, and that the hidden curriculum provides a helpful lens through which to view the pronounced level-based differences found. The variation presents in several nuanced and interwoven ways, whose effects are cumulative when experienced together.

The hidden curriculum is firstly evident through what is, or more accurately is not, discussed in the feedback on work at various levels. Here, the analysis has drawn out 'argument' and 'criticality' as featuring more frequently in responses to work deemed relatively high level. Even more interestingly, 'proofreading' and 'grammar' were virtually invisible in feedback unless becoming problematic for the marker. These findings may well reflect the 'essayist literacy' (Lillis and Turner, 2001), traditionally preferred by universities, yet largely inaccessible to non-traditional students; their divergent 'voices', grammatically speaking, attract primarily negative comments (Burke, 2008). The findings strongly support a role for the hidden curriculum in transmitting broader societal structures (Giroux and Penna, 1979; Apple, 1990), despite universities' attempts at objectivity through marking rubrics.

As much as the content of feedback is illuminating, so is its expression. Here, the findings have shown additional disparities in the hidden curriculum at various grade levels. Firstly, the lower a student's written level, the more likely their feedback will emphasise performance against standards, rather than how to move that forward. More strikingly, there was a positivist sense of obligation in the lower level students' feedback, conveyed mainly through the modals 'need to' and 'should'. Higher level students will sense greater agency and choice based on the prevalence of 'could', 'might' etc. Exacerbating the matter, lower level writers more often received praise tempered with hedges such as 'attempt' and 'begin' than did higher level counterparts, while criticisms made of their writing were more commonly boosted with words such as 'really'.

These findings have a certain inevitability, given that the comments act partly to justify the grade allocated. However, we should not automatically regard the differences negatively. We must also consider the contemporary neoliberal university context. More directive feedback has not only been argued as most useful for students at lower cognitive levels, but also to predict them reporting greater satisfaction on the NSS (O'Donovan, 2017). Markers may attend to these concerns fairly subconsciously, yet they cannot be discounted. Ivanič et al (2000) note that wider institutional agendas impact on feedback practices. Here we could envisage this operating through a relationship between the type of feedback at each level, and the greatest satisfaction for the three groups respectively.

All that said, student groups do clearly experience feedback in different tones – not least, it seems, with more positivist emphasis at low ability levels and more interpretivist steers at high levels. Reverting to Boud and Molloy's (2013) distinction, the first type leans towards 'Mark 1' feedback (transmission), the second towards 'Mark 2' (learner agency). This finding supports older constructs of 'hidden curriculum' that highlight its role in mirroring wider societal structures (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). In illustration, the lower-level students will probably feel the greatest obligation and merit to

complying with others' rules, rather than making their own choices. Feedback is one of several microcosms of how students might experience HE more generally (O'fon and Blasco, 2018). On that basis, we can tentatively suggest that the different experiences for ability groups partly mirror their wider academic encounters.

The older viewpoints of the hidden curriculum were preoccupied with its propensity to foster behaviours that apprentice students to workplace expectations. The literature review developed an argument that a neo-liberal, employer-driven agenda has rendered such concerns far more overt for students and universities (Collini, 2012). As a result, dialogue and tutor-student relationships tend to be carried in the hidden curriculum instead (Cramp, 2012). My data did not provide unequivocal support, as I found that markers used multiple grammatical tools in feedback to balance the needs to be clear, direct, and polite (Dunworth and Sanchez, 2016). Again, it should be emphasised that the summative comments analysed were one of four parts of the assignment's feedback process. They work in tandem with in-text comments, marking rubrics and follow-up tutorials, to produce rich opportunities for dialogue and positive outcomes. However, since only 30 of the summative comments across 114 scripts directly contained dialogic or relational elements, we can suggest that markers could better harness them as a dialogic opportunity.

In reaching these conclusions, I do not attempt a firm value judgement on whether directive or dialogic feedback tones are superior. This debate remains squarely open, with compelling arguments on both sides (Ivanič et al, 2000; Hyatt, 2005; Forsythe and Johnson, 2016; O'Donovan, 2017), and would benefit from further exposition. Therefore, I hope this paper has instilled in its reader a greater consciousness of how different ways of writing feedback predict likely effects and inferences, and a sense of the issues they can keep in mind when marking different proficiencies of work. Besides anything, preferences about feedback styles are a highly individual matter for all concerned. The hope is that from this account, academic staff feel empowered to make informed choices about their feedback practices, and through those, to empower students to make equally informed choices about their learning.

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Higher education and the climate emergency: exploring the hidden curriculum of the campus

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Introduction: the climate emergency

Climate change and ecological destruction are key issues for current and future generations and young people are some of the most forthright advocates for a stronger policy response. Through the climate strikes initiated by Greta Thunberg and increasingly vocal protests worldwide, young people have been motivated to take action on the climate emergency. In March 2019, more than 1.6 million people took part in the youth climate strike on all seven continents (Fisher, 2019). The #FridaysForFuture campaign is a growing youth movement, emerging from the climate strikes, and reflecting the frustration felt by many young people at being too young to vote for change yet seeing their futures gambled away by those in power.

There has also been increasing recognition of the importance of education in addressing the climate emergency. Education is a cornerstone of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which replaced the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, with SDG 4 focused on 'quality education' and 'lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN, 2015). As the expectation on educational institutions to show leadership increases, a UK-wide Climate Commission for Higher and Further Education (HE and FE) was launched in November 2019 to drive change throughout universities and colleges. A partnership of the Association of Colleges, EAUC, GuildHE and Universities UK, the Climate Commission aims to increase and amplify sustainability activities in the tertiary sector.

The role of higher education in sustainability

Differing views about the role of HE in relation to sustainability are reflected in the comment of Stephens et al (2008), who state that the university is perceived variably as "an institution that needs to be changed" or as "a potential change agent" (p320). Some argue that HE has an essential role to play in sustainability owing to its contribution to developing leaders of the future (Martin and Jucker, 2005), while others claim that it is universities who have produced the world leaders currently engaged in a limited and largely ineffectual response to the climate crisis (Orr, 2004) – or indeed that education may contribute to the mindset that steers students towards the "individualism, materialism and hyper-rationality" that ultimately leads to overconsumption of resources (Wals and Benavot, 2017, 407).

There is certainly a strong argument that HE should be doing more to prepare students and staff for a future that is likely to include climate-induced emergencies. Student energy and enthusiasm for sustainability is strong: climate activism is at an all-time high on campuses and numerous NUS reports have indicated the strength of feeling among students about the need to include sustainability in university teaching (eg Drayson et al, 2013; 2014¹; 2015). Despite the lack of inclusion of sustainability in core National Student Survey questions and other key metrics, in a marketised system the strength of feeling from student ‘customers’ makes it more likely that these agendas will be given priority by university management. Rankings such as the People and Planet’s Green League, and the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (which assess universities against the SDGs), while not beyond criticism, add weight to the sustainability agenda.

Much research into sustainability in HE has focused on the formal curriculum and pedagogic approaches. These are important areas, yet there is increasing evidence that much sustainability education occurs ‘under the radar’ through informal processes such as the hidden curriculum and place-based learning (Kagawa, 2007; Winter et al, 2015). Many institutions have undertaken some form of ‘curriculum audit’ which explores the inclusion of sustainability in the formal curriculum, but much less is known about the hidden curriculum and its influence on student learning.

The hidden curriculum and sustainability

The hidden curriculum consists of various aspects of education occurring outside of the formal curriculum, transmitted through the attitudes and behaviour of teachers, or through the learning environment (Jackson, 1968). There are both ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ aspects of the hidden curriculum, according to Apple and King (1977). ‘Weak’ hidden curriculum involves socialisation and professionalisation that may provide benefits for wider society and community cohesion, whereas ‘strong’ hidden curriculum involves processes of social and cultural reproduction that serve to ensure the “preservation of existing social privilege, interests, and knowledge of one element of the population at the expense of less powerful groups” (Apple and King, 1977, 34). In a wider theoretical milieu, the influence of the hidden curriculum can be seen at work in Bourdieu’s concept (as developed by Reay, 1998) of institutional habitus. This concerns the types of knowledge or behaviour which are expected of students, the ways in which educational institutions collectively think and act, and how institutions are positioned in relation to the social context. This is important in terms of sustainability as it helps offer a critical lens for understanding the influence of HE institutions on students from different backgrounds.

¹ Subsequent reports available as presentations on the website: sustainability.nus.org.uk/our-research/our-research-reports/education-learning-employment-and-sustainability/sustainability-skills-annual-survey

In HE, there are three main areas of influence in which the hidden curriculum can be identified:

- 3 The formal curriculum/syllabus: choices about what to include and exclude from the syllabus form part of the hidden curriculum of HE (Cotton et al, 2007; 2009).
- 4 Pedagogy/teaching approaches: comments in a lecture or choice of specific resources may send messages about a tutor's underlying values, contributing to the hidden curriculum (Cotton and Winter, 2010).
- 5 Institution/campus environment: institutional and campus environments may impact on student learning through the hidden curriculum of place (Kagawa, 2007; Winter and Cotton, 2012).

The focus in this chapter is on the third aspect, and how the campus can influence students' thinking and understandings about sustainability, though it also draws out relationships and synergies between all three elements.

There is evidence that young people are more committed to environmental sustainability if they have been through HE (Cotton and Alcock, 2012). Given that many of these young people will have studied little about sustainability explicitly in their courses, this suggests that there might be something about the experience of going to university that effects a change in values. HE often forms a crucial point of change in young people's lives as many leave home for the first time, meet new people and encounter a wider range of perspectives than previously and this can be highly influential in values development. The 'habit discontinuity hypothesis' (Verplanken and Wood, 2006) illustrates the potential for development of values when a significant life change takes place. This means that students starting university are particularly receptive to messages about sustainability either explicitly or implicitly through the hidden curriculum. Kagawa (2007) describes the campus as a potential site for learning through a "sustainability orientated pedagogy of place" (p320) and research on transformative learning for sustainability suggests that many of the significant learning experiences students report are outside the formal curriculum (Winter et al, 2015). However, students may also receive negative messages about sustainability through the hidden curriculum: Orr (2004) notes that whatever students are taught through the formal curriculum may be offset by what they learn elsewhere – from institutions which conduct their business and estates management unsustainably. This may mean that students receive incompatible messages about sustainability from different dimensions of their experience in HE.

Positive and negative aspects of the hidden curriculum of the campus

There are multiple aspects of the campus and the learning environment which form part of the hidden curriculum and send messages to students about what is considered important by the university. These include the design of learning spaces – are they indicative of hierarchical structures where the power lies with the teacher and didactic approaches are encouraged (eg lecture theatres), or do they indicate a more democratic relationship between teacher and students? Work on sustainability pedagogies has indicated that interactive, experiential learning approaches are more appropriate for teaching about such contested and often value-laden issues (Cotton and Winter, 2010), yet the design of many universities remains stubbornly oriented towards the large-group didactic teaching model. More widely, the hidden curriculum of sustainability can be observed in the university estate: Does the campus include green spaces, encourage wildlife or social interaction and relaxation, and do the signs around campus help students understand the sustainability features of buildings or energy saving measures? (Petersen et al, 2007).

In research at a UK university, Winter and Cotton (2012) asked students to make videos about what their campus was telling them about sustainability and found they described both positive and negative elements. Signs of a 'climate change generation' who were accustomed to thinking about sustainability in terms of recycling and energy saving were very much in evidence, and students picked up strengths and weaknesses in the way in which the university managed these issues and promoted them to students. However, what students didn't say was equally powerful – there were some excellent sustainability features in some of the buildings on campus, for example, but students were simply not aware of them. There were many similar missed opportunities for students to be discovering more about sustainability through informal learning.

Even if a university is successful in promoting energy saving and recycling on campus (and communicates this to students effectively), there may be other aspects of the university estate and culture that implicitly send very different messages. For example, the increasing marketisation of higher education in the UK in the last decade has led to many institutions taking on significant building projects, alongside a refocusing of curricula and pedagogies towards fulfilling student satisfaction criteria and achievement of highly paid employment. While this may not necessarily be negative (students often appreciate more interactive teaching, for example), there is a risk that some of these changes might undermine opportunities for students and institutions to work together on sustainability issues, and to challenge each other to reflect seriously on their own and institutional behaviour and future aspirations. For some time, sustainability theorists such as Blewitt (2012) have been warning that neoliberal market forces are a fundamental barrier to achieving sustainability in universities, arguing that for sustainability education to survive in modern-day universities, "compromise, accommodation and incorporation" were required as "the price of survival" (p2). Others would argue that universities and HE policy need wholesale reform in order to enable sustainability to flourish (eg Hursh et al, 2015; Gonzalez-Gaudiano, 2016), yet current government policy continues to assume that value for money and institutional competition are incontrovertible aspects of HE. This then forms the backdrop to the hidden curriculum of sustainability.

Sustainability and the hidden curriculum at Plymouth Marjon University

Plymouth Marjon University (often known as Marjon) is a small, teaching-focused university, with developing research expertise and a very strong reputation with students. Alignment between the subject specialities and institutional values of Marjon University and the SDGs is evident. Aside from SDG 4 (Education), there are clear links to SDG 3, which focuses on health and wellbeing and SDG 16, which focuses on peace, justice and strong institutions. Marjon staff and students have a long-standing interest in sustainability, which has included involvement in a Green Academy project through the Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2013-14) and declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. The university environment is one with plentiful green space, with more than two hectares of woods, more than 50 species of tree, and areas where wild deer can be encountered. Thus it is in a strong position to exploit the hidden curriculum of the campus, and events such as building composters or clearing paths are organised to engage students in sustainability alongside their programme of study. Importantly, engagement of students in all aspects of university life is a key part of Marjon's ethos as a values-driven institution. This enhances opportunities for campus developments to impact on students, which is not the case in every university. As Tilbury (2011) notes:

“... activities, mostly driven by estates directors and their teams rarely make an impact on students' formal learning opportunities ... Examples of campus activities extending their influence on core university provision are rare.” (p 21)

At Marjon, the Director of Estates is a strong sustainability enthusiast, and is supported by a Graduate Sustainability Projects Officer, who works closely with the student body. Recent work on sustainability has included a climate emergency survey, the results of which are discussed briefly here.

Echoing the NUS national surveys (Drayson et al, 2013 onwards), the Marjon survey findings indicate that students have high expectations of what their institution might contribute to sustainability, and that universities have a wide range of opportunities to enhance students' understanding of sustainability. Marjon students have been a key source of suggestions for development of sustainability on campus. Common issues raised have included renewable energy production on campus, dietary changes, encouragement of wildlife and biodiversity, and reductions in litter and single-use plastics. Students often (but not always) had stronger views than staff on the need for change – though there was significant support across the whole university community. This is important since the attitudes of staff towards sustainability can form a key element of the hidden curriculum – and can support or undermine proposed changes (see Brinkhurst et al, 2010; Cotton et al, 2007).

Linking campus and curriculum are initiatives such as the 'Innovation Challenge' and other similar

projects which feature students creating ideas for the campus based on the climate emergency. The Innovation Challenge, organised by the Marjon Futures team, was an extra-curricular opportunity that brought together students from different disciplines across the university. The challenge itself was designed to encourage students to develop skills of problem solving, entrepreneurship and teamwork. Groups of students put together a business proposal for the university – with a view to helping the institution become carbon neutral. The teams were provided with a set of resources and given a very broad brief related to enhancing sustainability at the university. Each group took a different approach and the ideas which were generated were diverse and sometimes unexpected! Suggestions included:

- + a student cookery YouTube channel, using ethical food sources, and teaching students how to cook
- + expanding allotments on campus, planting trees, or adding living walls to buildings
- + renewable energy – including wind, solar and hydro-electric (from a lake) – as well as electric car charging points
- + improving signage on recycling bins and putting in food caddies for compost in accommodation
- + using plastic bottles filled with rubbish as building materials to enable recycling and new building to go hand in hand
- + bottle deposit scheme in the canteen using reverse vending machines, and plastic-free kitchen
- + using campus gym equipment to generate electricity
- + ‘green lighting’ using phosphorescent products to power outdoor lighting
- + eco-hotel on campus or eco-classroom to trial new sustainability ideas
- + extending support for vulnerable groups (the university already runs a ‘dementia café’ which supports patients and carers from the community).

Presentations to a panel, which included the Vice Chancellor, offered opportunities for students to ‘pitch’ their ideas and to be asked questions about them. A certificate was given to all who participated and the strongest (and most realistic) suggestions were taken forward for consideration by the senior management team.

Future developments under consideration include efforts to engage greater number of students – perhaps by linking the challenge to curriculum or assessment, or by involving every first year student. Use of campus facilities for student activities can be more effective if this is linked to assessment within their programmes. Reflection on learning from practical activities offers a way of making the hidden curriculum more visible, valued and recognised by students. Learning points for students who engage in sustainability activities include: familiarity with some of the science behind sustainability issues; a greater understanding of actions and consequences and clearer appreciation of the need to balance economic, social and environmental sustainability. But most of all, the students gain a sense of empowerment: they can have some control over what can seem at times huge (and distant) sustainability concerns.

Remaining challenges include balancing the demands of students as consumers with those of students as sustainability enthusiasts. As in many areas of life, competing values lead to conflicting behavioural choices – and university management needs to balance student demands for new buildings and better facilities with renewable energy production on campus and, yet still, a desire for increased car parking. As has been shown in other research, curtailment activities are much less popular than encouraging good behaviour; low-effort, low-impact actions tend to predominate (Attari et al, 2010). Positive-focused approaches can have mixed success if negative actions are not reduced, yet balancing the need for restricting unsustainable practices without creating an image of sustainability as something inconvenient and divisive remains a challenge. In addition, while it is crucial to engage students in decision-making about campus sustainability, their suggestions for ways in which the university might respond to the climate emergency were not always practical!

Conclusion: What would a Future-Facing Campus look (and feel) like?

This chapter has identified some of the ways in which the hidden curriculum of the campus – in conjunction with the formal curriculum and pedagogy – can contribute to (or detract from) the sustainability agenda in HE. The question that remains is what might a future-facing campus of a sustainable university look like? How could the hidden curriculum best be harnessed to encourage students to change their behaviour towards more sustainable practices? In contrast to much writing on the hidden curriculum, this chapter suggests that it can be a force for good, but there remain many barriers to overcome – not least the competing agendas and difficult financial contexts which confront many institutions. Addressing these issues can have other positive benefits: it forces us to confront the structural disconnect between the campus and the curriculum; between academic and professional services staff; and between university management and staff or students. Using a systems-thinking approach (Sterling, 2003) is key to ensuring that decisions are joined up and have benefits that cut across HE's competing agendas.

Some solutions are readily available and achievable with institutional commitment and negligible funding. One of the key issues is making the invisible visible – making the existing sustainability features of a campus more evident to students and staff is an obvious first step. Previous research suggests that students are more likely to change their behaviour if they have a visual representation of the difference it makes (Cotton et al, 2018). This might be achieved simply with better signage or posters explaining the energy-saving or water conservation features of building – on posters outside lecture halls, for example. The next step might be to look at more effective visual representations of issues (interactive energy use systems which indicate how much energy a building is using in real time; or energy visualisations which attempt to make concrete the abstract concept of energy use by comparing carbon emissions to everyday objects). Nudge philosophy (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) can be used to help encourage people to make small behavioural changes towards sustainability (for example, using footprints on the floor directing you to a revolving door to save energy; bins that say thank you when rubbish is deposited). Longer-term changes should include redesign of campuses (and university cultures) to encourage experiential learning, group-work and interaction.

Linking campus to curriculum is a second step which can help reinforce change. For an overview of the measures that can be taken, the ‘7 steps resource’² on ‘Using the campus to learn about sustainability’ produced by the Educational Development team at Plymouth University offers a good start point. The Marjon Climate Emergency Survey and Innovation Challenge address issues including ‘Share with students what sustainability issues the university is addressing’ (step 1); ‘Raise awareness of environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability’ (step 4); and ‘Invite students to contribute ideas for improving sustainability on campus’ (step 6). Other opportunities include using disciplinary examples from the campus environment as illustration of more general theories or principles; drawing on university environmental performance data to undertake statistical analysis; and assessing corporate social responsibility, community engagement or volunteering. All of these activities serve to make the hidden curriculum more visible for students: the functioning of the institution which surrounds them but which they often take for granted is foregrounded in their educational experience and may lead to them reconsidering their own behaviours as well as putting more pressure on university management.

²www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/files/7_steps_to_using_the_campus_to_learn_about_sustainability.pdf

Students and staff can use the campus environment for learning about sustainability in their discipline: For Business students, this might include talking to the finance staff and cafeteria managers to understand how decisions about sourcing ingredients are made, and enabling students to ask about the ways in which issues of food miles or fair trade are taken into consideration. For Sports Science students it might involve looking at the facilities available at the sports centre and assessing some of the barriers to use of the facilities, as well as options for other free-to-use incentives to exercise for health and wellbeing. Interdisciplinarity can also be encouraged through this route. If there is an art exhibition or degree show that focuses on sustainability, can it be linked to other subjects? Students then engage with the exhibits or observe others doing so and link the art work to elements of their own discipline. In all cases, there is a strong argument to be made that a collaborative student-led approach involving academics and estates staff could offer a useful pedagogic vehicle for enhancing students' capacity to critique sustainability within organisations.

Equally important is the choice of pedagogic approach. Engaging students with campus-based learning as part of their curriculum lends itself to experiential approaches, real-life issues and project work, and aligns with best practice suggestions about sustainability pedagogies (Cotton and Winter, 2010). Wider development of informal learning opportunities might assist in these aspirations. Much can be uncovered about using the campus for informal learning by exploring activities and structures in free-choice learning environments such as museums, galleries, aquaria and zoos. These institutions use innovative ways of promoting informal learning, whereby learners construct their own meanings based on an interaction between their previous knowledge and the new information (Falk, 2005). Because they are voluntary, such contexts need to promote an emotionally engaging experience. The physical environment is deliberately designed to maximise the educational impact, and learning tends to be episodic rather than continuous. Research suggests that some free-choice learning environments can promote positive environmental attitudes and behaviour change. Zoos, for example, are known to enhance many people's sense of 'connection to nature' (Falk et al, 2007). This may provide a foundation for greater attention to and concern about environmental issues that can be built upon by further experiences and information.

Research suggests that informal learning can potentially be more powerful than formal learning (Winter et al, 2015). It provides levels of engagement, personal connection and reflection that are often missed in formal learning scenarios and offers students opportunities to ask questions, explore and become an expert in an area they are passionate about. Museum schools are starting to emulate this type of learning, and the 'Campus as a Living Lab' movement takes a similar model, developing whole institution approaches to embedding sustainability in HE. All aspects of the university's business should be aligned in support of sustainability, and students should see their institution taking a positive stance toward sustainability as part of its core business or a purposive projected identity. University leaders should be promoting sustainability in every context and students should be empowered to participate in decision-making about sustainability. Sterling et al (2013) argues for just such a joined-up approach, involving education, research and estates teams working in harmony to enhance student learning about sustainability through active problem-solving on campus. This offers a perfect opportunity for universities to act as a model for other organisations, following the lead of young people and illustrating "how a sustainable organisation ought to operate" (Ferrer-Balas et al, 2008, 296). In this way, universities and their communities of practice could use the hidden curriculum to offer an indispensable leadership role in relation to the climate emergency.

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Academia in the cloud

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Introduction

According to Giroux and Penna (1979, 2012), institutions impart more than the taught curriculum; they reinforce sector norms, values, attitudes and beliefs in a covert way, referred to as the hidden curriculum. This is a long-term belief held by the authors, who first published their insights in 1979 when the taught curriculum was bound only to physical spaces. Yet, between the first and the second (2012) publication, the learning landscape has changed significantly.

One such change is the emergence of online degrees. An online degree follows the same higher education institutional (HEI) quality conventions as traditional part-time degrees; students are required to meet the same entry criteria, engage in study, and complete equivalent assessments. In this paper, we focus on the experiences of those engaged in online degrees, contrasting their experiences with more traditional degrees, to uncover the online hidden curriculum. We explore how UK sector norms and university values, attitudes and beliefs influence the online curriculum within a single HEI.

While writing this paper, the Covid-19 pandemic has spread across the globe and we considered the impact of this on the current socio-economic climate and learning landscape. In order to continue to deliver the traditional curriculum, HEIs, academics and students are rapidly adjusting en masse to remote teaching and encountering strikingly similar problems to those created by the marginalisation of online learning.

A degree of separation

We propose that partial or complete unbundling, a strategy for outsourcing aspects of online degrees, hides the online university experience from HEIs. We suggest that separating the online curriculum from the university's governance structures, by handing parts or all of its operation over to third parties, often referred to as Online Programme Management (OPM) companies, makes it less tangible and undervalued by the sector. This degree of separation is one of the root causes of the online hidden curriculum.

