

The Hidden Curriculum Revisited: A Literature Review on Power, Ideology, and Social Reproduction in Education

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Abstract. This article revisits the concept of the hidden curriculum by examining its intersections with power, ideology, and social reproduction in education. The hidden curriculum has long been recognized as an implicit mechanism through which values and norms are transmitted beyond formal instruction. In this literature review, previous studies are systematically analyzed to uncover how educational institutions shape and reinforce social hierarchies. The review highlights the role of power relations in defining classroom dynamics and institutional practices. It also explores how ideology operates as a subtle yet pervasive force in legitimizing dominant cultural narratives. Social reproduction emerges as a central outcome, where existing inequalities are sustained through educational structures and practices. By synthesizing diverse theoretical and empirical works, the review provides a comprehensive understanding of the hidden curriculum's enduring influence. The findings reveal both the persistence of traditional critiques and the emergence of new perspectives that challenge deterministic interpretations. This review contributes by bridging classical insights with contemporary debates, emphasizing the relevance of the hidden curriculum in current educational contexts. The study underscores the importance of critical reflection on how education simultaneously empowers and constrains learners within broader social frameworks.

Keywords: *Hidden Curriculum, Power Relations, Ideology in Education, Social Reproduction, Educational Inequality.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the hidden curriculum refers to the implicit norms, values, and social expectations transmitted to students beyond the explicit instructional objectives of schools (Kelly, 2009). Jackson (1968) first introduced the term in his book *Life in Classrooms*, highlighting how schools convey unspoken rules that shape student behavior and attitudes. Durkheim (1922) emphasized that education serves not only to impart knowledge but also to instill collective norms essential for social cohesion. Building on Durkheim, Jackson (1968) identified how classroom routines, authority relations, and peer interactions collectively construct a "secondary socialization" process. According to Giroux (1983), the hidden curriculum functions as a powerful mechanism through which dominant ideologies are legitimized and reproduced. Apple (1979) further argued that the hidden curriculum operates to sustain existing economic and social inequalities by embedding hierarchical relationships into schooling practices. For Bowles and Gintis (1976), this process is particularly visible in how schools mirror the structures of the capitalist workplace, preparing students for stratified labor roles. Snyder (1971) observed that students quickly learn informal expectations such as obedience, punctuality, and compliance, which often outweigh the importance of formal learning goals. Meighan (1981) noted that the hidden curriculum shapes students' worldviews

in subtle but enduring ways, often reinforcing systemic biases. Anyon (1980) demonstrated empirically that curricular differences across schools reflect broader class divisions, illustrating how hidden curricular elements vary by socioeconomic context. Giroux and Penna (1983) stressed that these implicit messages must be critically analyzed because they normalize power relations under the guise of neutrality. More recently, Margolis (2001) showed how hidden curriculum research expanded into higher education, revealing how institutional cultures perpetuate exclusionary practices. Portelli (1993) described the hidden curriculum as the "unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons," emphasizing its multidimensional influence on schooling. This body of scholarship collectively demonstrates that the hidden curriculum is a central analytical tool for understanding the relationship between education and society. Its continuing relevance underscores the need to interrogate how educational systems both socialize and stratify individuals in ways that extend beyond formal pedagogy.