Exposing three levels of the online hidden curriculum

This paper exposes three problems caused by the separation of the online curriculum. At the macro (sector) level, we explore online learning's reputation within the sector and suggest that online degree students are not represented in sector policies. At the meso (HEI) level we scrutinise the digital infrastructure, designed as an adjunct to traditional learning and not for online students. At the micro (teaching and learning) level we challenge the lack of professional development for online teaching practice, compared with traditional teaching methods. In our reflections, we uncover some institutional fractures that, as Martin (1976) suggests, are just unknown, and others that create intended and unintended consequences for online students.

Fundamentally, through this institution's lens we propose a radical shift in HEI policy and practice, suggesting that a 'digital student first' approach will prepare HEIs for an uncertain future.

Background

Motivations for unbundling

In order to grow student numbers, many HEIs have turned to outsourcing their online learning (IT platforms, learning support, content creation, teaching, assessment and certification) to third party OPMs (Swinerton et al, 2018).

This approach, known as unbundling, is defined as:

“the differentiation of tasks and services that were once offered by a single provider or individual (ie bundled) and the subsequent distribution of these tasks and services among different providers and individuals.”

Gehrke and Kezar (2015, 96)

Unbundling is not a new concept; the idea has existed since the 1970s (Wang, 1975). At the macro level, it happens due to governmental and societal demands for widening access, scalability and marketisation of higher education (HE). This is achieved through the introduction of new HE products and services (Swinerton et al, 2018; Yuan et al, 2014).

At the meso level, HEIs sell their functions to students as two separate bundles (1) learning and achievement, (2) support and belonging (Shaw et al, 2020). As consumers, students have many online purchasing options, which makes higher education highly accessible on a global scale. To support this expansion without impact on traditional academic roles, HEIs outsource learning and achievement to OPMs. Financially, this frees up time for more traditional university duties, such as research (Swinnerton et al, 2018).

At the micro level, McCowan (2017) argues that outsourcing academic roles enhances student learning, providing a broader range of teaching skills across the sector, attuned to the new employability-focused types of students. Furthermore, McCowan (2016) contests the value of a traditional university's support and belonging bundle for older, work-based students.

Opposition to unbundling

There have also been long-term objections to unbundling. Delors et al (1999) suggested that it exacerbates inequality. Barriers to participating online include ageing computers, poor internet quality, disabilities and poor technology skills, and these create a significant 'ramp' to participation (O'Doherty et al, 2018; Ali, Uppal and Gulliver, 2018; Radijeng, 2010).

Sundt (2019) raised concerns about the quality assurance of support services, teaching, university reputation and shared governance and Peters (2015) argued that a competency-based curriculum trains but does not educationally transform a person. Unbundling online learning to an OPM typically only offers a quality measure for learning and achievement, leading to blind spots in what Peters (2015) defined as a university's ethical curriculum planning, namely equality, value, interest, freedom, respect and solidarity.

Rebundling, an alternative to unbundling

In 2011, the University of Derby decided not to unbundle its online provision. Instead it chose to rebundle it into a bespoke department, University of Derby Online Learning (UDOL), drawing on its own internal expertise. This provision meets the needs of online learners (those studying for CPD purposes) and online students (those studying for degree purposes) and shares the values and quality mechanisms of the University.

In the nine years since UDOL's inception, we wanted to understand the hidden challenges facing online professionals and make recommendations to improve online learning's reputation and parity with traditional programmes.

Uncovering the online curriculum: The PROPHET Framework

As Martin (1976,139) explains, “a hidden curriculum is not just something that one finds; one must go hunting for it”. Anderson (2001) added that exposure allows for remediation, change, defence and informed dialogue.

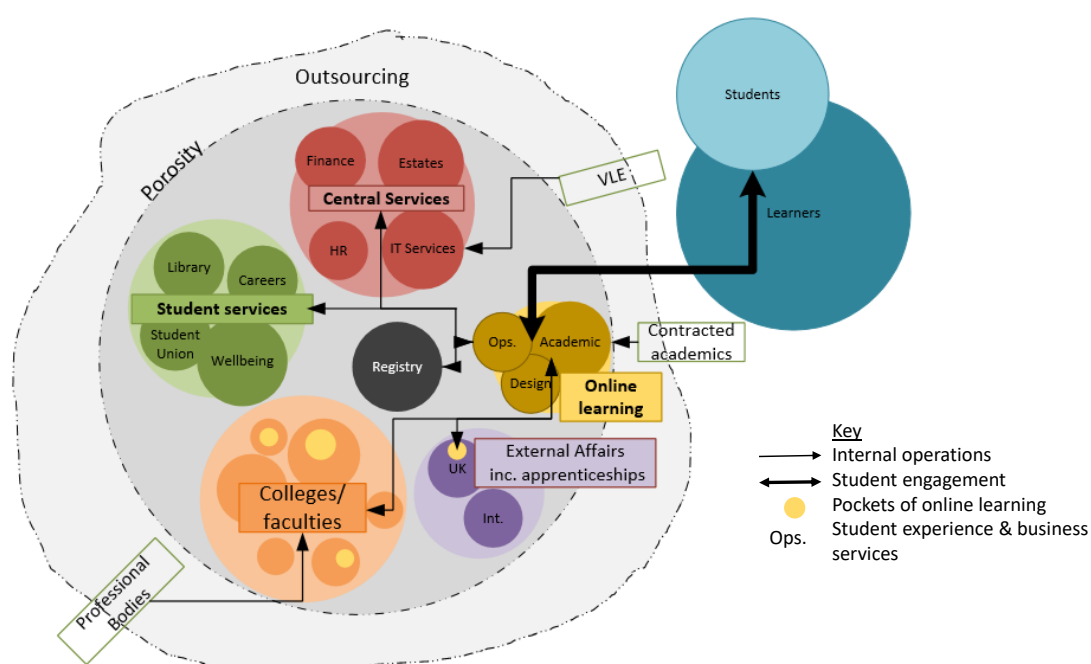
In 2018, the University reviewed its online learning offer, using a new conceptual framework, Pedagogic Realignment with Organisational Priorities and Horizon Emergent Technologies, abbreviated to the PROPHET Framework (Shaw, Rawlinson and Sheffield, 2020). This framework enabled University staff (managers, academics and student experience professionals) to understand online learning in this rebundled third space (Whitchurch, 2008) surfacing operational problems and supporting discourse through focus groups (Shaw et al, 2020).

It revealed what is tolerated or unnoticed, perpetuated and reinforced, through intentional and unintentional acts (Giroux and Penna, 1979, 2012; Hilliard, 2000; Lund and Tannehill, 2010). It confirmed breakages in communication within the University that conform to Martin’s (1976) notion of a) curricula that has been partially, perhaps deliberately, hidden from students; contravening traditional ethical foundations of curriculum design, and b) things that are not deliberately hidden, just unknown.

Communication and service breakdown

The image below (Figure 1) shows the rebundled online university’s operating environment. It highlights the porosity that technology affords, dissolving the divide between universities and society (McCowan, 2017). Managing internal and external operations include; (1) collaborating with departments, (2) establishing the quality of procured products and services, (3) monitoring the quality of outsourced facilitation and (4) measuring the University experience of remote students and learners. Any of these operations can result in communication and service breakdown leading to a hidden curriculum.

Figure 1: Rebundled online university operations



Findings: a detailed look at the hidden online curriculum

Retaining ownership of the online experience provides visibility of the online curriculum in ways that would not be achievable in a fully unbundled model. For example, HEIs can compare the value of online learning, using traditional measures such as: size of alumni, course enrolments, student support, teaching satisfaction and percentage of good honours (Pathak and Pathak, 2010). Using these measures, several research studies have found that the online experience compares well with traditional programmes (Shaw et al, 2020, Means et al, 2009, McPhee and Söderström, 2012).

Quality measures and studies helped to instil confidence in the rebundled model, yet statistics alone do not highlight curriculum challenges. As we explored the challenges caused by the separation of the online curriculum, University staff spoke about a fracture between a traditional and an online university education, at three levels (macro, meso and micro). A detailed look at challenges at these three levels follows.

Macro: the impact of sector focus and values

Institutions operate in a national policy environment that sets standards and expectations. In the UK, the Office for Students (OfS) acts as the sector regulator that monitors HEIs against four primary objectives: access and participation, quality of the university experience, progression into employment or further study, and value for money (OfS, 2018). This is reflected in university policies. Three situations where the online curriculum is partially captured in OfS and professional body objectives are examined below.

Macro: Access and participation

The University's access and participation plan sets, in institutional policy, mechanisms by which it intends to meet the OfS objective of reducing attainment gaps for black, Asian, minority and ethnic (BAME) students. To monitor this national target the University collects data about UK BAME students only, specifically to report to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Therefore, a significant number of our online students, namely, EU and overseas students – 1,832 in total, 44.8% (HESA, 2020) of the total UDOL population – remain hidden from the University's BAME statistics. A consequence of this is that the access and participation plan does not address the needs of all students studying at the University and, without the data, it is not possible to monitor and address attainment gaps within online degrees.

Macro: professional body recognition

One way in which a quality university experience is measured in the sector is by professional body recognition. There is variation in how online learning is recognised by professional bodies. For example, the British Psychological Society (BPS) offers accreditation for courses delivered fully online and actively promotes methods for online delivery in their curriculum guidance (BPS, 2017). In contrast, other professional bodies are not as supportive. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) will not count online learning towards the 400 hours of classroom training hours required for BACP membership or accreditation. They justify this decision by stating that they do not believe that the online learning environment can provide students with opportunities to be able to practice their counselling skills under supervision, nor develop relationships or obtain feedback from staff and students (BACP, 2020).

This position is now being challenged by the current Covid-19 pandemic, necessitating a move to remote teaching to practice counselling skills, develop relationships and obtain feedback, with potentially paradigm changing consequences.

Macro: longitudinal educational outcomes

Progression into sustained employment is monitored by Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) datasets, which link higher education and UK tax data together and chart the transition of graduates from higher education into the workplace (DfE, 2017).

Shaw et al (2020) highlighted that online students do not typically transition from higher education to work; rather they are well established in their profession and study concurrently. Consequently, LEO does not capture their starting point. Furthermore, online students often work in international locations that are exempt from UK tax data. This hides information about their career progression or promotion.

Taking these three factors together, sector data may suggest that online learning is failing students in their achievements, reputation and employability prospects, whereas it is unknown if it is improving achievements for BAME students and enhancing employability to more senior positions.

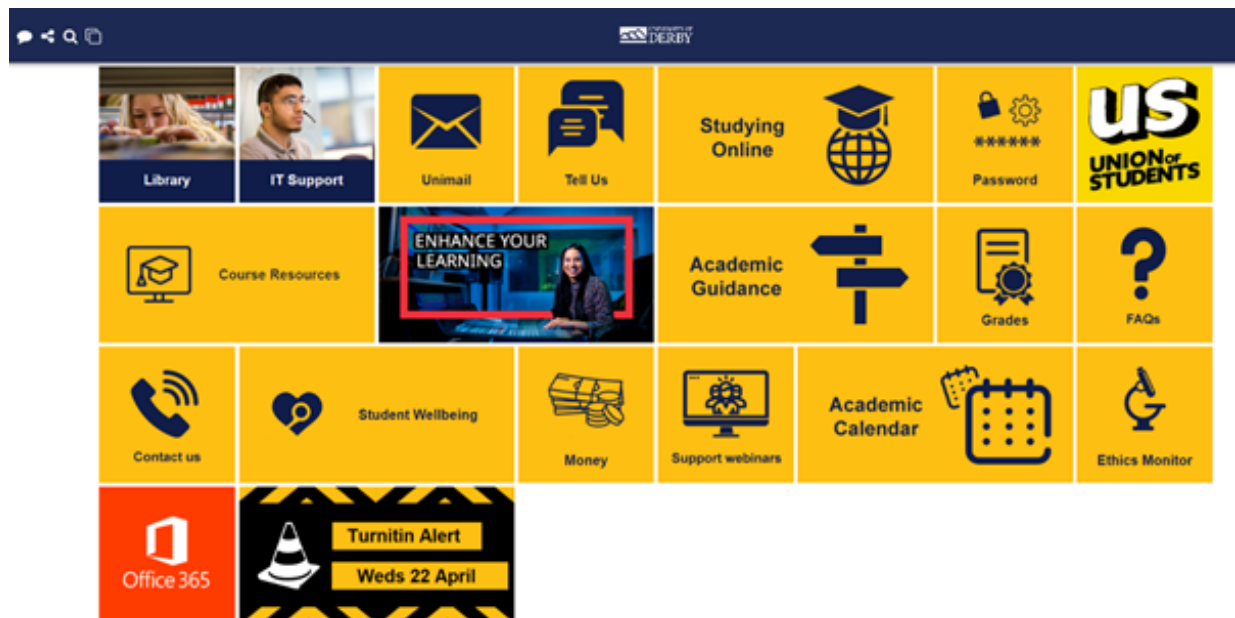
Meso: the impact of a disjointed digital infrastructure

The principal and almost exclusive means by which online students access the University is through the digital infrastructure. By default, one would expect online students to have access to the same digital resources as traditional students, brought together as a cohesive experience. However, rarely is any one department responsible for making sure that there is a coherent and seamless journey for online students; moving within the institution's electronic system, from one service to the next. Without clear instructions guiding online students to the wealth of available study support, these services are hidden. This conforms to the notion of things that are not deliberately hidden, "they just happen to be unknown to us" (Martin 1976, 143).

Meso: a single entry portal

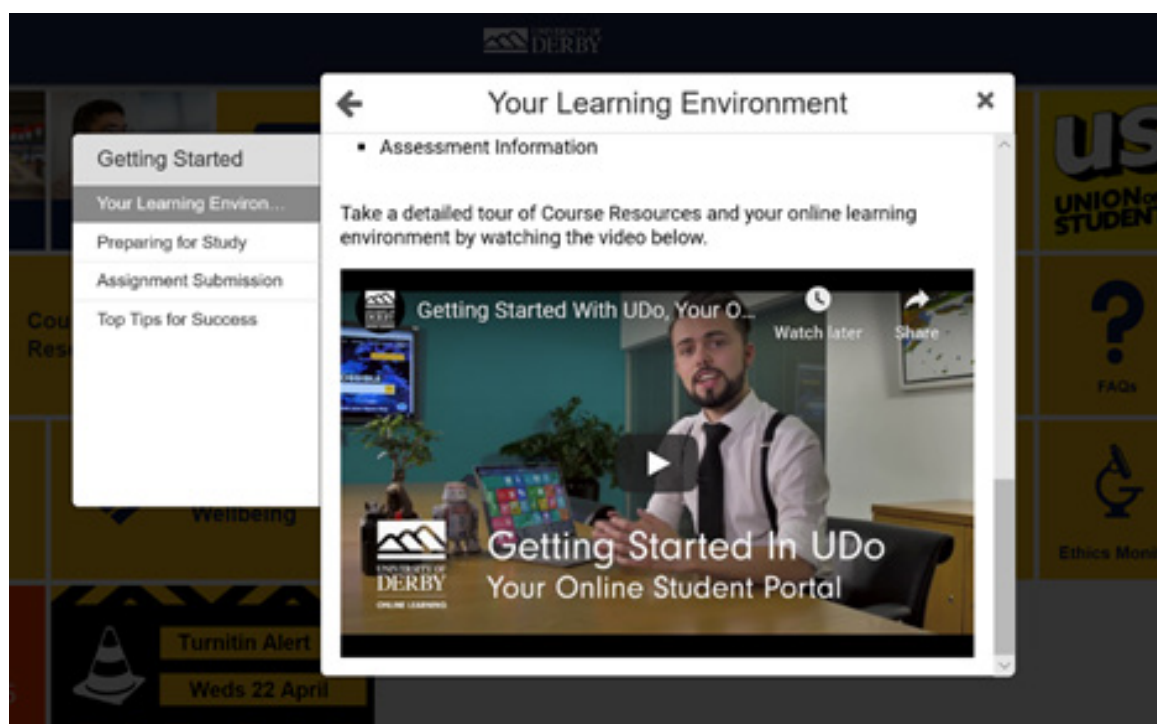
To address such challenges, an online student portal was designed, providing a single entry point to access all the University's services. This portal improves navigation and provides tailored communications, in place of the usual campus-focused services such as local weather updates and car park information (O'Shea et al, 2015). Analogous with the physical campus, the online student portal acts as the virtual reception desk, signposting students to various student services and classrooms (Figure 2). The University has since followed suit and designed a portal for traditional students.

Figure 2 Online student portal interface, University of Derby 2020.



We further enhanced the university experience by integrating technology video guides from the portal. This enables online students to access ‘just-in-time’ instructions, facts and guides, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 ‘Just-in-time’ Student Portal Guides, University of Derby 2020.



Meso: Accessibility

In 2015, the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) was withdrawn from all but the most severely disabled UK students. This benefit was never available for international students. By law, teaching materials must be made accessible to all students with reasonable adjustments made where appropriate (Gov. UK).

Prior to these changes in the DSA, the online department had already considered accessibility and designed accessible provision for all online students. We adopted the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which follows the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) accessibility online framework. Since the reduction in the DSA, UDOL was able to inform the University about the accessibility benefits of the virtual learning environment (VLE). Learning from the online approach and making digital accessibility an essential component of designing the study environment enabled the University to meet its obligations.

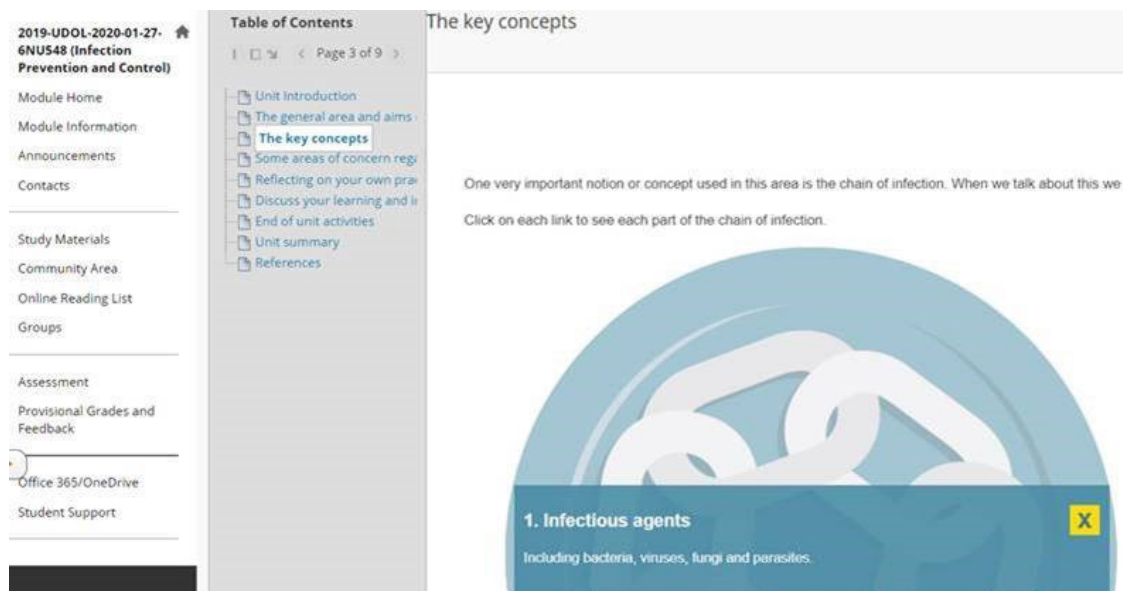
However, certain things remain hidden because of inconsistent design language between software and systems, which means that students need to continually learn new interfaces and ways of working. For example, referring again to figure 2, the colourful layout produced positive feedback from students, but it is not accessible to a screen reader. The unlabelled arrange link can be used to create a list view that is accessible to screen readers but students using these devices would need to be told about it or spend time working it out. Researchers have expressed concern about the digital competency of students, creating a hidden curriculum in the use and understanding of software (Edwards, 2015).

Meso: Navigation

Analysis of the end-to-end online university experience in 2011, from application to certification, revealed a disjointed student journey fraught with unnecessary and distracting information. Very few staff have access to the student view of the learning environment and have no concept of their students' user experience (UX). This further frustrates university staff's ability to support them.

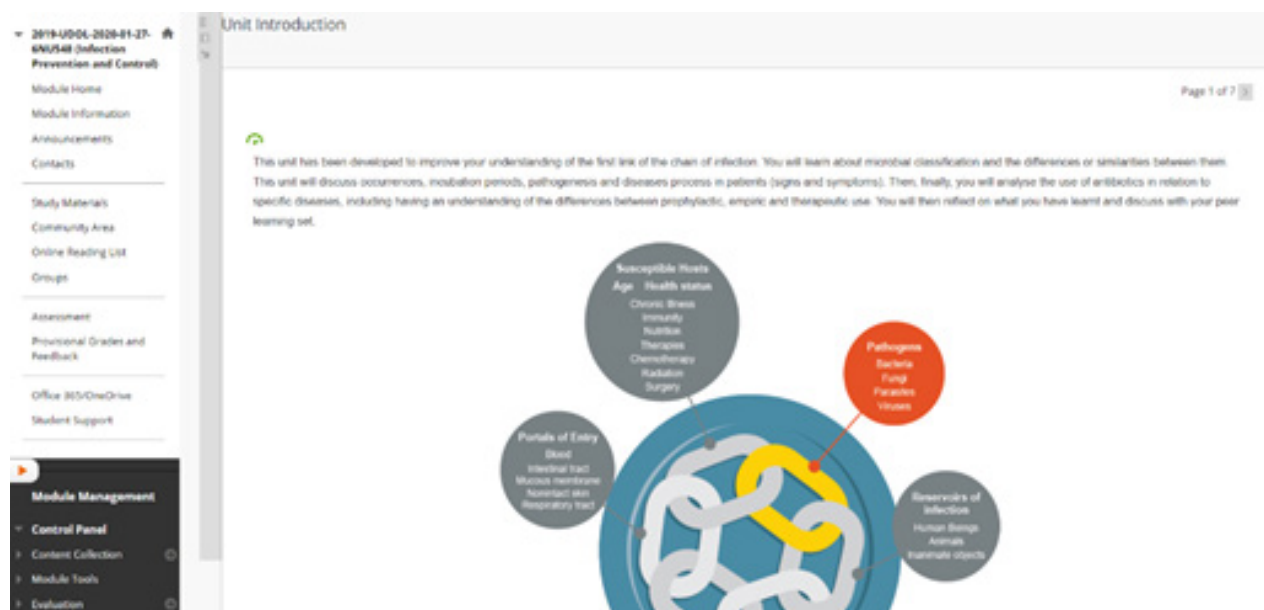
In traditional teaching and learning spaces, VLEs are typically designed and used as document repositories. Within most HEIs these programme spaces are designed by individual academics, applying their own preferred layout. Rarely does this cause major issues for traditional students as key information can be provided in person, with the VLE acting as a supplementary resource. Figure 3 shows a traditional digital learning space.

Figure 3 Traditional Degree Student Interface, University of Derby 2020.



Allowing online academics to make individual interface decisions does not support a cohesive online student journey. As a 2011 online student said, “it is like walking into a supermarket where each week the bread is in a different place, you have to learn to find it all over again”. To enhance the navigation experience for online students, each module was given a standardised menu, terminology and house style and purposefully designed study materials, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Online student interface, University of Derby 2020. The online module look and feel, note the additional menu items to assist navigation and the purposefully designed interactive content.



Employing elements of behaviourism (Beetham and Sharpe, 2013) with consistent and repetitive tasks, online students learn how to navigate modules without the need to learn a new process each time they move on. This reduces the overall cognitive load during learning, enabling students to focus on learning and not navigation.

Meso: Covid-19 when all you have is remote access

While writing this paper there have been several examples of online practice that have been adopted by the wider University to support remote learning in response to Covid-19. One pilot project that was championed for online students was online examinations. Since the pandemic, the institution now recognises that online examinations are essential for some degree programmes. Similarly, software that was only accessible on-campus, was launched in a new software portal, to allow access by students and staff off-site. These are two examples where the value of a 'digital student first' approach became apparent for the wider institution.

Yet, other challenges remain for international students, such as the limited access to Box of Broadcasts, which is only available in the UK due to licencing laws, and YouTube not being available in China.

Micro: the impact of professional development in online teaching

When students have trouble with module navigation and ambiguous instructions, or perceive detachment from the tutor, their learning experience is compromised (Shaw, 2018). As with traditional instruction, online academics play a key role in motivating, engaging and retaining online students (Bolliger and Martindale, 2004).

Unlike traditional instruction, where students may develop communities outside of the classroom, the online academic is pivotal in creating a community within the 'online classroom'. Responsiveness, availability and feedback outside traditional working hours is a feature of online learning that is hidden from traditional academics. In addition, online learning brings students across the world together in a single learning space. This creates a global learning community and offers opportunities for the exploration of critical pedagogy: outing the oppressed, challenging norms, changing attitudes and providing a better understanding of diversity (Giroux and Penna, 1979, 2012).

Micro: online learning professional development

We took the decision to expose academics to a responsive online learning experience. In a three-week, flexible induction programme, academics are required to engage regularly with their facilitator and peers. Such professional development provides more than technical know-how. It changes participants' basic assumptions from it being a lonely experience, lacking in quality interactions, to the realisation that online learning is flexible, supporting both community-based and individual learning (Roberts, 2004). This holistic view arises from the unique navigational structure and function of the online learning environment, its intentional course design and the challenging experience of working in virtual groups (Norton and Hathaway, 2015).

Micro: three lessons

Firstly, the training provides academics with an online student experience. Most academics have not experienced this previously in their own learning journeys. The training highlights online equity, as Howell (2016) found, diminishing stereotypes and teacher/student power balances. This filters through into academic instruction in both traditional and online modalities.

Secondly, participants learn that intentional learning design yields greater outputs that can be tracked and measured quantitatively, providing a robust platform for evaluation.

Thirdly, they learn that online facilitation is not a passive activity. It takes exceptional nurturing, continuous engagement and attention to detail. As Semper et al (2018) found, learning interactions require an element of trust between students and academic; presenting one's whole self as a human being is important when visual cues are lacking. Thus, the online academic plays many roles: coach,

instructor, constructor, assessor, philosopher and guide. These are similar roles to a traditional academic, but the crucial difference is that the experience is played out in full view of all the participants, recorded in text and video and can be unpicked for further scrutiny.

Micro: enhanced academic skills in both modalities

Undeniably, a plethora of external training programmes exist but evidence suggests that without compulsory training, academics will continue to teach in the way that they experienced their degree (Davis and Rose, 2007). The value of this course is measured in the quality of participant reflections. One participant said, “I have encountered new challenges from the student’s perspective that I was never anticipating before my participation in this module.” Another said, “I was expecting to find this module useful but perhaps not so enjoyable as I did”, and a third participant reflected on their use of synchronous leaning technologies, “Aside from choosing a subject, I realised in preparation and execution that the ‘devil is in the detail.’”

More than 200 academics have successfully completed this induction programme. Their feedback suggests not only confidence in online facilitation but an intention to adopt new approaches in their classroom teaching, a kind of ‘reverse impact phenomenon’ (Roblyer et al, 2009). As one participant reflected on their module, delivered in both online and traditional modes:

“This is the main revelation for me in terms of really understanding how students feel. It has initiated a critical review of my module and I am planning the changes I want to make the next time it is delivered.”

This rebundled model of online learning enables the University to monitor training outcomes and evaluate the use of transferable skills in the classroom, an impact that would be difficult to measure if the training was voluntary and unbundled. However, there remains a concern that the online learning induction is not integrated into the University’s Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE), particularly as that programme is designed to support new University staff transitioning into teaching and the distinctions between online and campus are blurring (Norton and Cherastidtham, 2014; Norton and Cakitaki, 2016, Martin, 2018).

Again, the Covid-19 has caused academics to consider how to deliver learning remotely and this has surfaced the acute need for professional academic development. HEIs are in the midst of upskilling academics and exploring both synchronous and asynchronous facilitation. Online facilitation will undoubtedly be a part of any future vision for HEIs.

Recommendations

Firstly, we recommend that, where possible, HEIs retain ownership of their online learning, to gain institutional insights. Where processes and teaching practices are shared across the HEI, elements of the online hidden curriculum will surface, meaning that the challenges faced by online students will be addressed within institutional policies.

In our study, we highlighted the need for inclusive data capture, to support sector benchmarking, for example, access and participation and LEO statistics. We recommend that data needs to reflect the true nature of an HEI's student demographics, and include UK and international online students, in addition to those studying in traditional degree programmes. Without this, HEIs will find it challenging to evidence the quality of their online provision. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic represents the opportunity to sway the opinion of professional accreditation bodies, such as British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, about the validity and value of online degree courses.

Secondly, the digital user experience (UX) and interface needs to be accessible for all students. This includes teaching spaces and all other supportive interactions with the HEI. A useful first step is the design of an entry portal that covers all aspects of the student journey; including step-by-step tutorials, links to all of the services and the ability to search, using common terms that are recognised by students.

A common and unified design language reduces the amount of technology that students need to learn. The layout of modules should be consistent, with assessments, teaching material, live lectures and discussion easy to find. With this consistent UX comes reduced cognitive load make learning more equitable for all.

Finally, we recommend providing an online student experience for all academics, commencing with HEI initial teacher training programmes and enhancing this with masterclasses or short courses. In this study, we highlight the benefits of such training and the academic intention to integrate new methodologies into traditional teaching. These online experiences will enable academics to move expertly between different teaching paradigms. The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a rapid response to deliver quality facilitated learning online. As a result, the value of intentional design (navigation and content) and delivery of quality online learning are starting to be recognised.

However, it should be recognised that this is a study of online learning within a single HEI and across the sector there is a wide variation of approaches. Moreover, the current pandemic may place other pressures on HEIs that supersede the opportunities outlined here.

Conclusions

Through the institutional lens we proposed a ‘digital student first’ approach, inverting the value of physical attendance, reducing issues of cultural identity and supporting student welfare at a distance. As online practitioners, we challenged the traditional concept of a university experience and highlighted the hidden difficulties for online students. Institutional case studies were provided, with a view of macro, meso and micro challenges. Our recommendations offer HEIs a means of unhiding the online curriculum.

Lessons learnt will be of particular interest to HEIs rapidly moving to remote delivery and those expanding their online offer. Our overarching conclusion is that applying a ‘digital student first’ approach to educational planning has far-reaching benefits for all students.

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Addressing the hidden curriculum during transition to HE: the importance of empathy

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Introduction

Think back to when you started university. How did you feel? Nervous? Excited? Confused? Did you feel welcome on campus? Did you know how to study effectively? Did you understand what the university expected of you? As educators, it is almost impossible to remember starting university with any degree of objectivity as we have gained so much experience of higher education (HE) since then. We have perhaps forgotten how overwhelming and confusing we found starting university. Now think about your first year students. Are you frustrated that they lack the knowledge and skills you expect? Do you find it disappointing that students don't turn up to your advertised office hours, or are you saddened that they put in the effort but don't seem to 'get it'? This disconnect between how we assume students will behave and what they actually do indicates the presence of a hidden curriculum. In this piece we will explore the hidden curriculum during the transition to undergraduate study, and how educators can address it for their students. We write from a UK perspective, but much of what we discuss will be relevant in other HE contexts.

Defining the hidden curriculum

There are many definitions of the hidden curriculum, reflecting its somewhat nebulous nature. It is generally understood as referring to the 'untaught' component of the educational experience, and includes the implicit knowledge, norms and behaviours that are required for success (Margolis, 2002; Jackson, 1968; Cotton, Winter and Bailey, 2013). It is debated whether the implicit components are intentionally hidden from students, or whether they are "hiding in plain sight" (Margolis, 2002). Semper and Blasco argue that it is the "distance between education and life that produces the hidden curriculum" (Semper and Blasco, 2018). Sambell and McDowdell frame the hidden curriculum by contrasting what is 'meant' to happen in education with what actually happens on the ground. They see the hidden curriculum as actively constructed by students, not just passively experienced (Sambell and McDowdell, 1998). This model means the hidden curriculum is also hidden from educators; it is constructed consciously or subconsciously by the student, making it difficult (if not impossible) for teaching staff to truly understand.

We see the hidden curriculum residing in the space between the norms of university education and the life experiences of students (Figure 1). We separate the hidden curriculum into two domains; 'Sense of Belonging' and 'Rules of the Game'. 'Belonging' covers the implicit messages students receive about whether they fit into the university environment, and whether people like them can succeed. It includes friendship groups, belonging to the institution and to the wider community of their discipline (Meehan and Howells, 2019; Araújo et al, 2014). 'Rules of the game' covers institutional processes, implicit components of the taught curriculum and academic expectations. It includes understanding of academic conventions, but also behaviours such as independent study and self-regulation. Underpinning both domains is 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). In this context, social capital is the real and potential resources that a student may be able to access through their social and family networks. These social resources can include insight into the experience of university, social support, aspirations and values (Mishra, 2020).

The importance of a successful transition into HE

Although the hidden curriculum may be present throughout university, it is perhaps most acutely experienced when students first arrive. A successful transition to university study underpins academic attainment and continuation (Thomas, 2012; Meehan and Howells, 2018; Lowe and Cook, 2003). We define transition as an extended process that starts before students arrive and continues long after induction week (Laing, Robinson and Johnston, 2005). For many undergraduates, arriving at university represents a major life change. Before they engage with new subject teaching and knowledge, students need to adjust to novel physical surroundings, new social groups, unfamiliar processes, institution-specific jargon etc. It is perhaps unsurprising that some first year students describe university as an 'alien environment' (Askham, 2008) and find it unsettling (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012).

The feeling of being a 'fish out of water' (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010) may be more pronounced for students from 'non-traditional' educational backgrounds (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012). This includes mature students, working class students, those from black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) communities and first-generation scholars (Leese, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). These may represent 'new students', who are more likely to combine studying with paid employment and spend relatively time on campus (Leese, 2010). They are more likely to experience the hidden curriculum during transition, as their experiences are further away from what is typically expected by the university (Figure 2). A more difficult transition to university underpins retention and attainment gaps for these demographic groups (Cousin and Cureton, 2012; Office for Students, 2018). However, our approach to transition is often designed for more 'traditional students'; an induction week centered on administrative activity, social events organised by the students' union, and then into disciplinary teaching. In this piece we argue we need to rethink transition to be more inclusive, starting with the hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum during transition

If we are going to understand the hidden curriculum, we need to see university through the eyes of students. Buffy Smith uses the character of Krista as a powerful mechanism to explore the hidden curriculum for a first generation African-American student at an elite US university (Smith, 2015). This 'persona' driven approach allows us to understand the hidden curriculum as a lived experience for students, and expose what is difficult for us to imagine. Here we consider three first year undergraduates on the same degree programme; Lydia, Kwame and Nathan. These characters represent composites of students we have encountered in our professional practice and serve as models through which to explore the hidden curriculum through a series of scenarios below.

Our first student Lydia is white, attended a well-regarded Scottish state school, and always obtained good grades. Her parents are a solicitor and a teacher. Lydia has a diagnosed anxiety disorder and is dyslexic. She has moved away from home to university, lives in one of the halls of residence and intends to join the university swimming team.

Kwame is from a British-Nigerian family. He attended a highly regarded London school with more than 50% BAME pupils. Kwame achieved excellent grades and was elected as class president by his peers. Kwame's parents run a successful business but did not attend university. Kwame lives in the same hall of residence as Lydia.

Nathan is from a socio-economically deprived town 20 miles from campus. His dad works in a local factory, his mum is a carer. Nathan left school with few GCSEs and went to work for his uncle's building firm. He went back to college after three years to do a BTEC and was encouraged to apply to university by a tutor. Nathan attends his local university, lives with his parents and works part time so he can contribute to household bills.

Before we can properly consider how the hidden curriculum applies to Nathan, Lydia and Kwame, we need to introduce an additional character. Rachel is a research-focused academic and is the module leader for a core introductory module. She is also the personal academic tutor for all three. Rachel is white and both of her parents attended university.

Sense of belonging

Do I belong here?

Let us start with the first day our students spend on campus, and the implicit messages the university sends about who belongs there. A sense of belonging underpins a successful transition to university (van der Meer, 2012; Meehan and Howells, 2019; Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie & Gauld, 2005). Even on the first day, Kwame may experience a sense of alienation. Many BAME students perceive universities as overwhelmingly 'white' spaces (Arday and Mirza, 2018). Buildings are generally named after notable historical figures who are disproportionately white, and portraits hanging on the walls generally showcase white men. Kwame finds that his peers are less diverse than at school, and there are few BAME academic staff (Universities UK and National Union of Students, 2019; HESA, 2020). For Kwame, the 'hidden curriculum' may mean the 'white curriculum'. He may find that the university sends an implicit message that only white perspectives are valid and valued, and that to succeed he must adopt behaviours, norms and ways of presenting himself that conform to these white expectations (Universities UK and National Union of Students, 2019; National Union of Students, 2011). This aspect of the hidden curriculum will not be apparent to Lydia or Nathan but may significantly impact Kwame's experience of university.

Friendship groups

Establishing strong friendship groups is associated with a successful transition to university (Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie & Gauld, 2005; Antonio, 2004), and contributes to the student's sense of belonging (Read, Burke and Crozier, 2020; Hughes and Smail, 2015). However, the assumption that undergraduates develop a social support network needs challenging, particularly for those who do not live on campus (Ahn and Davis, 2020). Many undergraduates feel isolated and lonely at university (Peel, 2000; Hughes and Smail, 2015; Read, Burke and Crozier, 2020), contributing to poor mental health (Richardson, Elliott and Roberts, 2017; Carr et al, 2013; Fisher and Hood, 1987) and increased likelihood of leaving university (Thomas, 2012). Lack of social connectivity is illustrated by Nathan. He commutes to university and doesn't hang around much on campus as he combines study with a job, typical of a 'new student' (Leese, 2010). He doesn't feel he has much in common with his more affluent peers. He becomes self-conscious of his working class accent and is alienated by stories of gap years and foreign holidays. He prefers to socialise with existing friends from his hometown. This compromises his feeling of belonging to the university (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010; Reay, 2001; Clark and Hordosy, 2019). Social isolation may have educational consequences. Nathan may not have peers he feels comfortable working with, or that he can get feedback on his work from (Lacey et al, 2020; Antonio, 2004). If Nathan does not connect with students who can encourage him academically, he risks underachieving and feeling like he doesn't belong.

Rules of the Game

Institutional language and process

Students may be unfamiliar with the 'language' of HE (Leese, 2010; Hughes and Smail, 2015). For example, on their first day on campus our students are scheduled to meet their tutor, which appears as 'tutorial' on their online timetable. Several implicit assumptions have already been made here which are manifestations of the hidden curriculum. Are all of our students sufficiently technology literate to have accessed the timetable without assistance (Leese, 2010; Khalid and Pedersen, 2016)? Do they understand the term 'tutorial', and have they realised this is compulsory? While most undergraduates have a reasonable expectation of what might happen in a lab class or a lecture, what a tutorial consists of is much less clear to students (van der Meer, 2012). Do our students understand the jargon of 'credits', 'levels', or 'reassessment'? This unfamiliar language potentially forms a barrier to all of our students before they have even attended their first class.

Self-efficacy and independence

The transition into HE requires academic independence, but this expectation is often poorly articulated to students (Thomas et al, 2015; Holmes, 2018). Effective independent study requires knowledge of relevant study techniques and a strong sense of self-efficacy (Fazey and Fazey, 2001; Henri, Morrell and Scott, 2018; Bartimote-Aufflick et al, 2016). This transition is difficult for students with limited experience of independent study, or those with a poor understanding of what this means in HE (Macaskill and Denovan, 2013; Thomas, Jones and Ottaway, 2015). Consider Lydia. Lydia initially feels quite confident studying because she is using the same techniques that allowed her to succeed at school. She spends lots of time studying, but it is mostly spent going over lecture notes, not expanding or applying her knowledge (Thomas et al, 2015). She receives feedback stating that she doesn't read around the subject enough (Sebesta and Bray Speth, 2017); this impacts her self-esteem, exaggerated by her anxiety disorder and low self-efficacy (Brown, 2007). She spends more and more time in the library reading technical literature she doesn't understand, and her anxiety mounts. Without guidance, she cannot identify what she does and does not need to read (Clark and Hordosy, 2019). She struggles to evidence her reading in assignments, so her marks do not improve. The extended time in the library results in greater anxiety, reduced productivity and emotional distance from her new friends. She may start to reconsider whether university is really 'for her'. Lydia has mistaken 'independent study' for 'isolated study' and would benefit from clear guidance of what is actually expected.

Subject content

There has long been concern that students are unprepared for university (Jones, 2011; Jansen and van der Meer, 2012; Lowe and Cook, 2003). However, this mindset represents a deficit model, where it is assumed the students are 'broken' or lacking in some way when they arrive at university. In the UK, there is a complex landscape of pre-university qualifications, eg A-levels, BTECs, Scottish Highers etc, each of which has different content. We should not assume that all incoming undergraduates have the same subject knowledge, and it isn't the student's fault that they studied for a particular qualification. Just because students have studied specific content previously, it doesn't mean that they still remember and understand it (Jones et al, 2015). However, students who feel unprepared for their course are more likely to leave (Thomas, 2012). Our three students are in a lecture based on A-level core content. Nathan and Lydia are instantly confused and overwhelmed by the new material. They studied for BTEC and Scottish Highers respectively, and this particular topic was not covered by either syllabus. Both immediately feel disadvantaged as they have encountered a hidden curriculum based on prior knowledge. This does not mean that instructors should spend valuable lecture time re-teaching A-level content (this is likely to lead to disengagement if anything), but all students would benefit from a clear explanation of what prior knowledge is expected at the start of the course.

Academic literacies

Academic success is not just about subject knowledge, but also articulating that understanding in assessments. For this, students need to develop their academic literacies – the understanding of how to talk, write, think and engage with literature in their discipline (Lea and Street, 1998; 2006). This requires students to develop structured and critical arguments. However, these concepts are 'invisible' (Donovan and Erskine-Shaw, 2020). This is because academic literacies are not just skills, they are complicated epistemologies that are socialised, challenged and contested within disciplines (Lea and Street, 2006). This makes them incredibly difficult for students to uncover. Academic literacies are the founding 'rules of the game' and are likely to be a source of worry for all of our three students. On the mark scheme provided for an assignment, Rachel has written that students need to include 'critical thinking' and 'a well-structured argument'. Nathan is confused. He has no idea what these terms mean, let alone how to include them in the assignment. He writes in the same way he did for his BTEC assignments and doesn't understand feedback that says his writing 'lacks coherence and depth'. BTEC students are more likely to have skills gaps (Peake, 2019), so Nathan is more likely to find academic literacies more problematic to uncover and develop. Lydia may also need support here. While her academic track record gives her an advantage, without the right support or guidance her dyslexia may be a barrier to developing the writing style expected in her discipline (Pollak, 2012).

Academic expectations

From the university's point of view, 'success' usually means a student graduating with a 'good degree', ie a first or a 2:1 in the UK context. However, students may not share this definition of success, or may not fully understand what this means. Students from non-traditional backgrounds are less likely to understand degree classifications, and the implications of not getting a 'good degree' (Cousin and Cureton, 2012). Our three students have all just obtained 55% on their first assignment, ie a mid-2:2. Lydia and Kwame are disappointed with their mark, but Nathan is pleased with his grade. He has heard that you only need 40% to pass; he sees 55% as significantly above this threshold, and therefore a good result. Through faculty eyes Nathan has underperformed, but from his perspective he has done well. Without these expectations being made explicit, Nathan has misinterpreted his assignment mark and is less likely to see a need to improve upon it.

Seeking support

At university, we assume that students will seek support when needed, usually through contacting individual members of staff. However, academic staff may appear unapproachable to many students, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. Students may have a significant fear of being judged by lecturers (Burke et al, 2016; Harmer and Stokes, 2016). For example, BAME students are less likely to approach academic staff for support, relying instead on their peers (Stevenson, 2012). There is wide variation between individual students in terms of how likely they are to seek support; many find that university staff are more supportive than they imagined (Leese, 2010; Hughes and Smail, 2015). Contrast Lydia and Kwame. Lydia asks her parents for advice about her low grades; they suggest she talks to her tutor. Lydia feels comfortable talking to Rachel, so organises a one-to-one discussion about the feedback. Rachel directs her towards the central writing skills team for further support and to a specialist dyslexia tutor. Lydia has benefited from the social capital of having parents who went to university, and in having a tutor she feels comfortable talking to. When Kwame calls home, his mum says, "work harder next time". He fears being unfairly judged by Rachel, based on previous experience with an unsupportive white teacher. There is a community of BAME students who use the library in the evenings, so Kwame gets their advice on his assignment instead. However, he is potentially disadvantaged for future assignments by not getting advice from an academic. Even if Rachel is proactive in suggesting 'see me' to discuss the feedback, this may not be interpreted in the same way by all students, making Rachel an unintentional gatekeeper to the curriculum.

The hidden curriculum is experienced at an individual level

Seeing transition through the eyes of our three students reveals that the hidden curriculum is a personal experience (Figure 3). No two students experience the hidden curriculum in the same way, as no two students have the same life experiences to draw on. Through this piece, we adopted a narrative approach so you understand our students as individuals (Smith, 2015). As educators, do we have the equivalent level of empathy with all of our students? This conception of the hidden curriculum as an individual experience means that we must avoid making assumptions about how the ‘average’ student experiences it. Although we can make some broad generalisations about how different demographic groups might be affected by the hidden curriculum, we must not reduce students to stereotypes. For example, as a BAME student Kwame could be assumed to come from an area of socioeconomic deprivation, but his parents are fairly affluent. Lydia might be seen as someone who would adjust easily to university due to her white middle class background, but her anxiety and dyslexia may be significant barriers to learning. Our students only represent a small subset of student experiences. Other identities and experiences (eg disability, sexuality, being a student parent) should also be considered, as should intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

Addressing the hidden curriculum requires empathy driven approach from instructors

Given that the hidden curriculum is experienced at the level of the individual student, we believe that it can only be effectively addressed by adopting a personalised, empathy-driven approach. Semper and Blasco (2018) propose that “the curriculum can only become explicit if educators acknowledge the interpersonal dimension of learning, both as it pertains to themselves and to their students”. They encourage educators to humanise HE through discussing their own experiences and motivations with students (Semper and Blasco, 2018). Although the pressures of modern HE make it difficult to carve out time to get to know our students, we believe this is essential if we are to effectively address the hidden curriculum. We must also acknowledge our own biases. For example, Rachel may find it easiest to get to know Lydia as they have similar backgrounds. She may need to put additional effort into understanding Kwame and Nathan’s experiences if she is to effectively confront the hidden curriculum with them. She may also need to recognise that she is not necessarily the right person for marginalised students to build relationships with, but has a responsibility to ensure that these students build an effective relationship with someone. Rachel also needs to avoid adopting deficit model approaches, assuming that it is her students that need ‘fixing’ (Figure 4).

So what do effective interpersonal relationships look like, and how can they minimise the impact of the hidden curriculum? A mentorship-based approach allows educators to go beyond signposting, and to actively support the student's personal development, self-confidence and academic self-identity. Degree programmes should be redesigned to build autonomy through learning, applying knowledge and self-reflection (Henri, 2018). We believe this is best facilitated through structured conversations between students and staff, so that experiences can be shared and the learning process seen at a personal level. However, this requires a shift in the mindset of the educator, going from an academic identity centered around passive transmission of information to one based on mentoring and the personal development of students (Semper and Blasco, 2018; Smith, 2015). This shift in mindset may be challenging for many academic staff and requires appropriate institutional support. However, we believe that adopting this student-centered approach is essential for creating an inclusive educational environment and is ultimately more rewarding for teaching staff.

Practical steps to confronting the hidden curriculum during transition

Below we provide some suggestions for Rachel and colleagues wanting to address the hidden curriculum. We strongly encourage educators to view transition as an extended process, not just induction week (Laing, Robinson and Johnston, 2005). Timeliness of information is key (Hughes and Smail, 2015; van der Meer, 2012; Thomas, 2012); eg study skills teams may be best signposted when the first assignment is set. Many of these actions may be more effectively taken at departmental level rather than by Rachel as an individual (Semper and Blasco, 2018). We do not propose these as an exhaustive list, and actively encourage academics to consider their local teaching contexts.

Sense of belonging

- + **present teaching staff as approachable individuals.** Discuss your own motivations directly – what drives your passion for your subject? When have you found education challenging? Present yourself as a person, not just a remote transmitter of information
- + **be inclusive in the way teaching staff are presented.** Indicate how you would like to be addressed, including your preferred pronouns. Show students how to approach academic staff appropriately in emails
- + **schedule time for students to develop friendships.** Don't assume that students are establishing social connections, so timetable opportunities for students to mix socially
- + **encourage student self-confidence and self-belief.** Adopt a mentoring approach, whereby personal development of students is valued as much as subject knowledge
- + **decolonise/diversify your curriculum.** Are the perspectives in your teaching disproportionately white, male and European? Consider whether BAME students feel represented by their curriculum and expand your range of examples and authors.

Rules of the Game

- + **anticipate the likely needs of students.** Find out about the demographics of students, including their ethnicities, educational backgrounds and how many commute to campus
- + **make the language of HE more accessible.** For example, rename 'Office Hours' as 'Student Drop-in Hours'. Do this in collaboration with students, particularly first- generation scholars
- + **make academic expectations clear throughout.** Embed regular discussions of degree classification systems and what makes for a 'good' degree
- + **support students through their first assignment and receiving their first feedback.** For student-centred resources relating to feedback we would recommend the Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (Winstone and Nash, 2016)
- + **signpost relevant support services regularly to all students.** Timetable opportunities for students to get to know support staff and the services available, including study skills teams, student wellbeing and other services.