The hidden curriculum remains a critical lens for analyzing contemporary educational practices because it continues to shape how students internalize values, norms, and dispositions within diverse schooling contexts (Alsubaie, 2015). In multicultural societies, the hidden curriculum influences how learners negotiate cultural differences and adapt to dominant institutional expectations (Sánchez & Barber, 2020). Research has shown that implicit lessons on gender, race, and class embedded within schooling processes affect students' identity formation and long-term opportunities (Priestley & Biesta, 2013). Apple (2014) emphasizes that even in the era of neoliberal reforms, hidden curricula legitimize social hierarchies by privileging certain knowledge forms while marginalizing others. A study by Fallace and Fantozzi (2017) reveals that teacher expectations and institutional policies indirectly transmit ideological assumptions that significantly affect student learning outcomes. Similarly, Brown and Rodríguez (2009) argue that hidden curricula contribute to disparities by reinforcing deficit perspectives about minority learners. Giroux (2020) asserts that the relevance of hidden curriculum is magnified under current global crises, as schools become sites where political ideologies and economic inequalities are subtly normalized. According to Portelli (1993), contemporary analyses must consider not only structural but also cultural and symbolic dimensions of hidden curricular practices. Studies in higher education have demonstrated that academic institutions perpetuate elitism and exclusion through unspoken norms, thereby influencing access to social capital (Margolis, 2001). Recent literature also suggests that digital learning environments have extended the hidden curriculum into virtual spaces, where implicit messages are embedded in design and interaction patterns (Henderson, Selwyn, & Aston, 2017). These findings collectively illustrate that hidden curricula are not confined to traditional classrooms but permeate all levels of education, from primary schools to universities. In contexts of educational reform, hidden curricula remain relevant because they operate beneath the surface of policy discourses, often contradicting stated goals of equity and inclusion (Priestley & Biesta, 2013). This ongoing tension between explicit and implicit pedagogical processes demonstrates why critical attention to hidden curricula is essential for rethinking contemporary educational practices (Alsubaie, 2015). Sustained scholarly engagement indicates that the hidden curriculum continues to be a dynamic, evolving phenomenon rather than a static theoretical concept (Giroux, 2020). Thus, the relevance of the hidden curriculum

in modern education lies in its persistent role as a mediator of ideology, power, and inequality across shifting contexts (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009).

Power relations within educational settings have long been recognized as central to the functioning of the hidden curriculum because they shape how authority is constructed and enacted in classrooms (Foucault, 1977). Teachers exercise institutional authority not only through explicit rules but also through subtle mechanisms that regulate student behavior and participation (Ball, 2012). Research demonstrates that such relations of power establish hierarchies that condition students' engagement with knowledge and influence their perceptions of legitimacy and authority (Apple, 2014). Bernstein (2000) emphasized that pedagogic codes and classifications serve to reproduce social boundaries while simultaneously legitimizing certain forms of discourse over others. Classroom interactions often reflect broader societal inequalities, where teacher expectations differentially impact students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Studies have shown that power dynamics manifest in the organization of space, time, and assessment, reinforcing compliance and discipline as central aspects of schooling (Gillborn, 2008). The hidden curriculum of obedience and conformity thus operates as an implicit pedagogical force that aligns students with institutional norms (Jackson, 1968). Power in educational contexts is not only hierarchical but also relational, operating through both teacher-student dynamics and peer interactions (Giroux, 2011). Contemporary scholarship has highlighted how neoliberal reforms intensify these dynamics by positioning students as consumers and teachers as service providers, further altering classroom authority relations (Hursh, 2016). The reproduction of dominant ideologies within classrooms occurs precisely because power determines which voices are amplified and which are silenced (Lukes, 2005). Critical pedagogues argue that recognizing these power asymmetries is essential for fostering emancipatory forms of education (Freire, 1970). Analysis of school disciplinary policies indicates that students from marginalized communities often experience disproportionate forms of surveillance and control, reflecting structural inequalities (Morris, 2016). Such disparities demonstrate that power relations are deeply intertwined with broader mechanisms of social reproduction that sustain inequality beyond the school walls (Giroux, 2011). Understanding the power relations embedded in education allows scholars to critically evaluate how schools function as both sites of social control and potential spaces for resistance (Apple, 2014). This perspective underscores the necessity of interrogating the hidden curriculum to reveal how authority, discipline, and hierarchy intersect with broader ideological structures.