Final conclusions

The hidden curriculum potentially undermines a successful transition into HE. One of the most insidious things about the hidden curriculum is that it is hidden to us as educators. As academics we know the rules of the game and have internalised the values and conventions of HE. It is almost impossible for educators to imagine not knowing these norms; we have passed through a threshold of understanding we cannot go back from. What seems obvious to us as teachers may be bewildering to our students. However, if we are to create truly inclusive degree programmes we must confront the hidden curriculum in all its manifestations. We hope that Nathan, Lydia and Kwame's experiences have exposed some of the ways that students experience the hidden curriculum during transition. We urge educators to adopt this empathy-driven approach to addressing the hidden curriculum in their local contexts. This requires us to see students as individuals with unique experiences, and not to reduce them to the sum of their demographic characteristics. All students will experience the hidden curriculum to some extent, and no two students experience the same hidden curriculum. We call on programme teams to address the hidden curriculum in partnership with students, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. It is only by seeing our campuses through their eyes that we can identify the hidden curriculum, which is the first step to improving the university experience for all students.

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Figures and Legends

Figure 1: The Hidden Curriculum exists in the space between University Education and Student Life Experiences. We separate the HC into two domains; ‘Sense of Belonging’ and ‘Rules of the Game’.

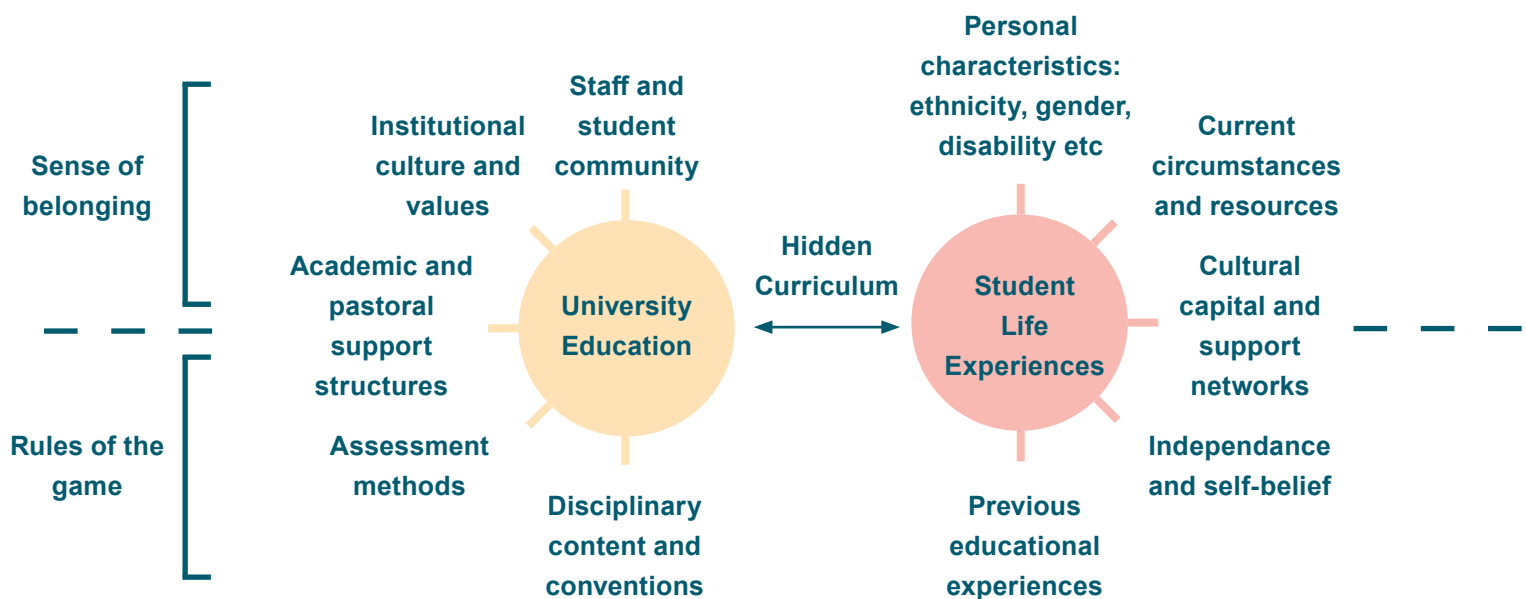


Figure 2: The hidden curriculum is not equally experienced by all students. ‘New students’ are more likely to be working class, BAME, first-generation scholars and combining study with work (Leese, 2010). They are more likely to experience a greater hidden curriculum than more educationally advantaged students.

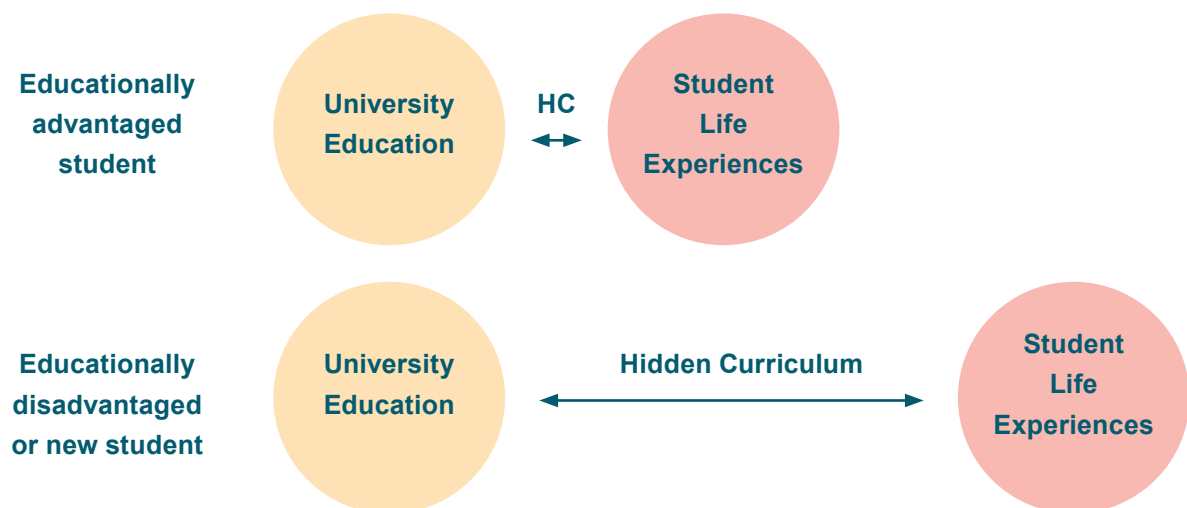


Figure 3: The hidden curriculum is an individual experience. Our three students experience the hidden curriculum differently, as they have different life experiences. Nathan and Kwame may experience a more significant hidden curriculum than Lydia, but she still experiences it. Note that we have positioned Rachel on this diagram as part of the university education; she is not a neutral figure, and her relationship between each of the three students may contribute significantly to how they experience the hidden curriculum.

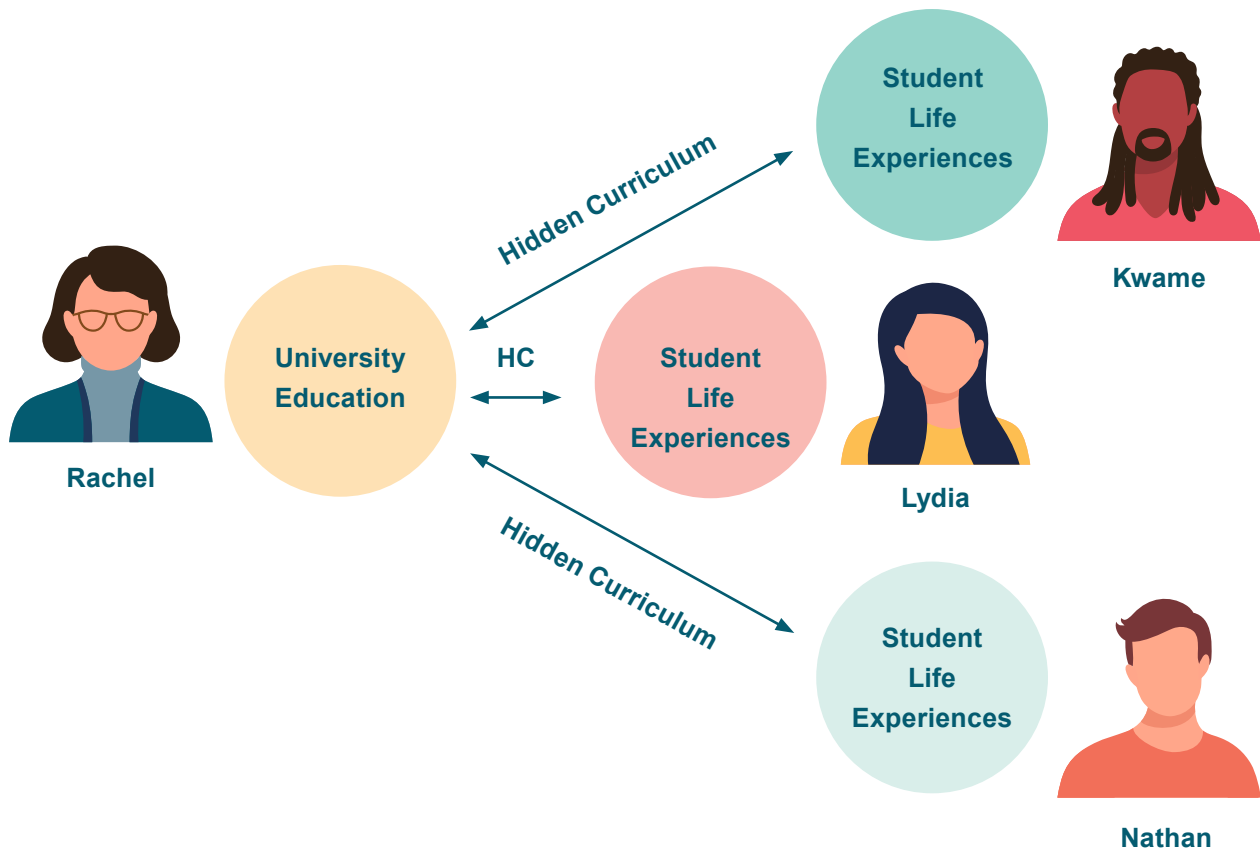
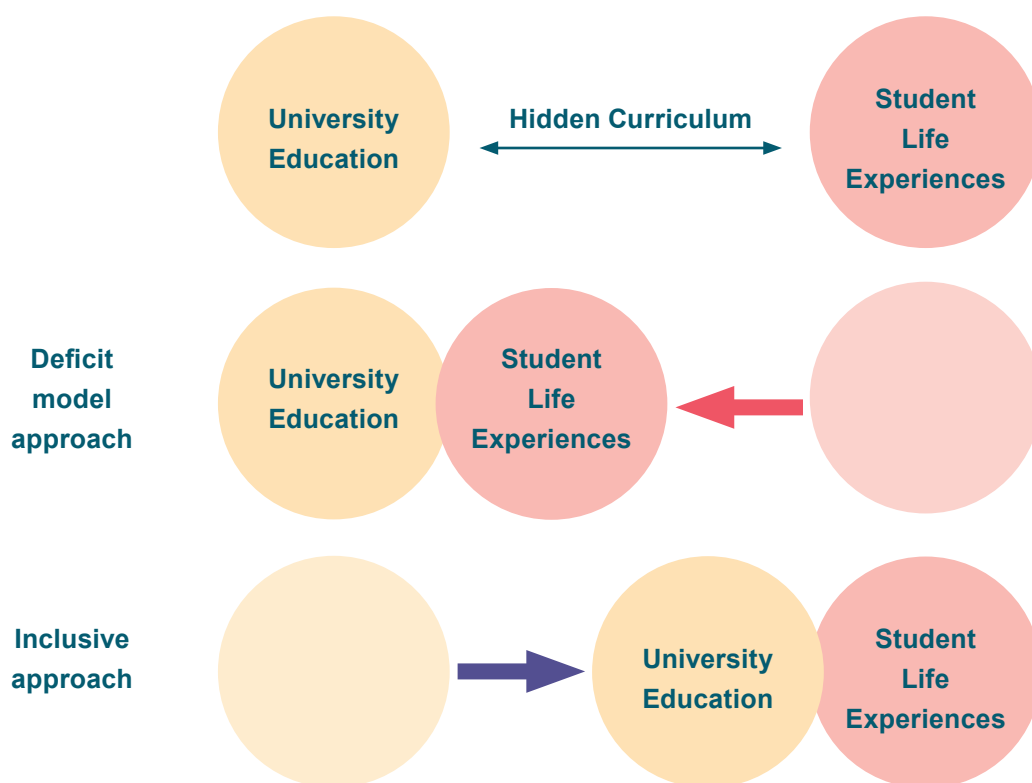


Figure 4: Reducing the impact of the hidden curriculum can be done from either a deficit model or an inclusive standpoint. In the deficit model it is the responsibility of the student to adjust to the norms of the university. A more inclusive approach requires the university and its staff to adjust to accommodate the experiences and needs of the student body.



Still the pedagogy of the oppressed? Going beyond the hidden curriculum to reimagine effective higher education provision for estranged and care experienced students

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Introduction

In January 2019 the authors of this paper embarked on a collaborative research project to explore the factors affecting access, retention and graduate outcomes for students with a background of care or family estrangement (Stevenson et al, 2020). The findings and recommendations commented on significant aspects of higher education (HE) provision, including financial support, accommodation and wellbeing services, but it did not reference how elements of learning and teaching, and specifically the curriculum, were perceived by these students. This is identified as a gap, which on further reflection also exists in the literature, and which this paper now seeks to address.

To this end, the qualitative data has been deductively re-analysed to provide a commentary that links the curriculum and the educational experiences of students with a background of care or family estrangement. This will be discussed within two themes: **meritocracy in higher education** and the promotion of values of individual responsibility, entrepreneurship and hard work; and the normalised reliance on **traditional personal networks** such as families to support engagement in the curriculum. This will then be supplemented by a short literature review, which is deliberately placed following the themes emerging from initial research. The review aims to address pedagogical aspects missing from the focus of the earlier study.

This further evidence concludes that the onus of responsibility is still placed with students rather than by HE providers who should be addressing significant infrastructure needs concerning how to support those from care-experienced backgrounds and those estranged from their families. Moreover, the emphasis on increasing instrumentality and competency appears to result in more elements of the HE experience being hidden and this nullifies addressing social inequalities. The literature also signals a possible link between how the accepted explicit curriculum intentionally, and unintentionally, socialises students to adhere to interests of dominant groups, thus reproducing further social division. The authors refer to both hidden student experiences and the hidden curriculum throughout and question whether one, or both, should be exposed.

The chapter ends with a call to action and a manifesto for practical change in which all become learners in higher education. The lack of progress made in the sector is telling, especially when considering that over 50 years ago, Freire (1968) in his visionary tome *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, described an emancipatory process so eloquently:

“Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the student-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.” (p. 80)

Definitions

Unite Foundation-funded research highlighted that care leavers, care-experienced and estranged students do not form a homogenous group, nor are they homogenous as a sole entity; many have very different contexts and experiences, which render some students more hidden than others. An “expansive” approach to definitions was suggested as a recommendation of this work (Stevenson et al, 2020, 11, 20) and this will also be applied here. Specifically, Tormey (2019) suggests that ‘care experienced’ should be used, rather than ‘care leaver’ or ‘looked after’. Here, a care-experienced student is described as,

“an individual who experienced any form of formal care, at any point in their life, and for any duration including those adopted shortly after birth, those looked after in early childhood and those who are commonly referred to as care leavers (leaving care after their 14th or 16th birthday). In this regard, the term care-experienced not only refers to a time when an individual was cared for or looked after, or the time when they became a care leaver when this formal care ended (aged between 14-16 years) but also the individual’s sense of their experiences” (Tormey, 2019, p. 80).

In addition, Spacey’s (2019) work on estrangement also acknowledges that estranged students are a diverse and heterogeneous group and she applies Agllias’s broad definitions (2016) that define an estranged student as someone who has: “no, or limited, emotional and or physical interactions with one or more family members, regardless of how this developed, and feels in some way dissatisfied with this arrangement” (2017, 8). A differentiation is then made between an ‘estrangee’ and an ‘estranger’ based on the element of choice.

The importance of expansive definitions is useful when discussing the curriculum. Knight stipulates that the curriculum is much more than content and can be defined as “a set of purposeful, intended experiences” (2001, 369), which also incorporate structures and pedagogy. With reference to the hidden curriculum, Orón Semper and Blasco (2018) draw on the following definition: “what is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction” (Sambell and McDowell, 1998, 391–392 in Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018, 483). They see the hidden curriculum as a result of focusing on the

technical and transactional aspects of learning and a competency-based model of HE. This can be addressed by making the hidden curriculum explicit through teaching, not by giving attention to individualised student experiences. We adopt this starting point for our paper, again noting the reference to ‘educational experiences’ pertaining to those students who are care experienced or estranged.

Primary data collection: method

The Unite Foundation research set out to answer two research questions:

- 1 What factors affect access, retention and graduate outcomes for students with a background of care or family estrangement?
- 2 What practical recommendations would support positive outcomes for this group?

The overarching aims of the research were to understand the causes of differential outcomes for care-experienced and estranged students, identify existing interventions supporting these students and their efficacy and make recommendations for new / refined practices / practical interventions. A mixed methods approach was adopted to gather the perspectives of students and other stakeholders, in order to draw out differences and intricacies of their experiences, and to develop guidance for the sector. This included a short literature review of policy and academic and grey literature; secondary data analysis of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data; a three-step Delphi survey to stakeholders; focus groups and interviews with students to explore their experiences; six case studies of higher education institutions (HEIs), comprised of interviews with staff, to ascertain the practices of universities; and a one-day summit for stakeholders. A total of 47 students and 128 staff members participated in the overall research. The findings of this research made few references to teaching and learning, and specifically the curriculum. This may well be a result of the focus attributed by the funders and the design of the research instruments. To explore this gap further, the evidence collated for this chapter has re-analysed qualitative data from 24 of the interviews/focus groups to look for themes relating to the concept of a hidden curriculum. This is then supplemented by the additional literature review which sought to corroborate or disconfirm elements of the initial research.

Key findings from the primary data

The first identified theme relevant to a learning and teaching context is Meritocracy. Meritocracy in HE promotes values of individual responsibility, entrepreneurship and hard work; however, meritocracy hides structural inequalities and shifts responsibility for success and failure to individuals (Mendick, Allen et al, 2018). We argue that these values are entrenched within the hidden curriculum. In the Unite Foundation research, care-experienced and estranged students strove to embody these values through various means, with varying degrees of success.

Meritocracy in context

Firstly, consider the complex circumstances which impact negatively on students' ability to engage with a curriculum which is designed for a normative student experience. The pressure to attain and succeed (not accounting for the pressure to exceed and excel) should be placed in the context of significant financial instability for some students. Concerns about paying rent, homelessness and having money to buy food were common. Receipt of grants, bursaries and funds were also pervasive for both student groups and cited as essential for increasing the likelihood of retention and progression. One student explained that, "there were points in the last academic year that I've had to steal food from work because I just didn't have money". While both care-experienced and estranged students were dealing with complex financial situations, estranged students were particularly at risk and, at times, further disadvantaged by a limited knowledge of institutional financial support.

The hidden curriculum makes assumptions about routine access to the essential provisions for learning and teaching. An estranged student living in catered accommodation explained, "for a couple of days ... I couldn't make it back to college for my meals because of how my lectures were scheduled". A care-experienced student stated, "I got given the government grant which I used to pay for like laptops and things throughout university and all my stationery and travel". Signposting of support services is often a component of local inductions and structured academic advisor provision, sometimes embedded within the curriculum. This evidence highlights a need to adopt an expansive stance within and beyond this provision.

Some students in this sample talked about withdrawing due to financial pressures and the impact on their wellbeing. In one example, where no financial support was available from the institution, the student recalls "I decided to drop out of uni then because I was working 20 hours a week". However, even when students are experiencing challenging times, they are hesitant to withdraw from their studies because of the effort and hard work they have already invested, as one student who contemplated withdrawing from their studies noted, "I've done too much [to] get in [university]... I know that I really want to do it... I would never drop out". Equally, one student explained that withdrawal was not an option, as her financial stability was a direct result of the financial support from the university and student loans. The students often discussed resits, deferrals, extensions, suspensions and withdrawal, and it is clear that sound advice is essential and often intertwined with financial pressure. In some cases, dropping out was described as "the best thing for me to do", which can be at odds with institutional strategies for retention. All these examples highlight the interconnections between wellbeing and engagement, which should be inclusive and not be based on assumptions about the behaviours of dominant student groups, which often mirror the prevailing hegemony in HE.

While the need for support and guidance is evidenced above, espoused meritocratic values can lead to students choosing not to disclose their care background or estrangement because they did not want to be viewed differently; either as a failure or to receive special treatment. Nondisclosure has a significant impact on the levels of support for learning and teaching that such students could access. For example, the individual responsibility of balancing financial stability with long-term educational goals led some students to make compromises that had a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing.

Meritocracy and hard work

Students from care-experienced and estranged backgrounds stated that they often had to prove their worth in order to access funding or bursaries offered by universities or other charitable organisations. One student had won a scholarship because their “exam results were really good”. Another student expressed their frustration as they had to present themselves as “I’m [a] really hardworking person who’s in such a difficult situation, please help me”. Often access to help and support was only granted after they had shared their personal life stories multiple times to multiple people to demonstrate how hardworking and deserving they were. Students also actively sought out volunteering opportunities, especially in relation to the care system. They took advantage of work placements and study abroad schemes. One such scheme in continental Europe helped one student form “a whole new mind and open mindset about the world entirely”. There was also a strong focus on entrepreneurship with one student having run their “own business for the last seven, eight years” and who aspired to have their “own fostering agency” one day. The personal circumstances of these groups of students meant that they had to “prepare for... life after uni while being at uni”. While much of this preparation involved housing and financial stability, as evidenced above, much of it involved extracurricular activities that would help them develop skills that would make them more employable. Working long hours in paid employment, in addition to studying, was the norm for these students. This put pressure on their ability to engage with the designed curriculum (time and energy), afford themselves of any extra-curricular opportunities and implied an obligation to accept that the curriculum was reflecting their needs, regardless of their lived experiences. These examples can also be applied to the notion of individual responsibility and that these students needed to evidence ‘hard work’ in ways that were not expected of their peers.

The high value placed on education means that failure was not an option and the route to success was through “working hard” and learning to “manage yourself properly”. Hard work for these students encompassed not just academic achievements but their ability to overcome significant personal challenges to make it to, and stay at, university. After describing some of their academic and personal challenges, a student stated, “it took me so long to get where I am, and I didn’t really want to give it up”. These students identified how past negative experiences had helped them develop positive characteristics and skills that were helping them succeed in academia such as “emotional resilience”, “willpower”, “independence”, “drive”, “ambition” and being “goal oriented”. A student who was about to graduate encapsulated this hard work ethos when they said, “I’ve got my certificate, I’ve got my degree, and I think the willpower that it took to get there has been immense”. This view of students as being highly skilled runs counter to the deficit model often framed by educators, officials and policymakers.

Positively reframing individual responsibility

For many of these students, HE represented “a way out” of difficult life experiences. A student who was the first in their family to go to university said “this [university] is a chance for me to truly change my life and a cycle”. University not only represented a “form of escape”, but a route to more “opportunities in general” such as; financial stability, secure employment and “personal development”. This is summed up by one student who said, “I want to be able to create a life for myself that no one can take away from me”. It was evident that interviewees saw themselves as owners of their own success and failure. This individualised responsibility is a cornerstone of the meritocratic system that supposedly rewards effort and talent, arguably replicated within curriculum design and assessment. However, the discourse of meritocracy also acts to obscure wider inequalities within education, the labour market and other societal spheres that are beyond the realm of an individual to change (Mendick, Allen et al, 2018).

An alternative view is that these students were reimagining survival as success. One estranged student positively reframed the necessity to work alongside study, and be astute at financial planning, and noted: “I think it really builds your work ethic because I know that I need to work and I’ve always had a part-time job or multiple part-time jobs”. While these skills were well developed out of necessity (“I was always able to keep on top of things, but I think that does come from having to do so much when I was so young”) sometimes academic skills required more support (“I was constantly having to cram and I didn’t learn very good [revision] techniques”). However, hard work and resilience were also key coping mechanisms as one student explained “I... do loads of things at once... because I felt so alone” while another student said, “I deal with my issues by putting them in to my work”. However, this approach can have a negative impact on the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of students. One student said “to be honest I just stress myself out and overwork in order to not have to think about anything else”, while another explained “I... [was] overworking myself so I got very exhausted very quickly at various points”.

Employability and individual futures

In order to be included in the curriculum-led employability agenda, students are asked continually to develop skills and competencies related to the workplace. A curriculum focus on professional status can also be overwhelming for care-experienced and estranged students: “I’m struggling to think of career and where I’d like to be because of the necessity of having a roof over my head after I graduate so I feel like I will have to just jump on anything, even if it’s not what I want”. These points challenge normative assumptions hidden in the curriculum about professional development and the routes and barriers to graduate employment. Recent policy drivers, which focus on graduate outcomes, have exerted considerable influence on curriculum design (eg mandatory placement provision, work-related learning), but without applying a robust consideration of how this might exclude some students. This extends to expectations about the importance of extra-curricular activity for graduate outcomes (Higher Education Academy, 2009), in which student engagement is increasing (Neves 2018). Students in this sample were sometime unable to engage in hidden ‘extras’ due to financial

constraints (academic societies membership fees or tickets for formal balls), therefore perpetuating the cycle of privilege and subtle exclusion.

The secondary identified theme in this primary data refers to **Networks**. The normalised reliance on traditional personal networks such as families to support engagement in the curriculum was viewed as pervasive by students. The absence of these networks impacted on every stage of their learning experience and there were many unspoken assumptions about the support these networks provided that, when absent, led to feelings of isolation and exclusions from other students. The hidden financial costs of a degree that are often covered by family members also appeared to hinder these groups of students significantly.

Addressing academic isolation

This impact was most notable in the case of those from estranged backgrounds. Students were often self-reliant, with a number referring to not having access to general advice and information and the need to be “proactive in teaching myself and knowing exactly what comes next”. The most difficult challenge of estrangement was described by one student as “not having anyone to talk to about a crisis” and having “no one to fall back on”. Several participants expressed feelings of isolation and exclusions from their peers, especially at the point of starting university and moving into halls of accommodation. In other cases, students referred to perceptions of being an outsider in the wider context of HE: “I had this idea in my head, I was like people like me don’t go to university...think I do not fit in”.

The willingness and confidence of students to share their background was a significant barrier in forging new relationships. However, despite having anxieties, there were examples of individuals who felt more empowered after speaking with others and some friendship networks were deemed to be invaluable: “I’ve had to somewhat network, make friends with people and just be honest enough with them... I think I’ve had to gain the confidence to just be very open about my situation, even if I am anxious during these times of year”. A number of care-experienced and estranged students who accessed peer support schemes stated that they were useful for establishing networks and for sharing experiences. Individuals from non-familial networks were potentially transformative figures in the access, success and progression of care-experienced and estranged students in higher education.

Staff-student relationships

In several cases, staff members were given credit for recognising students' personal situations and for providing knowledge and experience for students to draw upon, which would not have been accessible otherwise. A care-experienced student described "a number of lecturers...who saw my potential and really helped me flourish academically...I just think that when I had that sort of goal in mind and I had those people supporting me that I was able to do really well." However, this contrasted with the experiences of other students who felt alienated by their supervisor's misguided assumptions and lack of understanding about their needs, which led to feelings of "imposter syndrome" and a deterioration in relations. Tailored training for staff, which is shaped by students from care-experience and estranged backgrounds, was a key recommendation proposed by a few participants.

The importance of having a named contact to navigate the (in)flexibility of the curriculum was identified by some care-experienced and estranged students as a factor that affected their success at university. Students reported that having a curriculum structure that was responsive to individuals' needs was key for supporting their progression. In a few cases, the option to study part-time allowed students to work and become more financially secure, for example, to save money to fund their degree and prepare for their transition after higher education. The flexibility of switching mode of study during the completion of their studies benefitted another student: "it was ideal for me at the time...and for a lot of people in my class [studying part-time] ...working or going back to uni to change careers or whatever...but I quickly realised that I was doing quite well, and I quickly realised that I wanted to do this quicker".

Literature review: method

To complement the analysis of the primary data and in order to give emphasis to pedagogical aspects which had not been part of the original study, a scoping literature review process was undertaken concerning aspects of the hidden curriculum. This gave attention to learning and teaching aspects of higher education with specific reference to both care-experienced students and those estranged from families. A range of search strings were used, combining the words hidden curriculum, meritocracy, personal networks, care experienced, care leaver, and estranged students. Initially, date inclusion parameters were set to look at sources from 2018 onwards but, as this yielded very little evidence in practice, this was moved back to 2016.

Database searching and applied abstract relevancy rating found 14 very pertinent academic sources which had managed to link care experience and / or estrangement to the hidden curriculum (sometimes known as the implicit or unintended curriculum). The approach within the found research articles often treated care experience and estrangement completely separately within the literature. Various opinion pieces, thinktank reports and blogs of interest were also found within grey literature sources. These tended to highlight a report launch, a local initiative undertaken by a particular higher education provider or were issued as a call to action. While not discounted, these sources were used to provide useful background information concerning the wider policy context in which care-experienced students and those estranged from families are located; such sources did not contribute explicitly to addressing the evidence-base underpinning the hidden curriculum and students with particular demographics.

Databases accessed for scoping of literature comprised:

- + Academia Edu
- + Digital Commons
- + Education Research Complete
- + ERIC
- + Google Scholar
- + OECD iLibrary
- + PsycArticles
- + Scopus
- + Emerald, Sage, Wiley databases
- + Grey literature sources (HEPI, Wonkhe, Universities UK).

Key findings within recent literature (2016 onwards)

There is a **dearth of research**, especially longitudinally (which is virtually non-existent) into how the hidden curriculum influences estranged students and care-experienced students. There is broad research into the hidden curriculum, per se, (referred to by Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018) which builds upon work that has been ongoing since the 1970s when the term “hidden curriculum” was first used by Jackson (1970). However, virtually all found literature which has any specificity to those with care experience and / or estranged students refers to the lack of appropriate research and therefore to the slow development of a meaningful evidence-base. Hence, Spacey (2019) alludes to her research about experiences of estranged students as filling a gap. This is confirmed by Key (2019) and Taylor and Costa (2019). The recent work by Stevenson et al (2020) into factors influencing a range of outcomes for university students with a background of care or family estrangement, on which this chapter is based, corroborates the notion that there is a fundamental lack of research into these areas.

Lots of inadequate data and crude assumptions are made about care-experienced and estranged students within HE. Key (2019) contends that the quantitative nature of existing research into estranged students' experiences cannot examine underpinning nuances. She contends that: "It fails to explore the ways that issues may interact, intersect and complicate the experiences of individuals" (p99). Spacey (2019) asserts that engaging vulnerable groups or marginalised communities in research about their own experiences does need to be well-considered and this might explain why less risky and therefore cruder forms of information-gathering appear to have sovereignty. Tormey (2019) uses work with those from a care-experienced background to demonstrate that differing definitions and inexact terminology can lead to inadequate data being collected, which has considerable influence on the journey into higher education and beyond for some groups of students. He asserts that: "As practitioners and corporate parents, we must exchange knowledge to ensure care-experienced people can reach beyond to access higher education" (p88).

A common theme emerging from analysis of found materials concerns the notion that the **hidden curriculum should be made explicit if real transformation is to be achieved**. Biesta (2016) notes that it is essential that the teacher recognises how their own learning and experiences mediate the student-teacher interaction. This builds from the work of Freire (1993), which although published and republished many times, was originally written over half a century ago. It is not merely a one-way process of knowledge transmittance between teacher and student, in which the teacher becomes a vacuous vessel seeking to facilitate the autonomous learning of the student. Such approaches hinder the transformative possibilities of HE with no real insights into teacher-student worlds, nor does such vacuity acknowledge how these interactions might create changes in their own respective practices or learning. When creating an effective learning context, inter-relationships and setting clear boundaries play pivotal roles, too. Boundaries are defined as four interdependent pillars of learning within the UNESCO report *Learning: the treasure within* (Delors et al, 1996, in Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018). Indeed, the report stresses the need to give priority to 'learning to live together' as the key facet for developing a better understanding of other learners through project-based approaches that recognise interdependence. This need to surface learning by bringing together personal situations, interdependence and values can be interpreted as moving the 'hidden' into the 'explicit'.

Mainstreaming the hidden curriculum by recognising that learning is not only dependent on students' ability to navigate, but is far more complex, is also supported by a range of authors within the literature (see Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018; Tormey, 2019; Spacey, 2019). The found literature contends that **contemporary treatment of the student 'experience' still obliges the student to change**, primarily via the adoption of specific skills. Furthermore, this technical model of higher education reduces the role of teaching from focusing on one of its key purposes; namely of being concerned about inter-relationships. Orón Semper and Blasco, (2018) contend: "that education should not be separated from life and interpersonal relationships...there is no place for a HC because the curriculum explicitly includes all personal dimensions and is not reduced to a mere technical transfer of knowledge and / or competencies." (p488).

The move towards a competency-based model of higher education has resulted in more elements of the experience being hidden and this nullifies addressing social inequalities. When considering social work, in particular, Bhuyan, Bejan and Jeyapal (2017) suggest that the hidden curriculum in social work education reflects wider neoliberal market-driven demands that prioritise task-oriented goals which, in turn, mask social inequalities by focusing on competence-based ways of learning, per se. They note that “social work’s focus on competencies reinforces a hierarchical binary between clinical and social justice skills; social workers learn that justice theories do not translate well to ‘skills’ and thus are not useful in everyday social work practice” (p386). Not surprisingly, the prioritisation of skills therefore narrows the knowledge domain of would-be professionals. Orón Semper and Blasco, (2018) contribute an interesting additional view to the competency debate. They contend that the shift to competency-based education assesses the learning by considering how well the students solve problems in the external environment; hence, internal factors influencing learning get overlooked or lost in translation. They argue that this means that a hidden “interpersonal dimension of the learning experience remains unaddressed and unacknowledged” (p486). Høgdal et al (2019) link the hidden aspects of the curriculum with the ability to avoid noticing. They contend that it is the uncritical acceptance of routinised approaches within the classroom and a focus on technical delivery of content, rather than the ‘why’ something is being delivered in a particular way; hence, scant thought is given to whom might be advantaged or disadvantaged by the formal curriculum and how such practices send subtle messages to students about which approaches to learning are valued by the higher education provider.

Consequently, a dominant theme in the found literature concerned the recognition that **the explicit curriculum intentionally and unintentionally** socialises students to adhere to interests of the dominant groups. Bhuyan, Bejan and Jeyapal (2017) within their critique of social work education noted that the neoliberal lens through which social work is now viewed has led to commodification into standardised competencies and technical skills underpinned by the logic of cultural capital production with a focus on individual assimilation and behaviour. They describe how this process grows graduates “who are doing diversity work; they are critical; they are taking the socially just approach. This appeal to mainstream social and institutional rhetoric that centers (and superficially embraces) diversity does not require structural or social change” (p387). Cox (2018) notes that there is even a hidden curriculum relating to aspects of space, in which messages conveyed unintentionally can create or reinforce inequalities in learning. Orón Semper and Blasco (2018) assert that despite the move towards a more student-centred model of learning, the student still remains the focus of change, not the institution or overarching culture.

This literature review builds upon the previous themes of meritocracy and networks emerging from the original study to provide more pedagogical emphases. The review demonstrates that the prevailing explicit and hidden curricula in higher education allow narrow ideological representations of social justice to dovetail as a form of competency-focused transactional social value; meaning that parallel institutional practices continue to reproduce social division unhindered and unchallenged. As Lim (2016) contends,

“ideologies contain elements within themselves that see through to the heart of the unequal benefits of a society and at one and the same time tend also to acquiesce in the relations and practices that maintain the hegemony of dominant classes” (p164).

The literature implies that care-experienced learners and students estranged from their families are some of the unfortunate recipients of this torpor within HE, characterised by failure to acknowledge the continuation of divisive social reproduction and subsequent lack of meaningful action.

Our concerns and questions

The further analysis of primary data from the original study, alongside the additional literature review that examined pedagogical themes more explicitly, has raised many more questions and concerns that anticipated. These comprise:

- + should the hidden curriculum be exposed, as implied by the wider analysis, given that there is also specific reference to fear of disclosure identified by both estranged students and care-experienced students, many of whom wish to preserve anonymity about their previous lives, in order to promote more positive future identities?
- + why is the focus consistently upon student experience rather than on structural systems and / or institutional processes and what is the impact?
- + is the ‘hidden’ actually the curriculum of everyone, but presented only via the dominant hegemony?
- + why is writing an article the conduit, rather than by taking action?
- + why is the notion of reflexivity not routinely applied to pedagogic reflection so that evidence informs action?
- + why is this still not being addressed within institutions (lack of care or motivation / lack of insight / privilege and bias / not ‘noticing’)?

This chapter therefore presents a call to action to respond to these questions by examining our evidence base and scrutinising our manifesto to reduce the pedagogical impact of the hidden curriculum.

A manifesto to reduce the pedagogic impact of the hidden curriculum

Overarching theme	Sub-theme	Proposed action(s)
Meritocracy	Constructively exposing disclosure/non-disclosure	+ facilitators to deliberately disclose, at the earliest appropriate opportunity, their own experiences of learning, their trajectory into learning and teaching role(s), motivation for studying the particular subject area, the 'why' of their particular approaches to pedagogy and learning.
	Designing a fully integrated curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + facilitators to design an integrated curriculum that does not rely upon assumptions about the learners' ability to continually have access to pursuing 'extra mile' or extra curricula activities outside of the explicit curriculum. + •facilitators to use the widest possible experiences of a heterogeneous learner population to critique and create positive collaborative opportunities for demonstrating and / or enhancing personal skills development in addition to subject-specific knowledge. + designing the curriculum with an explicitly stated collaborative ethos which infiltrates learner engagement and underpins all assessment processes.
	Employability and individual futures	+ reframing learning opportunities within the curriculum to move away from preparing graduates on masse for achieving a particular level of professional status; to be replaced by a focus on wider aspects of graduate employment and soft skills capture and enhancement.
Networks	Addressing academic isolation	+ development of an in-curriculum peer mentoring scheme, in which both facilitators and learners have opportunity to be mentors and mentees on an equal basis and not hierarchically grounded.
	Staff-student relationships	+ producing and delivering tailored training for facilitators and other academic staff about learner journeys into, through and out of HE, which is shaped by learners from heterogeneous backgrounds and delivered by course alumni.
	Curriculum structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + creating a curriculum structure which offers maximum flexibility to respond to pragmatic changes in learner's needs whilst maintaining a collaborative cohort identity + resisting the need to populate more of the curriculum with competencies as these nullify addressing social inequalities by obfuscating the 'why' of learning, supressing analysis of 'how' real learning (both generic and subject specific) takes place within the curriculum and competency-based models replace these fundamentals for engagement with the 'what' of learning, ie acquisition of factual knowledge.

This manifesto draws together the key themes from this chapter and presents proposed pedagogical actions. We ask that readers make time to self-evaluate institutional responses to the hidden curriculum by mapping these proposals against current practices. We encourage evaluators to start by discussing with key stakeholders, and specifically to consider who the aforementioned ‘facilitators’ might be?

Conclusions

This chapter has presented primary evidence and an additional literature review relating the hidden curriculum to care-experienced and estranged students. It has focused on two overarching themes - meritocracy and networks - to highlight how the experiences of these students are marginalised within the design of learning and teaching. We have developed our argument based on the principles of inclusivity and highlighted how specific changes within the curriculum should support this. Although the literature on oppressive pedagogy and an excluding curriculum has been known for some time, actions in this regard still appear to be on the ‘too hard to do list’. This chapter concludes by presenting a call to action to disrupt normative assumptions of student experiences and to adapt pedagogy accordingly.

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Autism and higher education: a nested hidden curricula

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Introduction

This paper is offered from the position of being an autistic academic and educational developer with broad experience in developing curricula, and teaching and supporting others in the development of curricula. Through the lens of my lived experience of autism, I engage with the concept of the hidden curriculum both in terms of how it speaks to the experiences of autistic students in higher education (HE) and through reflection on how my autism has framed my approach and preferences in curriculum design. This leads me to suggestions for the characteristics of more autism-friendly curricula.

Positionality

In offering an insider and lived-experience perspective on autism and HE, I'm working in support of the principle of "nothing about us without us" (Charlton, 1998). Scholarship around autism should include autistic voices.

In writing about autism there are tensions to navigate. A dominant, medical discourse frames autism as a neuro-biological developmental disorder; autistic people are defined by deficits. The nascent field of critical autism studies (O'Dell et al, 2016) argues that autism cannot be defined solely by universal diagnostic criteria; there is also a culture (or cultures) of autism shaped by a multiplicity of lived experiences that vary from context to context. Framed within a neurodiversity perspective, autism is part of the variety of human life, not a set of deficits to be cured. For some, including myself, autism is a key part of positive identity, but if we accept that the cultural experience of autism varies from context to context then it follows that each autistic student in HE is uniquely autistic. This tension broadly reflects the distinction between the medical and social models of disability.

Autism intersects with other aspects of identity and life, so we need to pay attention to how autism is mediated through (eg) gender (Bargiela, Steward and Mandy, 2016), ethnicity (Burkett, 2020), sexuality (Gilmour, Schalomon and Smith, 2012), other disabilities and so on. Each autistic student's experiences of autism and of university will be unique to them.

Prevalence of autism

Notwithstanding the tensions involved in engaging with work that defines autism principally in clinical terms, it is still necessary to offer an overview of the prevalence of autism and that work has mainly been presented through the lens of the medical model. Describing autism prevalence is complicated as processes of diagnosing and naming autism have changed through time and vary from country to country (Zeldovich, 2018). It is also recognised that there is underrepresentation of women in autism diagnoses due to bias in diagnostic instruments (Haney, 2016) and of minoritised people due to structural inequalities in access to health provision (Begeer et al, 2009; Donohue et al, 2019).

The World Health Organisation estimates that one in 160 people is autistic based on averaging various global studies (WHO, 2019), while acknowledging that in much of the Global South there is very limited information and/or diagnosis. At national levels, in the USA one in 59 children (1.7%) have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (1 in 37 boys; 1 in 151 girls [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018]) and it is estimated that there are around 700,000 autistic people in the UK, a prevalence of 1.1% (National Autistic Society, no date).

Autism and higher education

The proportion of autistic students in HE appears to be growing. In the period between 2015/16 and 2017/18 the number of students in UK HE disclosing social communication/autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) as a sole disability has risen from 8,230 (0.4%) to 11,400 (0.5%) (Advance HE, 2019). In 2017/18 a further 31,300 UK HE students declared two or more disabilities and, as ASD is often experienced alongside other conditions, for example anxiety, it is reasonable to assume a proportion of those with multiple conditions are autistic. A recent large study from the Netherlands (Bakker et al, 2019) found that the proportion of students with ASD at a major university increased from 0.20% to 0.45% between 2010 and 2016 and that comorbidity (multiple disabilities) was more common for autistic students (24.7%) than those with other disabilities (11.7%). These figures reflect what students choose to disclose, and some may choose not to (Cox et al, 2017). When considering the challenges of getting diagnosed, the under-diagnosis of women and minoritised people, the complexities of coming out as autistic (Davidson and Henderson, 2010), the continued phenomenon of late diagnosis into adulthood and the fact that many autistic students do not identify as disabled (Shattuck et al, 2014) it is reasonable to assume that the prevalence of autism among students in HE is higher than that officially disclosed and reported. There may be more autistic students in a classroom than may be indicated on a class list.

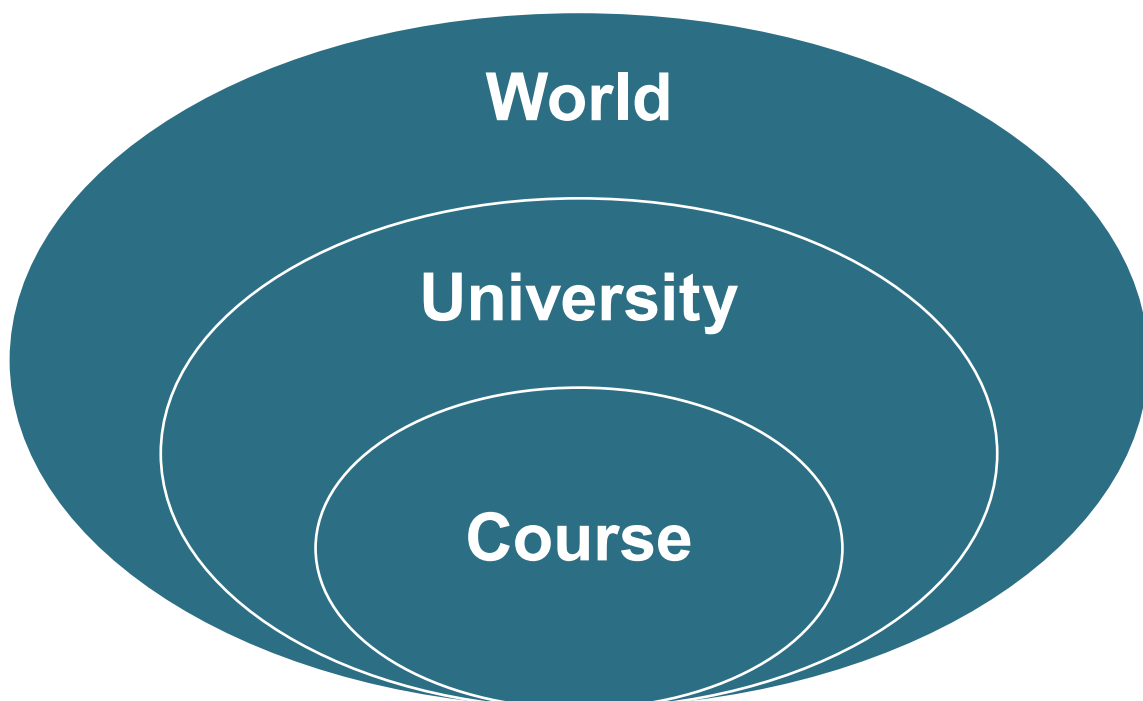
Analysis of UK HE sector equality data (Advance HE, 2019: 102) shows a degree attainment gap of four percentage points for social communication/autism spectrum disorder students compared to non-disabled students. In 2017/18, 72.6% of students disclosing social communication/autism spectrum disorder gained a good degree (First or 2:1) compared to 74.7% of all disabled students and 76.6% of non-disabled students. For students disclosing two or more conditions the degree attainment gap is 6.9 percentage points (Advance HE, 2019).

Autism and the hidden curriculum

A starting point for this paper was the observation that in autism literature the term “hidden curriculum” refers to the unwritten rules of social behaviour that exist in the world at large (Myles, Trautman and Schelvan, 2004) or, as Endow (2010) expressed it: “social information that is not directly taught but is assumed that everybody knows.” This is a broader meaning than its established use in HE contexts (eg Bergenhenegouewen, 1997; Margolis, 2001) where the focus tends to be on the hidden curricula of the university and the course of study. In both literatures there is a commonality that what is hidden is a set of assumptions, expectations and modes of behaviour that are not usually formally communicated (Alsubaie, 2015).

Bringing these perspectives together, I suggest that, for autistic students, the hidden curriculum can be seen as a nested concept which applies to their experiences of: the world at large, the institutional setting of the university and their specific course of study.

Figure 1: Autism and Higher Education – Nested Hidden Curricula



The World

Autism literature has described the hidden curriculum as a set of essential social skills, modes of behaviour and protocols that are not taught directly but which are needed to function in mainstream society (eg Myles and Simpson, 2001). This can be extended to include more practical skills such as how to use public services and get around independently. This observation and naming of a hidden curriculum is necessary as there is much about how the world functions that autistic people just don't get. This feeds a sense of otherness so strong that it has become a unifying positive identity for many autistic people – we are as aliens living on the “wrong planet” (Badcock, 2015).

Seeing the world as the outer layer of the hidden curricula that autistic students experience is an acknowledgment that each day brings this sense of otherness. The cognitive and affective load of simply being in the world is significant and can be debilitating. For HE students this load may be ameliorated if they are commuter students, still living at home in the same place that they're studying. For those that have moved to a new town or city and are perhaps establishing themselves as independent adults for the first time, navigating a new place, meeting new people, getting fed and keeping well are going to take a huge effort, even before we start layering in the university and the course of study.

The University

In addressing the hidden curriculum of the university and its campus it is important to consider the whole student experience. The taken-for-granted unpredictability, social expectations and sensory environment of mainstream education provision place considerable demands on autistic students (Goodall, 2018; Van Hees, Moysen and Royers, 2014). The transition into and through university, understanding social rules in academic and non-academic activities and learning to deal with what for many students will be a newly independent life all contribute to the stress of the university experience (Glennon, 2001). While being confident in their academic abilities, one study found only 41% of autistic students felt they had the social skills to succeed at university (Gelbar, Shefcyk and Rechow, 2015). A further recent study of experiences of autistic students in UK found that autistic students' efforts to fit in and appear normal - also known in the autism literature as “masking” – can lead to social withdrawal and heightened anxiety (Gurbuz et al, 2019). Fear of doing the wrong thing, and the cognitive and affective load of trying to work out what the right thing is, can make keeping to oneself the simplest strategy.

The Course

It is important to remember that in meeting the entry requirements and admissions processes for demanding programmes of higher level learning, autistic students entering higher education must have already demonstrated considerable success in their prior educational settings. On enrolment, autistic students share many successful academic characteristics with other students but have encountered more challenges in accessing and making the transition to HE and benefit from specific support in making this transition (Bakker et al, 2019). However, issues such as sensory demand, speed of information processing, motivation, time management, working in groups and asking questions have all been seen to present additional significant challenges for autistic students in HE (Gurbuz et al, 2019).

While the academic demands may be navigable and achievable, the course environment in an HE setting will be very different to what has been experienced previously. Depending on the subject area, the mix of large, crammed lecture theatres, intimate small group settings, laboratories and workshops or the social space of the arts studio present new and varied challenges. The reduction in scheduled class time and heightened expectations for independence in learning add a further dimension. In such settings the hidden curriculum can present as a series of questions or mysteries for autistic students to resolve. What are expectations in class? How do these vary in different class settings and environments? How can autistic students focus in over-stimulating spaces? What is required by assessment briefs? How should students' questions be formulated, and how and when can they be raised?

Autism and collaborative learning

Issues around group work and collaborative learning provide a useful example to explore how autistic students.

The highest performing students are those that form the best networks of social relationships (Mittelmeier et al, 2018), be those formed within the context of a course, wider campus life or the world beyond the university. Collaborative learning approaches are widely promoted within contemporary pedagogy. This includes active and collaborative learning as a classroom strategy, the establishment of collaborative learning spaces (as in studio-based learning) and the formulation of teams of students to complete coursework assignments. It is difficult to conceive of a contemporary higher education experience which does not include significant collaborative learning. Even online distance learning has largely been transformed from an individual learning experience to one where students work collaboratively within online learning communities.

Yet persistent difficulties with social communication and social interaction comprise one of the triad of impairments that (medically) defines autism. Group work is challenging for all students, involving as it does complex interplays of cognition and emotion (Järvenoja et al, 2019). There are, though, specific challenges for autistic students including a greater demand for oracy skills, picking up on subtext and social nuance in group discussion and balancing their own intense personal interests with those of

others when negotiating topics for discussion, study and inquiry. Dealing with the “noisy education” of classrooms filled with lively chatter presents specific challenges for autistic students and others with auditory processing disorders (Smith, 2018). Autistic students may find themselves feeling almost as a slightly detached observer of groups that they find themselves in, although this can become an asset as it may mean they are listening carefully to a range of contributions and are able to spot patterns and relationships between ideas. Likewise, an autistic student’s need for clarity about decisions, responsibilities and deadlines can make a contribution to the management and success of a group, so long as it doesn’t clash with more relaxed and informal approaches of other group members.

At its worst, collaborative learning can entrench the social exclusion of autistic students and present a real barrier to their progress (Smith, 2018). At its best it can provide an opportunity for autistic students to learn and practice social skills and strategies for collaboration and to appreciate other perspectives, thereby deepening their own appreciation of the subject of study.

The inclusion of collaborative learning in HE courses of study risks being tainted for autistic students if it comes across as being aligned with a deficit model – the notion of autistics being trained up in social skills so that they can become more employable and successful in a neurotypical world. Collaborative learning is more likely to be seen as valuable if it is seen to be aligned with deepening learning about a topic of interest – the idea that in some circumstances you can learn more as an individual collaborating with others than you might by yourself. Giving autistic students special dispensation to not participate in collaborative learning, while well meaning, can be seen as exclusionary. A more positive approach lies in developing collaborative learning which opens up the hidden curriculum of group work and is inclusive to all.

Towards autism friendly curricula

Existing strategies for supporting autistic students in HE (for example RIT, 2014) include efforts to make the hidden curriculum of social relations visible, provision of mentoring and coaching to aid transition into the HE environment and adjustments to group working practices. Such initiatives and interventions can be seen as broadly accommodating rather than transformational. The focus is on helping autistic students navigate, adapt to and be successful within existing HE cultures and practices.

At the core of any student’s university experience is the curriculum of the course they are studying: the methods of learning and teaching and the subject content. While some progress can be made in making a hidden curriculum visible, what is revealed may not be inclusive. It may simply and starkly illuminate entrenched practices which exclude autistic ways of being.

Rather than asking how we might tweak and adjust our curricula and the broader university experience to accommodate autistic students within them, I’m interested in exploring the potential for transformative, inclusive curriculum design. To finish this paper, I’m going to sketch out some principles and characteristics for an autism-friendly HE curriculum. While this could be approached from the perspective of Universal Design for Learning, in this first step I do not want to lose sight of the

particularities of autism. In doing this I find myself acknowledging for that first time that my own interests and experiences as an educationalist, both in the curricula that I have designed and taught (eg Brook, Hunt and Hughes, 1994; Hughes et al, 2001; Hughes, 2003; Hughes, 2011) and the institutional curriculum initiatives that I've developed (eg Hopkinson, Hughes and Layer, 2008; Hughes et al, 2010; University of Bradford, 2012) have been significantly shaped by my autistic world view.

Autism-friendly curricula would:

- 1 activate deep interests and provide significant spaces in the curriculum to explore them and to develop and exercise learner autonomy
- 2 offer choice, but balance that with structure and guidance (ie navigate the tension between freedom and structure)
- 3 think carefully about the role of collaborative learning. Scaffold engagement and support the building of social networks rather than exclude autistic students
- 4 help build routine and predictability, establish a course portfolio of types of classes, learning activities and assignments and allow time for students to become familiar and comfortable with these
- 5 recognise the typical anxiety load for an autistic student and therefore try not to add too many additional stressors
- 6 provide space for decompression and down time between classes and assignments
- 7 promote reflection and processing of learning and of the whole university experience to support autistic students in developing their sense of self and positive autistic identity
- 8 work beyond accommodations and adjustments towards inclusion.

Discussion and Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been the intersections between autism and the concept of the hidden curriculum within the context of HE. A significant part of this is revealing hidden assumptions in mainstream HE curricula, assumptions that may work to exclude rather than include autistic students.

There are, though, tensions in countering these hidden curricula with alternative notions of universal practice for autism-friendly curricula, particularly given the uniqueness of each autistic student. This paper can be seen as a resource to start conversations with autistic students to help them to get the most out of higher education, it is not intended as substitute for those conversations.

In focusing on the particularity of autism I've explored one aspect of hidden curricula in HE. Other similarly narrow analyses, framed through the interests of a particular minoritised group, may have different conclusions. An alternative perspective would be to aim for inclusivity through Universal Design for Learning (UDL). There is, though, a risk that this elides differences.

In considering my individual responsibility in unearthing and tackling hidden curricula I have determined to use the insight that emerges from being autistic, combined with my professional experiences, to contribute to the uncovering of hidden curricula for autistic students. In positioning this perspective within more universal discussion around inclusive curriculum design, my aspiration is for HE to develop and offer autistic students an open curriculum within which they can enhance and channel their autistic attributes towards their interests and goals, rather than conditions and assimilates them to a neurotypical world.

To achieve this, we need to appreciate the nested hidden curricula experienced by autistic students, and develop open curricula within which they can enhance and channel their autistic attributes towards their interests and goals, rather than curricula which condition them to function in a neurotypical world.

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Is the hidden curriculum binary?

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Introduction

This paper examines higher education (HE) through a trans and gender diverse lens in order to explore the extent to which the hidden curriculum is tacitly, and unconsciously, binary. This matters, because empirical evidence suggests the experiences of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people in HE are poor (Formby, 2017) .

We argue that the hidden curriculum, that which is learned outside and around the planned teaching content, reproduces binary and cis-gendered norms. With stark evidence of inequality and difficult experiences for gender diverse students, it is likely many learning and teaching environments unwittingly contribute to that environment, othering those who do not identify as cis and making assumptions about student and staff gender identities. At worst, in failing to challenge transphobic conduct or unconsciously erasing trans and gender diverse experiences and identities, the hidden curriculum validates discriminatory behaviour and reproduces ignorance of trans and non-binary people.

The paper will also question how gender is addressed within the curriculum in a variety of settings, in particular through two case studies, asking if the underlying paradigm is binary in nature. With NUS research (2014) suggesting trans students were very unlikely to see themselves, trans experiences and history reflected in their studies, we argue there is much to do to build a trans inclusive curriculum, and to surface and challenge binary gender assumptions.

Finally, we will examine how trans and non-binary inclusion can become embedded within learning and teaching environments, making gender diversity visible within the curriculum and creating space for those who consider their gender identity to be outside the female-male binary. Such transformative practice is of benefit to all students and staff.

We argue that responsibility for change lies with individuals, teaching teams and senior leaders in institutions, focusing in particular on the role of staff development and training, and internal processes for review, recognition and promotion. We conclude that professional development through Advance HE Fellowship and Athena SWAN charter work could be effective catalysts to embed inclusion and that there is room to strengthen the UK Professional Values Framework in relation to equity.

Background

Trans is an inclusive umbrella term for those whose inner sense of self does not match the sex they were assigned at birth and the gender in which they were raised (Lawson and Mckendry, 2019). This includes a range of identities such as trans men, trans women and other gender diverse people. We use the term cisgender or cis to denote those people whose gender identity does match the sex they were assigned at birth. The world at large, including academia, can be described as cis-centric or cis-normative, since it unconsciously and almost wholly caters for the needs, worldviews and lived experience of that cis majority.

Not all trans people experience their identity as either male or female. For many, it is much more fluid, something more akin to a spectrum than a binary. Mckendry and Lawrence (2017) found that fewer than 50% of their trans research participants identified as consistently male or female. The remainder perceived themselves in some other way. As the Scottish Trans Alliance (2017) explains,

Some people feel that their gender identity cannot be simply defined by the expected binary terms of 'man' or 'woman'. Instead, they experience their gender in another way. Typically, we refer to this group of people as being 'non-binary'. The term non-binary refers to a person: identifying as either having a gender which is in-between or beyond the two categories 'man' and 'woman', as fluctuating between 'man' and 'woman', or as having no gender, either permanently or some of the time.

There are a range of terms used by people who do not experience their gender identity as binary. These include non-binary, genderqueer, agender and, more recently, enby. Those within the trans and gender diverse community are neither homogeneous nor without agency and it is important that people are asked about their preferred terms and pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him). The 2018 UK Government National LGBT Survey found that non-binary people comprised over half the trans participants, with younger trans respondents more likely to identify as non-binary.

In England, Scotland and Wales, trans and gender diverse people are protected from harassment or discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 which includes 'gender reassignment' as one of the protected characteristics (EHRC, 2014). In Northern Ireland, the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) provide similar statutory protection. Higher education institutions, as public sector bodies, also have responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people.

Currently, the UK only legally recognises two genders: female and male. Third gender options have been introduced in a number of other countries, including Australia and India. We argue it is best practice, and essential under PSED, to support the needs of non-binary people within HE and, indeed, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has already introduced a third or 'other' gender option. While Athena SWAN, the UK HE sector's charter mark to advance gender equality, had expanded in 2015 to include institutional support for trans students and staff (Advance HE, 2015), its most recent review has recommended: "The Athena SWAN Charter continues to focus on gender

equality but that it broadens its scope to reflect gender as a spectrum, rather than focusing on the binary definition of men and women” (Advance HE, 2020a). This means it is essential all facets of higher education become inclusive of non-binary people and experiences. This includes the curriculum.

Current Research

We consider it essential to challenge the cisgendered assumptions of higher education and promote trans inclusion in the curriculum, because evidence suggests trans, non-binary and gender diverse learners currently have a much poorer learning experience than their peers. The TransEdu project (Mckendry and Lawrence, 2017), based at the University of Strathclyde, investigated the experiences of staff and learners in colleges and universities in Scotland. The vast majority of participants had encountered barriers to their learning and work (86%) with 35% withdrawing before completion of their course. Students encountered issues around the provision of gender neutral facilities, administrative processes and negotiating relationships with peers and staff. Many learners had low expectations and felt unsafe or unwelcome within classrooms and campuses. Stonewall (2018) reported that three in five trans students had been the target of negative comments or conduct by other students and one in five had been encouraged by university staff to hide or disguise that they are trans.

Trendence UK (2019) explored the experiences of more than 1,800 LGBT+ young people who were studying at university or in graduate employment. Their key finding was that LGBT+ people are less satisfied with their life than the general UK population (6.5 out of 10 compared with 7.7). They also found that 45% of trans respondents had experienced a hate crime, compared to 32% of LGB+ respondents and 3% of non-LGBT+ respondents. Among trans research participants, 38% had experienced assault, 60% harassment and 75% discriminatory language. With some exceptions (Valentine, 2016) there is a general lack of research into the experiences of non-binary people. This is particularly true in relation to education (Non-Binary Genders in Higher Education, 2019; Barker et al, 2016).

Teaching and Learning

The case study approach in this section considers inclusion and the hidden curriculum in two specific disciplines: nursing and psychology. However, there are elements of the hidden curriculum that are potentially shared by all subjects. Specifically, through the danger of inadvertently reproducing cisgendered norms and accepting the binary paradigm; failing to challenge transphobic behaviour or language; and erasing gender diverse experiences and identities. In such cases, and evidence would suggest there are many, the hidden curriculum validates discriminatory behaviour; teaching people that it is acceptable to be transphobic and such behaviour will not be questioned or challenged. Those who are gender diverse, their allies, friends and families, learn that they are not valued or protected.

As Mckendry and Lawrence (2017) found,

Many students faced barriers and challenges with respect to teaching and learning. While students reported differing experiences – depending upon the specific institutional, departmental, disciplinary, and classroom cultures – many encountered difficulties with peers, teaching staff, curriculum content, and placements with respect to trans identities and gender diversity. Trans students faced particular challenges in group work with peers, the awareness and behaviour of teaching staff, and the perceived 'laddishness' of particular courses and disciplines. Particularly in Higher Education, many students and staff felt that academic staff are often beyond reproach and that they would not be made accountable by the institution for inappropriate or harmful behaviours. (p.11)

Those on professional courses such as the health professions, teaching and social work commented on the absence of curriculum content relating to gender diverse identities. Where it was touched upon, "the content was all too often inaccurate and outdated, and in some cases even offensive and potentially harmful" (Mckendry and Lawrence, 2017, 12). These findings are echoed in Formby's (2017) work.

Nursing

For those who design and deliver professional programmes, such as Nursing, Teaching and Social Work, universities must consider opportunities to raise awareness among professionals of the future and include trans identities within the curriculum (Mckendry and Lawrence, 2017). Trans inclusion and visibility must be embedded within teaching, learning and assessment, and universities must challenge the cis-centric nature of the curriculum to ensure trans and non-binary students feel included and supported at university. For professional programmes, it is crucial to develop and deliver a trans inclusive curriculum that does not perpetuate cis-normativity, and meets the needs of all learners.

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) offers a range of Nursing programmes, from Adult to Return to Practice, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. All pre registration Nursing programmes at GCU have recently been re-validated in accordance with the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) 'Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education' (2018), with a view to implementing changes from academic year 20/21. Section three of the framework, 'Student Empowerment', states, as a requirement, that

'Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must ensure that all students have their diverse needs respected and taken into account across all learning environments, with support and adjustments provided in accordance with equalities and human rights legislation and good practice'.

In line with this, at GCU, there will be a focus on embedding diversity and inclusion, including trans and non-binary identities, within Nursing programmes. This is an opportunity for Nursing to design

and deliver a programme that is current, inclusive and reflective of their students and the wider society. The plan is to embed trans inclusion throughout the programme, and to avoid the tokenism of relegating this to a single module, which perpetuates the notion that LGBT+ identities are not that important, do not need to be taken seriously, and that it is something you can 'tick off' and not have to think about again. This is a subtle element of the 'hidden curriculum' that students may unconsciously pick up on. Equality and Diversity is often contained to a single module or part of the curriculum, sometimes known as the 'add on approach' (Sykes et al, forthcoming, 23), reinforcing cis-gender norms and 'othering' students whose identities don't fit within this structure. Throughout the curriculum, including during skills practice and within assessments, cis and heteronormativity will be challenged and a diverse range of identities embedded. The aim is to explicitly embed LGBT+, BAME, refugee and other communities and experiences into the curriculum. For example, patients and family members are almost always referred to as 'Mr' and 'Mrs', which is cis-centric, non inclusive and not reflective of the types of families nurses will work with and, indeed, belong to themselves.

By working to dismantle stereotypes and making gender diversity more visible within teaching and learning, the attitudes, values and beliefs of all in HE will be challenged. Including trans and non-binary experiences enables others to learn and make a conscious effort to challenge cisgender norms. Lecturers actively challenging transphobia and unacceptable language among students and staff within the classroom sets an example and makes it clear that transphobic behaviour and attitudes will not be tolerated (Mckendry and Lawrence, 2017, p90). This will empower Nursing students who may experience or see transphobia on placements to feel supported by their university to challenge this in an appropriate way. Nursing students should feel comfortable seeking advice from placement mentors on how to challenge transphobia and how to report it as a student nurse. Many students may currently feel uncomfortable challenging transphobic behaviour and attitudes on placement due to a lack of confidence in how to do this and who to speak to. For trans and non-binary Nursing students, seeing themselves reflected in the curriculum, in a positive and supportive way, is empowering and will create a safe learning environment in which students can visibly be themselves, without fear of hostility or feeling 'othered'.

Psychology

With its focus on the human mind and behaviour, Psychology would appear to be a promising arena in which to surface the complexity of lived experiences in relation to gender identity and diversity. At the University of Abertay, for example, the psychology curriculum explicitly covers the biological underpinnings of gender identity and sexual orientation, including bisexuality. The first year curriculum has also recently been redesigned, with diversity prioritised alongside the conscious acknowledgement of trans and non-binary experiences. One of the curriculum designers, Dr Rebecca Sharman, described some of the changes:

‘The concept is to introduce the students to Psychology by presenting a different seminal study each week and looking at how it has influenced contemporary research. I decided to base one of my lectures around Sandra Bem’s work on androgyny. This serves multiple purposes within the curriculum, primarily, teaching the students to think about ideas they are familiar with in new ways, teaching about diversity, and teaching about how psychological research can influence society.’

Teaching covers research into gender roles and stereotypes, as well as gender identity, with students engaging in challenging discussions on whether masculinity and femininity can or should be measured, and the extent to which these concepts are tied to gender. This surfacing of gender diversity reflects students’ lived experiences and raises awareness among those unfamiliar with trans and non-binary perspectives.

There are common elements of undergraduate psychology degrees, as well as other disciplines, that provide opportunities to transition from a cis-normative hidden curriculum to a gender-diverse visible one. Perhaps most obviously in relation to statistics, and the opportunity to teach that gender is not, as assumed by many, a categorical variable; one that can be answered with an either/or. As one of Formby’s participants noted, “I got very annoyed recently when my statistics course notes used gender as an example of a binary statistic. It literally said ‘An example of statistics in this way could be gender because all participants in the survey are either male or female’.” (2017, 10). This provides a rich teaching moment, across many STEM disciplines, to introduce trans and non-binary identities, challenge previous implicit assumptions and consolidate understanding of variables. Unfortunately, in many circumstances, the binary nature of the hidden (and visible) curriculum is asserted, erasing the experiences of gender diverse people and adding to their sense of otherness.

Indeed, failure to challenge students’ binary notions of gender early in undergraduate programmes can lead these concepts to be incorrectly embedded in their thinking, thus influencing their approach to experimental design. Here is a further opportunity to unpack and rebuild the gender paradigm. Undergraduate students may naively collect information on gender and use it as a predictor variable based on a binary and cisnormative understanding, seeking differences between men and women in relation to abilities or behaviours: are women better at multi-tasking than men, for example. A further risk when unchallenged, is that experiments can be designed to exclude and erase trans participants because they do not meet a simplistic, binary criteria. It is imperative staff challenge these misconceptions and support students to consider the issues in a richer, more complex manner. This also allows non-binary and trans learners to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Embedding trans and non-binary identities into the curriculum

While we have focused on two specific disciplines, there are opportunities to embed trans and non-binary inclusion in all subject areas and degree programmes. There are a number of pitfalls to be avoided, however. Firstly, it is essential such activity takes place across whole modules and programmes, rather than as one-off ‘special events’ only during Pride or LGBT History month, for example. This, though well intended, can appear tokenistic or speaking only to those with lived experience rather than mainstreaming and educating the majority. Harbin et al (2016) have produced useful guidance on how to avoid “homogenising, exoticising, or tokenising non-binary experiences”. It is equally important to take an intersectional approach: the experiences of BAME trans and non-binary people are likely to be different to white members of the LGBT+ community; for example. Therefore, care should be taken to reflect the richness of an inevitably heterogeneous group. Finally, there is a risk that we focus on vulnerabilities, on the support needs and poor experiences of individuals, rather than on challenging cisnormative assumptions. The latter is harder to do, but ultimately more impactful.

The key is to make gender diversity visible within the curriculum, through subject material, reading lists and authors, or through focusing on influential trans and non-binary people. For example, if covering neurobiology, the structure of the brain or Alzheimer’s disease, reference could be made to Professor Ben Barres, a trans man who made important discoveries in relation to the brain’s functions and was also a vocal critic of gender bias in the sciences (Independent, 2018).

The other element of the hidden curriculum, beyond its binary assumptions, is the norms, language and behaviours expected of those in the classroom. If trans inclusive language is role modelled, if pronouns are asked for and respected, students learn that this matters. Conversely, it is also comprised of what is tolerated; if no action is taken when someone uses transphobic language or expresses transphobic views, the hidden curriculum teaches that such behaviour is acceptable and that trans and non-binary people and their allies should not be afforded basic dignity or respect within that learning space. There must, therefore, be robust and informed challenges to any such behaviour. Where academic staff do not feel sufficiently educated on issues of trans inclusion, it is incumbent upon them to seek out information and learn.

Spaces for trans and non-binary people

Trans and non-binary people often face barriers to entering HE, and for those who do enter university, Trans and non-binary people often face barriers to entering HE, and those who do enter university often continue to face barriers in relation to their studies and accessing the wider university community (McKendry and Lawrence, 2019a, 79). It is essential for trans and non-binary people to feel welcome and safe at university, and institutions should strive to increase visibility and awareness of gender diversity through teaching and learning as well as the wider campus climate, from administrative procedures to student services such as Student Wellbeing. Creating a welcoming environment that celebrates gender diversity raises awareness and creates a safe space for trans and non-binary people. For example, flying the trans flag, hosting Pride events on campus and embedding

gender diversity into the curriculum shows trans and non-binary people that they are seen and valued. Other spaces that may make university more accessible for trans and non-binary people include gender neutral toilet facilities and changing rooms across campus, the provision of free sanitary products in all toilets, and inclusive spaces within social settings such as the Students' Association. Trans and non-binary people may be reluctant to join a sports club or society if there is no visible display of support around gender diversity. Using social media to promote clubs and societies as a welcoming space can encourage trans and non-binary participation. As Sykes et al (forthcoming) stated:

“Everyone should feel meaningfully seen, involved and represented [at university].” (p22)

Bringing about change

We believe it is the responsibility of the institutions themselves to change. It is not for trans and gender diverse learners and staff to advocate for the inclusion and recognition to which they are entitled. Senior leaders, module and programme teams and individuals should all challenge cis-normative, binary assumptions and work towards trans and gender diverse inclusion. A champion's approach has been developed by Mckendry and Lawrence (2019b) to support institutions in taking such work forward.

Shining a light on the hidden curriculum, acknowledging and changing the binary and cis-gendered paradigm is not a zero sum game. No one loses out; rather all gain through an increased understanding of human experiences. As Skyes et al (forthcoming) noted in their study of LGBT+ identities in the curriculum and classroom, inclusion, “can have positive impacts for LGBT+ students, staff, and allies. Students not only perform better when they feel welcomed and included, but conversely perform worse and feel unsafe when made to feel unwelcome and not included” (p3). Moreover, it is of benefit to those who identify as cisgender and heterosexual to learn about complex identities (p4).

Similarly, it is not the case that trans and non-binary inclusion is just one further demand on busy academics who are already required to consider their curriculum and teaching practice from the perspective of BAME or disabled learners, for example. This is all the same, very necessary, task. Teaching that explicitly calls out racism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism; that aims for a diverse curriculum reflecting the lives, histories and cultures of all learners (and potential learners) will meet the needs of more people and will benefit everyone.

The more such work can be undertaken within other embedded processes, the more likely it is to be effective and sustainable. Athena SWAN charter submissions involve whole institution and department committees and action plans; they can incorporate trans and non-binary inclusion into that activity without having to establish any further infrastructure. Institutional and subject reviews provide another cyclical opportunity for individual academics and teaching teams to engage in curriculum development and review. Module review and approval processes are a further place in which to embed consideration of inclusion.

Conclusions

There has been encouraging work, not least by the Universities of Birmingham (Ward and Gale, 2016) and Glasgow (Sykes et al, forthcoming), to examine LGBT+ inclusive curricula, and moves across the sector to recognise gender beyond the binary. However, for change to accelerate and become widespread, truly bold action is required. We thus end our paper with a challenge: does the UK Professional Standards Framework, the standards and values of the teaching and learning sector, go far enough to bring about inclusive teaching practice and curricula? The values include respect for individual learners and diverse communities, and the promotion of equality of opportunity (Advance HE, 2011). Equality, diversity and inclusion clearly matter. Yet, it is possible to respect trans and non-binary learners and promote opportunities for them without fundamentally changing the hidden binary curriculum or influencing the behaviour of other teachers or learners. Is it enough to not be transphobic or racist, for example? Arguably, that would meet the current requirements of the Framework. We believe that it is not: one must be anti-racist, actively pro-trans inclusion. Our professional values should demand more of us; should ask that we explicitly develop inclusion in our teaching. This would actively encourage those involved in HE to embark on inclusive professional development as part of the Advance HE's Fellowship system (Advance HE, 2020b), to include the recognition of trans and non-binary experiences in their own learning and, ultimately, in their teaching and curricula.

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Hidden in 'plain' sight: the ethnic minority teachers

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Introduction

A growing body of work articulating the need for UK higher education (HE) to decolonise its curriculum and structures is starting to gain much needed traction across the sector (see Arday, 2015 and Bhabra et al, 2018). However, there remains little discussion about how those subject to internal colonisation, a result of what is known as the 'English project' (Insley, 2013), might also contribute to this expanding discourse.

While, in this author's view, there should be no attempt to equate the impact of internal colonisation with the experiences of those subject to external colonisation, an appreciation of the practices lecturers might adopt to mitigate against the impact of internal colonisation can add to our understanding of the complexity of the UK HE sector's pedagogic landscape. For those who are currently unaware, recognising that marginalisation and discrimination, as a result of internal colonisation, continues within the UK HE sector might be helpful.

The experiences of communities impacted upon by internal colonisation in the UK are not homogenous. Since 1999, following the devolution of legislative powers from Westminster, the administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, in responding to the needs of their particular geographical areas, have created increasingly distinctive regional identities for their respective HE sectors (Gallagher and Raffe, 2010). These independent regional identities, it can be argued, have enabled a move towards the redressing of inequalities resulting from years of internal colonisation and rule from Westminster. For example, the Welsh Government has funded Welsh medium provision within its HE sector, with the result that all institutions in the country now have some Welsh medium provision, with plans for growth (Welsh Government, 2019).

In this paper, examples of how lecturers from another minority group – also subject to internal colonisation, but without the affordances of a legitimised devolved administration HE framework to work within – have sought to ensure students receive a positive, and culturally apposite, learning and teaching experience are shared. Drawing on evidence gathered from Cornish HE lecturers working across Cornwall during the period 2010 and 2011, this chapter will discuss how, by adopting the hegemonic discourses of neo-liberal HE, lecturers were able to actively subvert aspects of neo-liberal expectations operating in the anglocentric UK HE sector (Camps, 2017). Examples will be shared indicating how lecturers used what Bernstein (2000, 30) identified as "discursive gaps" to affect change, namely to exploit the dominant narratives in order to design teaching and learning opportunities that enabled the enactment of valued long-standing Cornish community practices and expectations contributing to the establishment of a local pedagogic identity.

Neo-liberal paradigms within the UKHE sector

Reshaping the purpose of UK HE, from the liberal perspective of the 19th century towards a more instrumentalist function has fundamentally altered the nature of the sector (Ball, 2015; Mahony and Weiner, 2019). The resulting neo-liberal characteristics are recognisable by its explicit and increasing managerialism (McLean, 2006; Lynch, 2014); the growth of precarity within its workforce (Blackham, 2020); its uncritical adoption of the role of agent of the state, for example, by ensuring compliance with Tier 4 regulations (see Qurashi, 2017); and a desire to privilege learning for student employability (Tomlinson, 2012; McCowan, 2015), characteristics and activities that are cloaked in a market-orientated discourse (Ashwin et al, 2015).

All curricula in higher educational institutions (HEIs) are designed to support the building of what Bernstein (2000, 66) recognised as pedagogic identities. These are identities that create in the student a “particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices” (Bernstein 2000, 65). The type of pedagogic identity available to students alters as curricula offerings adjust in response to external change – whether driven by technology, the economy or cultural transformation. Bernstein identified three potential forms of pedagogic identities of which two recontextualise different aspects of past knowledge within the present, which in turn projects a particular view of the future. For example, a ‘retrospective’ pedagogic identity drawing on grand narratives, such as those related to national, religious or cultural positions, can offer students an identity that is “unambiguous, stable, intellectually impervious, [and] collective” and often drawing on “mythological resources of origin, belonging, progression and destiny” (Bernstein 2000, 75).

In contrast, ‘prospective’, or future orientated, identities are, according to Bernstein (2000, 76), less focused on the past but are concerned with “narratives of becoming, but a new becoming not of an individual but of a social category”. Seen to form a new basis for social relations, these categories can include race, gender or a region. However, Bernstein notes that adopting either of these types of pedagogic identities is likely to require students to accede their individual identity to the aspirations of the wider group.

It is possible to locate historically Bernstein’s proposed outlines of both retrospective and prospective pedagogic identities within HE. But it is more challenging to situate these within the 21st-century university, unlike his third and final proposed pedagogic identity. This identity, Bernstein suggests, is unconcerned with the past or future but instead has a focus on the present. De-centred pedagogic identities seek to provide individuals with an identity that has market value and which is responsive to the needs of the economic community at large. The emphasis on self as an individual commodity, rather than collectively, aligns with the aspirations of the current neo-liberal HE sector. The involvement of business stakeholders, focused on the anticipated requirements of business and the economy (Olssen and Peters, 2005) both locally and globally, has resulted in curricula, it can be argued, that contributes to the privileging of a de-centred pedagogic identity for students. Within the neo-liberal university such pedagogic identity building privileges the vocational – through focusing on economic value of the learning – and places responsibility for success, both as a student and as a graduand, to the individual.

Notwithstanding changes to the type of pedagogic identity projected for the 21st-century student – that is to say one that supports the articulated neo-liberal ambitions of UK HE – there are regular, and occasionally alarming, indications of a lack of acknowledgment of the devolved nature of the HE sector by the UK. This continued failure to recognise the increasingly disparate nature of the sector, with its difference and interdependencies, (such as the announcement that there would be cap on English HE students studying in other parts of the UK in September 2020 (Guardian, 2020)) reaffirms the continuation of the Westminster government's anglocentric perspective.

Resistance, decolonisation and the neo-liberal university

At the same time that neo-liberalism has globalised HE sectors across the world, a growing resistance has emerged to the neo-liberal nature of globalisation. Resistance has been situated both within, and without, the academy involving a range of activist scholars, students and communities all wishing to counter the narrative of neo-liberalism with its foci of economic contribution, individualism and homogenisation.

Counters to these hegemonic narratives have been increasingly been located within the decolonisation movement – such as the South African 'Rhodes must fall' movement. Similar calls have been heard in the UK with student activist groups calling for a recognition of the impact of the ongoing legacy of the British Empire within UK curricula (see Andrews, 2018; Arday, 2015; Bhambra, 2018; Arday et al, 2020). The 'Why is my curriculum white' campaign, and the explicit challenge following the 'Black Lives Matters' movement (Dar et al, 2020), demand the inclusion of more diverse knowledge and cultural perspectives within UK HE curricula. This impact of such a call, if implemented, would assist in the formation of different pedagogic identities for students.

As noted above, the devolved nations of the UK currently have the potential to create distinct local pedagogic identities by exercising the power that has been afforded them. However, not all nations of the UK, internalised as part of the English project, have been fortunate enough to have devolved powers. Although the Labour government appeared at one point to promise devolved powers for Cornwall (Whitty, 2001) this was rescinded, and Cornwall continues to be subject to English HE expectations through the Westminster government and its HE functions.

HE in Cornwall: colonisation, recognition and opportunity

Cornwall's ongoing complicated relationship with England, as an internally colonised nation, remains largely unknown. It continues to hold a distinct position within the legal system of England and Wales. For example, the Duke and Duchy of Cornwall hold privileges in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly normally enjoyed by the Crown in other parts of the UK; and Stannary Law remains on the statute books offering a number of long-standing rights for those working in mining (Kirkhope 2014).

Although colonised at the turn of the first millennium and believed by many to be firmly assimilated (Hechter 1975; Erikson 1993), the Cornish have resolutely maintained a distinct culture and language. In 2003 under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Cornish language,

Kernewek, was officially recognised as a minority language. And, following significant political pressure in 2014, the Cornish were recognised as a national ethnic minority (Cornwall Council, 2014).

Despite these formal recognitions, the Cornish, in relation to HE policy and formal practice, have little influence or power at a regional level. While there seemed some possibility for a growth of influence being exerted following the creation of the Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) project (CUC, 2010) as a result of receiving European Objective One funding, it remains the case that HE provision in Cornwall continues to be dominated by HEIs located outside Cornwall (for further detail see Camps, 2017). This domination can be seen in the substantial physical presences – the University of Exeter, for example, has campuses in Penryn and Truro – and through the exertion of power as validating institutions. Cornwall's only validating HEI is the specialist arts-based University of Falmouth, which gained its degree awarding status in 2012.

The creation and beginning of the CUC project, with its ambitions to support and grow the Cornish economy, dovetailed seamlessly with the expansionist widening participation ambitions of the new Labour government (DfEE, 2000; DfES, 2002; DCSF, 2006). With the creation of the CUC, HEIs were perfectly poised to offer a growing portfolio of curricula, actively supporting the creation of a neo-liberal pedagogic identity, preparing them for job roles that focused on employers' requirements.

The dominance of the neo-liberal narrative, in the increasingly extended provision of HE across CUC partners, was noted by all the Cornish academics who took part in the study. They recognised HEIs were businesses with decision-making driven by economic imperatives. Underpinning these were the need to maximise income streams from student fees and research funding. Cornwall's geography, too, became an intrinsic part of this neo-liberal offering as it was commodified as a lifestyle destination or a site for intellectual study. The latter can be seen in contemporary HEI marketing with the University of Exeter (2020) describing its Penryn campus as providing the "perfect 'living laboratory' for students and staff" and the University of Falmouth (2020) noting that Cornwall is a "test-bed for innovative research programmes that can have global application and impact". Of note is the fact that neither website makes any reference to the distinctiveness of the communities within which they are based.

Cornish identity: communities and higher education institutions

In this case study the academics worked across a number of HE programmes including HEI and college-based institutions across Cornwall. There was only one notable absence in terms of institution where, despite several enquiries, it was not possible to locate any Cornish lecturers to take part in the study. This potentially could have been an important omission for this study, as Tierney (1988) has observed, as while institutions can share similar neo-liberal missions their institutional cultures could be distinct.

The length of time the academics had been working in HE was wide ranging; although only one was new to the role. Some were still early career but most were experienced teachers of more than 10 years standing. Ages ranged from a lecturer in their 20s to academics in their 50s. The roles held in

their respective institutions varied and, perhaps unsurprisingly given the length of time in post, some participants held middle management roles. Such roles, Hotho (2013) noted, are often key in establishing departmental cultures that other academics work within.

As the number of Cornish lecturers within HE in England is not known (data is not collected centrally), and anecdotal evidence suggested that there were few Cornish academics working in Cornwall, a networking approach was adopted to enable approaches to potential participants. Ethical permission for the study was given by Cardiff University.

What the study clearly indicated was that all lecturers, regardless of their institution, were aware of current political and economic concerns particularly around the neo-liberal expectations of their institutions. And, although not all participants were openly supportive of Cornish nationalist politics, all were aware of ongoing discussions around self-government for Cornwall. Additionally, all saw their ethnicity as a live issue impacting on their practices as educators. Using Holland and Lave's (2002, 3) concept of 'enduring struggle' it is possible to recognise Cornwall as a place where long-term historical and open-ended socio-historical considerations intersect with contemporaneous concerns. HE, then, can be identified as a site where long-held community identities meet externally imposed anglocentric neo-liberal attitudes.

The Cornish academics were able to identify key aspects of what they believed was distinctive about being Cornish and the values they espoused. This group's Cornish identity was firmly located in geographical place with – for most – generational connections. Unsurprising perhaps, when bearing in mind how geographical space is continually criss-crossed with meaning, as emotional and sentimental bonds build on historical, familial and cultural antecedents. While claims based on generational links to place could be regarded as problematic, as they seem to border on essentialist views of ethnicity, it is perhaps helpful to bear in mind Neizen's (2009) warning against making simplistic assumptions. Instead, he cautions, when faced with the ongoing need to persuade others of intrinsic value of a group's identity and heritage, a choice is often made to privilege a distinct claim of difference.

In seeking to describe what was distinctive about Cornish culture, lecturers highlighted a number of factors. These included a resistance to externally imposed hierarchy; the importance of community with an espoused interdependency within its membership and expectations of individual contribution and reciprocity; and adoption of collectivist egalitarian approaches. They also saw an explicit rejection of materialism as a central tenet of Cornish identity.

It is perhaps not surprising that they shared examples of professional conflicts within their roles within HE. Recruitment policies that seemed to purposely bypass the Cornish local community were signalled out for specific note. It was felt that the neo-liberal processes adopted by the institutions when undertaking recruitment, and setting remuneration, specifically worked against the local community and its cultural values. Narratives that emphasised the need to have recourse to the marketplace were seen as working against local Cornish academics who wished to work in the sector. One lecturer felt that the decision to always recruit nationally to each post was a positive rejection of

valuing local communities and their possible contribution.

'we go to the market place for these posts....is there any desire on behalf of the college as an organisation to develop Cornish beliefs and values? Probably not'. Meryn.

In terms of remuneration, the mantra of the marketplace also worked against those working in Cornwall as institutions chose to offer a lower level of pay, as a result of the perceived notion that Cornwall being an attractive lifestyle destination, would receive applicants willing to accept a drop in salary. As another male lecturer noted,

'they think that we, that Cornish people should be happy with salt water and fresh air' Jacca.

In spite of experiencing what they saw as pervasive neo-liberal hegemonic practices in their organisations, lecturers did identify where they could influence and impact on the institution, namely in the design and enactment of the institutions' portfolio of courses. Bernstein's (2000, 30) framework of the pedagogic device usefully helps illuminate where such influence can be asserted. The 'potential discursive gap', he notes, is

'a site for alternative possibilities...the site of the unthinkable, the site of the impossible, and this site can clearly be both beneficial and dangerous at the same time'.

Knowledge, Bernstein observes, from its production to its final use within the classroom, undergoes a series of transformations, the outcomes of which see it being recontextualised, and it is at the point of recontextualisation that opportunities for possible alternative knowledge might arise.

For those wanting to use such gaps to challenge colonial or epistemological knowledge of the neo-liberal university, that is, to undertake acts of 'epistemic disobedience' (Mignolo, 2011, cited in Morreira, 2017), then these sites are to be regarded as places of opportunity.

'Epistemic disobedience': building a local pedagogic identity

Bernstein (2000) highlighted that the ability of practitioners to effect change as knowledge is recontextualised as part of the education process is largely dependent on the extent to which players, situated in different fields of influence, exert that influence.

Operationalising that influence in the context was made more difficult, the lecturers highlighted, because of widely circulating stereotypical views of the Cornish: people who are regarded as lazy, lacking aspiration, parochial and naïve in their outlook (Kennedy 2016, 65). These stereotypes had become, for some of their peers within the sector, part of an accepted deficit model within the sector. The effect of which resulted in some Cornish students' learning experiences being adversely impacted upon. Lecturers perceived that they could easily fall prone to being stereotyped by others where their ethnicity was made salient (for example, by having a Cornish accent), and they gave illustrations of how they took care to ensure that their work was not marginalised: for example, by seeking out international research collaborators who they deemed were more likely to judge contributions on merit alone.

Increasingly, technology was being used by this group to redress perceived marginalisation resulting from their ethnicity, setting up online networks, enabling them to take control of the production, and sharing, of their professional identities (Pause and Russell, 2016). Such activity was being purposely embraced as it was regarded as aligning with Cornish values enabling the circumvention of imposed hierarchies, thereby assisting a more egalitarian form of collaboration.

As the lecturers were keenly aware of the ways in which the foregrounding of Cornish values could impact negatively on their professional standing, it was perhaps of little surprise that the language used to discuss their curriculum design mirrored the discourse found within government policy and the institutions they worked within. During the data gathering there was much discussion about the wider economy and how the portfolio offerings of the institutions contributed to the growth of the Cornish economy.

'I would like to be helping, you know the right kind of industry ... coming to Cornwall...and that we have the right kind of training in place, so people could be trained up, like for example here at [name of institution], and could then go into those jobs.' Jeffra.

The academic went on to offer yet further insight into his curriculum choices.

'[In the] first year they have to do ... a bit of everything. That's that adaptability. Trying to get them used to that ... the bulk of what they do in their second year is negotiated ... which makes life a little bit challenging. But at the same time it's quite rewarding because again the students can start helping each other and adaptability comes through again... ... But I do sometimes, encourage them, most students in their second year to ... base it around a Cornish company or something like that'. Jeffra.

On first reading, these extracts suggest whole-hearted incorporation of neo-liberal policy and process through the privileging of employability and student choice (Tomlinson, 2012). However, the repeated use of such language throughout the interview indicates that this was a deliberate act; one of rehearsed and careful usage of acceptable terminology, thereby not confronting the prevalent hegemonic discourses. In subsequent interview responses the lecturer stated he "did design the [course] with Cornwall in mind" and offered additional motivations in which he described how he specifically aligned the design of his curriculum to Cornish cultural expectations, such as rewarding a collectivist approach to working with others and engagement in activities that required students to make reciprocal contributions to community.

It is also possible to recognise in this account the successful mediation of a number of influences, similar to a concept identified by Willis (2001) in his study of social employment practices. Willis noted that employees recognised formal codes and expectations within the workplace, and yet simultaneously held an awareness of the informal plane that exists beneath this, along with an appreciation of the minimum level of role compliance within any given circumstance. Employees who work with, and through this 'double activity' were deemed to hold a sophisticated understanding of how to operationalise minimum compliance. However, Willis (2001, 121) cautions, those who are 'role compliant' should not be viewed as demonstrating a 'role commitment', which in turn cannot be read

as holding 'role belief'. Willis' differentiation between compliance, commitment and belief is of particular value when thinking about the challenge to neo-liberal narratives.

The lecturer interviewed above could, in Willis's terms, be seen as demonstrating this 'double activity', using the expectations of his role within the institution and, through the use of marketised language, appear 'role compliant' as a curriculum designer. The initial articulated position, and the subsequent meanings ascribed to his pedagogic decision-making offers an insightful example of how successful mediation of the formal (within the institution) and informal planes (those relating to Cornwall), can occur. To the outsider, the course design satisfied the requirements of the institution, but it was through the enactment of that curriculum ie the 'where' and 'how', that resistance and challenge surfaced more clearly.

Like Jeffra, whose preferred model of curriculum design was seemingly compliant with the sector's neo-liberal expectations, so other lecturers initially explained their pedagogic choice-making using language that aligned with institutional and discipline expectations. References were made to the universality of discipline knowledge, and consistency in pedagogic approaches before further expositions revealed that they were consciously modelling Cornish community values by choosing culturally relevant teaching and learning strategies – strategies designed to run counter the expected neo-liberal pedagogic identity.

Building a local pedagogic identity through pedagogic approaches

As lecturers appeared to effectively mask their intentions to design courses that acted as a conduit to relay Cornish values, through their use of accepted neo-liberal language, there appeared to be little examination by key others in their organisations of the pedagogic approaches or modes that were also adopted. It was through discussion of their pedagogic choices that lecturers' intentions became salient.

During this study, lecturers identified key personal attributes that were highly prized by the community, including being a hard worker, valuing education and being adaptable and outward looking. These compare markedly with the attributes afforded to them by others, as noted above. It is important to note, in relation to the wider context of the call for the decolonisation of UK HE curricula, that these attributes are historically fashioned, drawing predominantly from the 19th century which saw the Cornish working as economic migrants across the globe, settling in Britain's former colonies; and contributing to the Anglo-Celtic imperial project. This is something that will be returned to below, but it is worth registering that the interviews did not raise or critique how Cornish identity, based on this aspect of the imperial process, could be adversely impacted by this. Rather, the global activity was noted as a positive contribution to Cornish identity creation (for further discussion see, Camps 2017).

Key to the successful transference of values and expectations in the classroom was their embodiment of Cornish distinctiveness. For example, several talked about their desire to democratise their classrooms. The ambition of Cadour to distribute power, for example, encouraged responsibility for others' learning:

'the older ones look after the younger ones [.....] the more you delegate that stuff to students within themselves [...] I think sometimes they get too much of this teacher hard edged thing going on'. Cador.

The rejection of teaching as a form of personal gratification was discussed by several participants, preferring instead to see their work with students as a form of 'giving back' to the community.

Creating an inclusive non-hierarchical learning environment with accessible language and opportunities for co-created local knowledge was also deemed of high importance. Meryn intimated, however, that his adoption of a non-hierarchical approach was met with hostility by others in his organisation.

Other pedagogic approaches met with less resistance, such as the use of storytelling. Much valued – providing as it does a space for renewing and invigorating communities (Portelli 1997; Kovach 2009) – it was noted by many as a means of 'bringing' Cornish culture into the classroom.

Perhaps the most important aspect of their pedagogic approach, regarded as crucial by many, was a desire to create a sense of belonging for their students. The movement between institution and community was regarded as important and learning was planned to repeatedly move between the two sites, creating a web of connections which were (re)created, underscoring co-dependency (Camps, 2017). Such connections were seen as being of particular benefit to students who self-define as Cornish (Bernstein 2000, 105). Referring to this space as a 'spider's web' Myghal noted that non-Cornish students were equally impacted by this web of connections and desire to create a sense of belonging. He noted that they often become

"smitten they've been caught, caught by this Cornish glue that's grabbed them". Caught in a "spider's web of Cornishness", he explained, and having completed their course, non-Cornish students often "go away ... but they always return'. Myghal

The desire to counter the neo-liberal pedagogic identity offered within HE in Cornwall has resulted in Cornish lecturers choosing to design and enact a series of pedagogic decisions that has resulted in opportunities to relay valued Cornish beliefs and attributes. By operationalising Bernstein's pedagogic identity framework it is possible to identify that students in Cornwall are being offered an alternative pedagogic identity to the official identity offered through the neo-liberal HEIs. Of the three identity positions offered by Bernstein (2000, 74) a 'prospective' identity is one that is "constructed from past narratives to create a re-centring of the identity to provide for a new social base and to open a new future" that seems to best align with the purpose of the Cornish lecturers. Central to this form of identity, Bernstein (2000, 76) posits, is the construction of a new discourse that will enable a new basis for "social relations, solidarities and for oppositions" the ordering of which recognises an arena of positions accompanied by an ongoing struggle to dominate the narrative resource which in turn enables the construction of authentic becoming. The historical basis on which such an identity is based is selective which in turn helps to shape the form it takes as the identity engages with contemporary change(s).

How does the creation of a local anglo pedagogic identity inform current discussions about neo-liberalism and colonisation?

While the number of lecturers who self-define as Cornish within the HE sector in Cornwall is not known, as noted above, anecdotal evidence does suggest that the number is likely to be small.

"It doesn't take a genius to sit there and think 'Oh hell, how come there's no Cornish people doing this'." Jacca

The gatekeeper at the one HEI not represented in this study commented, at the time of the approach, that they were not aware of any Cornish academics within the institution. While this comment might be accurate, it is worthy of a critique. Lecturers taking part in the study suggested that the recruitment undertaken by institutions often privileged non-Cornish applicants, suggesting a circulating narrative that biases against the Cornish were at play in all institutions.

It is perhaps understandable, therefore, that some Cornish academics might not wish to disclose their identity within their workplaces. Of course, the continued lack of recognition processes within official government returns, such as HEFCE data means that, although legally recognised as an ethnic minority (by Europe and latterly by the UK government), the Cornish are not 'counted' or rather perhaps more accurately are purposely discounted as being irrelevant. Perhaps a case of what Tuck and Yang (2012, 29) regard as morally convenient 'not seeing'.

However, lecturers were aware that making the choice to enact such practices, which offer a counter to the powerful discriminatory narratives about the minority group circulating within their employing institutions, could impact negatively on their future employment and career progression. What is perhaps of interest here is the value Cornish lecturers placed on non-Cornish colleagues and managers who gave support to their practices. The importance of such allyship was recognised by Jeffra, who noted the importance of support from his line manager who was "encouraging of me doing this sort of thing". This contrasted with the experience of others where it was felt that to disclose this activity would not be 'well received at the non-academic management level'.

An additional interesting aspect of this case study is the lack of a supporting network. Unlike the increasing calls for decolonisation of the curriculum noted above, such as the 'Why is My Curriculum White' and 'Black Lives Matters' movement, this activity by Cornish lecturers within the HE sector has not emerged through collaborative groups, or with the benefit of an overarching coordinated counter movement. Only some of the participants in this study were professionally connected eg part of a discipline network or as programme leaders or managers within their institution. Where membership of such professional networks occurred, these reflected the hierarchies and foci of the neo-liberal institutions and therefore were not designed, or expected to support, or reflect, the needs of Cornish staff or students. So, while there were undoubtedly informal opportunities for Cornish academics to discuss what they were doing within their pedagogic practices, any similarities and choices were drawn from their personal location within, and understanding of, Cornish values and needs.

As a result of masking their intent in an acceptable, performative manner, Cornish lecturers were able to design curricula, choose apposite learning and teaching approaches, and identify assessments of their choosing. The impact of these choices resulted in a better alignment of the student learning and teaching experience with key community expectations and practices such as the foregrounding of community and not the self; encouragement of reciprocity in transactions; and a geo-political connection to place. They thereby created a local pedagogic identity which counters the neo-liberal narratives about student identity ie community focused versus individual gain which is a central tenet of the neo-liberal pedagogic identity promoted by the neo-liberal sector.

The activity of the Cornish lecturer would seem therefore, to be directly challenging the neo-liberal stance of English anglocentric HE. Their culturally sensitive approach to design, and its involvement of community assessment that rejects individualistic gain in favour of group benefit, has created a pedagogic identity that connects students to a geographical location. But to what extent can this be regarded as a contribution to the decolonisation of HE curricula?

Hoadley and Galant (2019, 102) suggest that, unless the focus of disciplines alter as a result of decolonial activity, ie what is valued and assessed results in a different discourse, then such actions might more properly be viewed as examples of 'cultural expression' than an attempt to decolonise the curriculum. While lecturers were actively seeking to relay Cornish culture through the promotion of Cornish values and attributes, they were not wishing to replace their disciplinary knowledge with a form of Cornish social knowledge which itself is noted as having limitations for student groups (see Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005) and Lourie and Rata (2014) for further discussion about the impact on students where such approaches are adopted). Rather, the practices focus on the broader moral discourse that Bernstein (2000, 32) details as creating order, relations and identity.

As such it offers a valuable case study which, this writer believes, can contribute to the pressing debate about decolonising the curricula. First it provides an example of how local pedagogic identities can be formed, co-exist with and challenge dominant pedagogic identities within the HE sector. It also provides a reminder that the existence of overarching coordinated counter movements is not necessarily a determinant of success, when contemplating such interventions. And finally, it persuasively illustrates the power and transformative potential that resides in individual pedagogues within the neo-liberal academy.

So, what might be the next steps for Cornish lecturers?

Imagining next steps

In the introduction of this chapter it was noted that internal colonisation, and its impact, is different to the ongoing effects of external colonisation on the HE sector in the UK, and society, more largely. This chapter has sought to highlight the complexity, and ongoing impact, of internal colonisation on Cornish academics and their subsequent response and pedagogic practice choices.

But how does such activity align within the increasing calls for a decolonised curriculum within UK HE? While intensified activity on social media from academics working in the devolved nations indicates engagement with the complexity of colonisation within their contexts, there has been little call to date for such activity to be undertaken in Cornwall. With the 'Black Lives Matter' movement appearing to be gaining much needed traction, a thoughtful consideration of how the Cornish situate their experiences, both as a people who have been subject to colonisation, yet have been part of the imperial project as economic migrants, settler people or as members of the Anglo-Celtic administrative class, is long overdue.

For Cornish lecturers, contributing to the national debate on decolonising the curriculum offers the possibility of removing the burden of a colonised past, and the opportunity for authoring a new becoming. Contributing to such a discourse offers Cornish lecturers the possibility of being recognised as legitimate players within the UK HE sector.

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Notes:

- 1 While 'internal colonisation' is contested within the literature (Turner 2017), Pinderhughes' (2010, 236) definition of internal colonisation as a 'geographically-based pattern of subordination of a differentiated population, located within the dominant power or country' is used here.
- 2 Deacon (2017, 15) is perhaps the sole writer who has raised the issue of the need for the Cornish to confront their part in the colonising process. In doing so, he reminds us of the need to carefully consider how the global, the regional (Cornwall) and the micro-local interact. As of yet, no such exposition has been explored in relation to curricula within education in Cornwall.

The hidden curriculum as doxa: experiences of the working class

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Introduction

The hidden curriculum – facilitated by teachers in all educational sectors – delivers social class oriented sub-texts and meanings (Martin, 1976; Sambell and McDowell, 1998; Giroux and Penna, 1979; Gair and Mullins, 2001; Margolis et al, 2001; Portelli, 1993; Greene, 1983). This in turn facilitates the construction of knowledge and behaviour, leading to compliance with dominant ideologies. This paper will illustrate these elements of the hidden curriculum through theoretical considerations and lived experience. Firstly, by considering Bourdieu's conceptual notions of doxa and illusio, before reflecting on the educational experiences of the working class and poor. Finally, we will consider the radical hope of ending classism on campus through the choices and agency we all have. Failure to do so will lead to the dominant culture and classes continuing to use the curriculum to reinforce privilege, while the hidden curriculum subtly adds to another level of domination in the reproduction of social class hierarchy.

Doxa and Illusio

We might introduce Pierre Bourdieu's notion of doxa as “what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu 1977, 165-167). We can immediately sense the subversive nature of doxa; it is here that we can begin to see the traits of the hidden curriculum emerge as doxic. Bourdieu (1994, 161) noted of doxa, “the established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, ie as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned, the agents' aspirations have the same limits as the objective conditions of which they are the product”. The taken for granted, the self-evident and critically unquestioned – all could equally describe the hidden curriculum as it does while Bourdieu describes doxa.

Throop and Murphy (2002) refer to doxa as “the process through which socially and culturally constituted ways of perceiving, evaluating and behaving become accepted as unquestioned, self-evident and taken for granted”. We know that the hidden curriculum delivers socially constructed ways of thinking and being – as the dominant culture and classes want. After all, Bourdieu reminds us that “the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of doxa” (1977, 169).

Likewise, we know that the dominant classes have an interest in defending and maintaining the hidden curriculum. Throop and Murphy (2002) outline how “doxa is only foregrounded and made explicit through the interrelation of divergent, novel or competing discourses and practices”. Therefore, what conditions are necessary for those oppressed by doxa of any sort to challenge and question it? Bourdieu discusses this (1977, 169) and outlines the need for crisis in this context to generate the challenge to doxa. However, he also notes that while crisis is necessary, it is never sufficient for the complete questioning of doxa (Throop and Murphy, 2002).

Hayward (2004) notes doxa as “perceptual and classificatory schemes that are misrecognised as having no alternative, and hence as inevitable”. We might think of how the hidden curriculum is misrecognised and how we might feel unable to posit its alternative and assume that it’s all just inevitable. However, misrecognition is what leads us to assuming inevitability. Thomson (2005) outlines how Bourdieu teaches us that “a doxa works as misrecognition; doxic narratives deliberately obfuscate how the game (re)produces social inequality through the (re)production of the hierarchy of positions and capitals”. The game that we play, in particular within the field of education, contains this intrinsic doxic tradition that – through misrecognition - appears to conceal from players its ultimate outcomes and consequences. Thomson continues, “the doxa provides a teleological rationale through which failure is able to be attributed to poor playing, rather than the nature of the game itself” (ibid).

We can envisage how undergraduate students and school pupils that fail in their academic endeavours are considered simply not to be very academic – they failed the game. This is the doxic assumption rather than the critical approach that questions the nature of a game that appears to be fixed in favour of the dominant classes and cultures. We can see the doxic nature of the hidden curriculum as, according to Semper and Blasco (2018), “some scholars suggest the ‘hidden curriculum’ is not actually hidden, but merely constituted by all those things that are so taken for granted that they are rarely given any attention.”

But why do people play the game? What is it that seduces them to take part in this game, a game which “(re)produces social inequality through the (re)production of the hierarchy of positions and capitals” (Thomson, 2005). Bourdieu offers us a way to understand this situation (1998, 76); he does this through *illusio*, meaning “the fact of being in the game, of being invested in the game, of taking the game seriously”. Elsewhere Rowlands and Rawolle (2013) shed further light on *illusio*; “the notion of *illusio* provides a name to the belief that people maintain in the games that are played in everyday life that allow a person to take the objective of these games seriously”. Bourdieu (1998, 76-77) makes it clear that *illusio* is the “fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is ‘worth the candle’, or more simply, that playing is worth the effort”. Yet despite this, Bourdieu (2000, 102) states that, “participants have ultimately no answer to questions about the reasons for their membership in the game, their visceral commitment to it.” The success that individuals generate from partaking in the game and the various forms of capital that flows from this success means that, according to Bourdieu (1998, 80), they “have the game under the skin”. This is still the case “regardless of whether all of the players agree with the game being played” (Rowlands and Rawolle, 2013) or indeed that the players would agree with the rules of the game. As the authors continue, “it is, therefore, *illusio* which prevents us from being cynical about the game being played because we take the game seriously” (ibid).

We can now see the doxic nature of the hidden curriculum, “a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned” (Bourdieu, 1994, 161). A curriculum hidden in plain sight that facilitates the delivery of ways of thinking and being, in accord with the *habitus* of the dominant culture and classes. However, “the doxic attitude does not mean happiness; it means bodily

submission, unconscious submission” (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992, 121). Submission to a reproductive system, “doxa allows the socially arbitrary nature of power relations that have produced the doxa to continue being misrecognised, thereby reproducing this same doxa in a self-reinforcing manner” (Deer, 2012, 116). In addition to this, we can begin to understand the games associated with a social field – that way that *illusio* facilitates the partaking in a game, because after all, as Colley argues, “*illusio* denotes how we are caught up in the game, our belief that it is worth playing” (2012, 324). Because if “your mind is structured according to the structures of the world in which you play, everything will seem obvious and the question of knowing if the game is ‘worth the candle’ will not even be asked” (Bourdieu, 1998, 77).

The working class and higher education

We have seen how the doxic hidden curriculum facilitates the implementation of hidden sub-texts, which in turn help to construct knowledge and behaviour, leading to dominant ideologies and social practices being conformed to. We are reminded of Gair and Mullins (2001, 35) when they point out that the hidden curriculum has an alignment process “that requires submitting to a distinct class-based consciousness in order to acquire necessary symbolic capital”. They continue (*ibid*, 36) to say that “elements of the hidden curriculum ultimately serve not only in the reproduction of both hierarchy and marginalisation, but alienation as well”.

The hidden curriculum is another way in which class-based knowledge and power are transmitted within classrooms and lecture theatres across the world. Althusser (2001, 89) reminds us that education is an ideological state apparatus, whereby the dominant class-based ideologies are conveyed, “the school teaches ‘know-how’, but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’.” Capitalist societies require this in order to perpetrate the myth that society is meritocratic and to ensure “good behaviour, ie the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour”. Those undergraduate students that arrive on campus to begin their degree studies have been through a system where “schools socialise students to accept beliefs, values, and forms of behaviour on the basis of authority, rather than the students’ own critical judgements of their interests” (Bowles and Gintis, 2002). After all, as Paul Willis (1977) reminds us, working class kids get working class jobs.

The continued lack of compassion and generosity shown to the working class and poor is staggering. In her book *Miseducation* (2017) Diane Reay reflects upon her own working class upbringing, she recalls how her and her family (2017, 13) “have been called scum”. Reay discusses (p13) how, more broadly, the working class and poor are presented either as ‘decent and hardworking’ – those who are engaged in trying to become middle class – or else as failures who are either not aspiring enough or not making sufficient effort to be viewed as successful individuals. Reay asserts (2017, 14) that “research shows that changes in the political system since the 1960s have increasingly marginalised the working classes. And here, as in relation to the economic sphere, the working classes are blamed for their own marginalisation”. As Reay succinctly puts it (p17), we live in a “culture in which it is seen to be generally acceptable to scorn and rubbish the working classes”.

Since the late 1970s the UK's Gini co-efficient (Office for National Statistics, 2020a), which measures income inequality, has shown a general pattern of increase. While the median income for the poorest fifth of people fell by 4.3% per year over the two years up to FYE 2019 – it is worth noting that median income of the richest fifth fell between FYE 2017 and FYE 2019 but only by 0.4% per year (Office for National Statistics, 2020b). Overall, average income remains lower than levels reached prior to the economic downturn in FYE 2008 (ibid). The special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights for the United Nations, visited the UK in 2018. The final report noted that “although the United Kingdom is the world's fifth largest economy, one fifth of its population (14 million people) live in poverty, and 1.5 million of them experienced destitution in 2017”. Starkly, the report noted that “close to 40% of children are predicted to be living in poverty by 2021” and emphasises that “statistics alone cannot capture the full picture of poverty in the United Kingdom, much of it the direct result of government policies”. The UK government response to the report was included: “The Prime Minister ‘disagreed’ with the preliminary statement, and the Secretary for Work and Pensions was ‘disappointed’ by its language”. One can imagine that the 14 million people who live in poverty are more than disappointed with and disagree with government policy on such matters. The special rapporteur noted that “in the area of poverty-related policy, the evidence suggests that the driving force has not been economic but rather a commitment to achieving radical social re-engineering – a dramatic restructuring of the relationship between people and the State”.

Despite the feeling that class meanings have vanished or even are irrelevant in a modern neoliberal world, the fact is that they have not vanished, as Scott (2000) notes, “Everybody does not have to believe in the existence of class, nor constantly think of themselves in terms of class identity, for class to be a social division. The system of class situations is not dependant in people's awareness of it”. While social class meanings are real and every minute of every day press down upon the working class and poor, Lawler (2014) goes further and states that “today's working class are seen as ignorant, stupid and universally racist”.

It was F Scott Fitzgerald (1926, 2) who wrote, “Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves”. Minter (1996, 125) quotes Fitzgerald's reflections from 1938: “That was always my experience – a poor boy in a rich town; a poor boy in a rich boy's school; a poor boy in a rich man's club at Princeton...I have never been able to forgive the rich for being rich, and it has coloured my entire life and works.” Fitzgerald's experience at Princeton as the poor undergraduate surrounded by the privileged is a familiar experience to many undergraduates – an experience lived day to day.

Reay (2016, 70) reports that working class students can complete their undergraduate studies “with a strong sense of being bruised and battered by the whole experience”. Indeed, she tells us that, “while I was writing this chapter, the local Cambridge press reported that a privately educated, Cambridge University student had boasted about spitting on working class people. Classism is rife in the

university sector, particularly the elite sector” (ibid, p71). The classism that Reay refers to is facilitated through the hidden curriculum, with its transmission of behaviours, values and knowledge all promoting the ideologies of the privileged. Bourdieu (1988, 41) reminds us clearly that “the structure of the university field reflects the structure of the field of power, while its own activity of selection and indoctrination contributes to the reproduction of that structure”.

Reay (2017, 119) builds on these words from Bourdieu when she notes that “working-class students are predominantly going to universities that are seen to be low status and ‘second rate.’” The argument develops further when she asserts that “the troubling paradox of widening access and the democratisation of higher education is that, despite the democratic intentions, widening access has brought an intensification of class and racial inequalities between different levels of higher education” (ibid, 121). We are seeing classism between various universities along with classism within those elite universities where working-class students have been successful in gaining admission. It is within consideration of the undergraduate experience that Reay correctly highlights that “due to forces of circumstance, the majority of the working-class students were trapped in the present as ‘onlookers’ on student life, compelled by economic necessity to live at home and work in the labour market” (ibid, p125).

Many authors have written about the experiences of working-class students in higher education (Quinn, 2004; Evans, 2009; Lehmann, 2009; Crozier et al, 2008; Finnegan et al, 2017; Thiele et al, 2017), documenting the various struggles undergraduate students have gone through, while navigating the structures that frame and reproduce inequity. However, university staff are complicit in the transmission of the doxic messages of the hidden curriculum. This may be rather difficult to accept, but reflexive consideration will reveal nothing else. The messages of the hidden curriculum, in plain sight on our university campuses, do not help to develop a culture of understanding, compassion and desire to enable not just equity of access but equity of experience and participation. By engaging honestly with this we aim to reject the status quo that Reay describes: “In 21st-century Britain class inequalities in higher education have shifted from being primarily about exclusion from the system to being about exclusion within it” (ibid, 118).

The responsibility to address and engage in dismantling the class-anchored structures that are reproducing inequity on campus and fuelling classism falls at the feet of university staff. However, Bourdieu’s (1993, 43) comments on the nature of university staff, might not leave us with much confidence in their ability to address the issues presented here, when their pre-occupation, he posits, is clearly elsewhere, “those who give the illusion of dominating their epoch are often dominated by it, and, growing terribly dated, they disappear with it”. He continues, “There is something desperate in the docility with which ‘free intellectuals’ rush to hand in their essays on the required subjects of the moment...And there is no more dismal reading, twenty years on, than these obligatory exercises brought together, in perfect harmony, by the special issues of the major ‘intellectual’ magazines”. This relates to the study by Gair and Mullins (2001, 24), referred to earlier, where an interviewee notes that, “part of surviving an institution and making it in a profession is learning to ignore, or to become part of it, and so that it also all of a sudden dissolves, it becomes invisible. So then, we also become part of

the institution". In trying to dominate their epoch, making it the profession, we see the neoliberal careerist take over campus life. The focus being on their own gain of symbolic and economic capital and not becoming the public intellectual that can be part of the struggle to expose and remove the hidden curriculum.

Yet there is still space for light and hope in all of this. Despite all that pushes against the working class and poor student, there are those that succeed in an education system that is set up to produce the very opposite. Rather importantly, Weis (2016, xv) reminds us that "there are always individuals who come from very humble backgrounds and effectively use the education system to reposition themselves in class terms. Although noteworthy, the success of these outstanding individuals neither empirically describes nor can it be used as a proxy for the overall shape of the educational opportunity structure, a structure that predominantly serves to maintain class inequalities". In an interview in 1992, Pierre Bourdieu reflected on his own life trajectory: "My main problem is to try to understand what happened to me. My trajectory may be described as miraculous, I suppose – an ascension to a place where I don't belong... For that reason, even if my work – my full work – is a sort of autobiography, it is a work for people who have the same sort of trajectory, and the same need to understand".

Two banks of one river

George Seurat's masterful painting, *Un Dimanche Après-Midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte* from 1884-86, is aesthetically beautiful – pointillism at its finest, but there is a deeper and relevant meaning. The elite classes spend a privileged Sunday afternoon socialising on the banks of the Seine. Talking, smiling, and picnicking in the good life, they are sheltered from the afternoon sun with dainty parasols and landscaped planting of large trees. While on the other bank of the Seine, in Seurat's painting *Une Baignade à Asnières*, from 1884, the working class take a moment to breathe from their week of hard work. Things are different of this bank of the river; the columns of smoke can be seen drifting from industrial chimneys and the workers are by no means sheltered from the baking heat of the sun – no parasols or landscaped natural shelters. Two banks of one river, two very different lived experiences. The privileged are not interested in the workers on the other bank of the river, but the working class are indeed aware of their privileged counterparts.

Similarly, in her novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Muriel Spark (1961) wrote of the unemployed, "They were without collars, in shabby suits. They were talking and spitting and smoking little bits of cigarette held between middle finger and thumb". While another character comments, in a whisper, on the unemployed, "They are the idle". During the course of the novel, the titular Miss Brodie takes her class to the old town of their city, where they discover the historical significance of the area as well as the conditions the poor are forced to endure. "They approached the old town which none of the girls had properly seen before, because none of their parents was so historically minded as to be moved to conduct their young into the reeking network of slums which the Old Town constituted in those years". The privileged appear uninterested in the plight of the working class or poor - seeing or hearing them might invite the reflexive pause that reveals their role in it all. Later in the novel, Spark

writes about the lead character Sandy thus, “And many times throughout her life Sandy knew with a shock, when speaking to people whose childhood had been in Edinburgh, that there were other people’s Edinburgh’s quite different from hers, and with which she held only the names of districts and streets and monuments in common”.

We are familiar with the many undergraduates that reside on the other bank of the river throughout their studies, their lived experience unacknowledged, unsheltered from the pressure of the beating sun. We are familiar with the shock to the privileged that another’s undergraduate experience might have been different to theirs – no international travel, society receptions or internships. All the time the hidden curriculum with its subtle hidden meanings fuelling these differences, this classism. We must pause and generously consider Paolo Freire (1987, 38) when he asks us “in favour of whom and what (and thus against whom and what) do we promote education? And in favour of whom and what do we develop political activity?”. Perhaps we need to act on what George Orwell said when quoted by Bloom (2004, 76), “The moral to be drawn from this dangerous nightmare situation, is a simple one: Don’t let it happen. It depends on you”.

We can choose not to allow the hidden curriculum to operate in plain sight, to challenge this doxa. We can choose to believe in the emancipatory nature of education and not to facilitate its role in social reproduction. We can choose to reach out in solidarity to the working class and poor with generosity and compassion. For many, this is not an easy task but, in terms of social justice, it is a priority now more than ever. We may see that Bloom (2004, 80) refers to “...our universities, wretched parodies of what they are supposed to be, are veritable monuments of newspeak and doublethink”. However, as Gair and Mullins (2001, 36) reminds us via one of their interviewees, “you need to be conscious when you are challenging the system so that you’re not doing it kind of naively. Through a lot of negotiations and struggles, people like myself have carved out spaces to do a different kind of work.... We carve out spaces, and the question then is how you actually operate in those spaces”. Another interviewee comments, “I think there are many places now that are struggling with what does it mean to be educated. And what is the responsibility of the higher education segment of a society. It gets manifested in some places, in for example, the growth and expansion of service learning courses, internships of various kinds...”

An understanding of “the messy empirical features of the lived reality” (Margolis, 1994, 124) is vital, but we can see that some are making efforts to resist the doxic hidden curriculum. This act of solidarity is vital as Freire (2000, 64) reminds us, “as long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically ‘accept’ their exploitation”. This must result in a contestation where “education is the practice of freedom” (Hooks, 1994, 21), and where “political action on the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and, therefore, action with the oppressed” (Freire, 2000, 66).

Despite “the collective disillusionment which results from the structural mismatch between aspiration and real probabilities” that Bourdieu (1984, 144) reminds us of – and the draw for educators to fall into the “bureaucratisation of mind” (Freire, 1985) – there is still hope. Bourdieu (1984, 144) lays out the “anti-institutional cast of mind... [that] points towards a denunciation of the tacit assumptions of the

social order, a practical suspension of doxic adherence to the prizes it offers and the values it professes, and a withholding of the investments which are a necessary condition of its functioning”.

This is not a naïve hope. It is far more substantive, as McLaren (1988) points out; “radical hope ... resists the fixity of interpretation that could turn it into despair, and refuses to abandon the moral principles which generate it, thus preventing it from becoming merely ‘wishful thinking’.” Ready with this radical hope and compassionate trust in a democratised and critically literate curriculum, we can remove the hidden curriculum from all sectors of education. The working class and poor can, in solidarity with educators of all sectors, travel along life trajectories that their origins would not predict. These predictions are not absolute; we can witness the stretching of the imagination of the possible, the collective struggle towards a future radiant with possibility.

Through the pedagogical action that we employ on campus, we can facilitate these changes; working with undergraduate students as they become who they were always meant to be. We cannot allow a curriculum, hidden or otherwise, dare to impede the development of students merely because of their background. Paolo Freire (1985) reminds us all of the importance of our role as teachers on campus, “Humility is an important virtue for a teacher, the quality of recognising – without any kind of suffering – our limits of knowledge concerning what we can and cannot do through education. Humility accepts the need we have to learn and relearn again and again, the humility to know with those whom we help to know. You must be humble because you don’t have any reason not to be humble. But being humble does not mean that you accept being humiliated. Humility implies understanding the pain of others, the feelings of others.”

Conclusions

The hidden curriculum is a serious matter, not simply an interesting topic to amuse intellectual debate. Along with the curriculum itself, it is used to transmit class-based values, knowledge, culture, ways of thinking and being. Across all universities and schools, the curriculum, hidden or otherwise, is not a neutral site – rather it leads to dominant ideologies and social practices being conformed to. The hidden curriculum is doxic in nature, doxa being thought of as “what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu, 1977, 165-167). As a doxa, the hidden curriculum functions through misrecognition, leading to assuming its inevitability. Why though do we play this game? Rowlands and Rawolle (2013) shed light on illusion, which facilitates the game: “the notion of *illusio* provides a name to the belief that people maintain in the games that are played in everyday life that allow a person to take the objective of these games seriously”. Bourdieu (2000, 102) explains that, “Participants have ultimately no answer to questions about the reasons for their membership in the game, their visceral commitment to it”.

As the privileged use education to reinforce their privilege, what of the working class and poor? Reay (2017, 177) points out that “education is neither to realise the potential of all children nor to provide equal opportunities for academic success. Rather, it is still about...control and containment”. Tawney (1951, 157) summarises this by noting the fact about educational policy is “that hitherto it has been

made, except at brief intervals, by men, few, if any, of whom have themselves attended the schools principally affected by it, or would dream of allowing their children to attend them”.

In higher education we are aware of the socialisation that takes place (Orón Semper et al, 2018) “into academic, professional and disciplinary norms and through service learning” via the hidden curriculum – and the social class anchorage within it. We must all act to dismantle these structures of privilege. We know they exist and how we are complicit in their existence and modes of reproduction. Through the joy of radical hope and the implementation of a critical pedagogy, these outcomes are possible. It is undeniably within reason for all to reject any “educational system that still operates as a form of social apartheid” (Reay, 2017, 178).

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