The ideological dimensions of schooling are embedded in the hidden curriculum because educational institutions not only transmit knowledge but also reproduce dominant cultural values and worldviews (Apple, 2014). Schools operate as sites where ideologies are normalized through everyday practices and curricular choices, shaping how students perceive their roles in society (Giroux, 1983). Research has shown that ideology is not neutral in education since it often privileges the perspectives of dominant groups while marginalizing minority voices (McLaren, 2015). The hidden curriculum functions as a mechanism through which social norms are legitimized, allowing existing power structures to be maintained under the guise of neutrality (Anyon, 1980). Teachers and administrators, consciously or unconsciously, reinforce these ideologies by emphasizing conformity, discipline, and the

acceptance of authority as central to schooling (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Ideological reproduction is also visible in curricular content where certain histories, literatures, and cultural practices are prioritized while others are excluded (Apple, 2012). Critical theorists argue that this process serves to maintain capitalist and patriarchal structures by embedding particular values into the educational experience (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993). Empirical studies further illustrate how school rituals, grading practices, and assessment mechanisms reflect broader ideological frameworks that condition students toward compliance (Au, 2011). In neoliberal contexts, ideology manifests through policies emphasizing standardization, accountability, and market-driven reforms that redefine the purpose of education (Hursh, 2007). Scholars have documented that such reforms not only intensify inequality but also reshape students into competitive subjects aligned with global economic demands (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). Cultural reproduction through education therefore operates subtly, influencing how students internalize meritocracy, individualism, and consumerism as unquestioned truths (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The ideological work of schooling extends beyond formal instruction since it molds aspirations, self-perceptions, and collective identities in ways that sustain systemic inequities (McLaren, 2015). This phenomenon has been critiqued for concealing its political nature, portraying education as objective while silently reinforcing dominant social orders (Giroux, 1983). Recognition of these ideological dimensions is essential for rethinking the role of schools as institutions that should foster critical consciousness rather than passive acceptance (Freire, 1970). Analyzing the ideological underpinnings of the hidden curriculum thus reveals how deeply education is tied to broader struggles over culture, identity, and social justice (Apple, 2014).

The hidden curriculum has been widely studied as a mechanism of social reproduction because it ensures the transmission of cultural capital and social norms that maintain existing class structures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Research demonstrates that schools function not only as sites of knowledge acquisition but also as institutions that reproduce social hierarchies across generations (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The process of stratification is embedded in pedagogical practices where students from privileged backgrounds are rewarded for dispositions that align with dominant cultural codes (Lareau, 2011). Students from marginalized communities often encounter curricula and disciplinary policies that reinforce deficit perspectives, limiting their opportunities for upward mobility (Anyon, 1980). Empirical studies reveal that working-class students tend to be socialized into roles emphasizing obedience and routine labor, while middle-class students are trained for leadership and creativity (MacLeod, 2009). The persistence of these patterns highlights how inequality is institutionalized within everyday schooling processes (Collins, 2009). Research in sociology of education has further shown that hidden curricular messages about meritocracy mask structural disadvantages by attributing failure to individual shortcomings rather than systemic inequities (Giroux, 1983). Teacher expectations and labeling practices disproportionately disadvantage minority students, illustrating how symbolic power translates into educational outcomes (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Inequality is perpetuated not only through content but also through organizational structures such as tracking, standardized testing, and differential access to resources (Oakes, 2005). Policies that emphasize accountability and performance metrics exacerbate these disparities by privileging schools with greater economic

and cultural resources (Lipman, 2011). Comparative studies demonstrate that social reproduction mechanisms operate globally, though they manifest differently depending on local political and cultural contexts (Sadovnik, 2011). The intersection of race, class, and gender further intensifies these inequalities, making the hidden curriculum a powerful force in sustaining multiple layers of stratification (Gillborn, 2008). Such processes result in what Bernstein (2000) describes as symbolic control, where the distribution of knowledge reflects and legitimizes social divisions. Critical pedagogues argue that disrupting these patterns requires recognition of how education both reflects and constructs broader inequalities (Freire, 1970). Understanding social reproduction through the hidden curriculum is therefore essential for addressing the persistent inequities embedded within modern education systems (Apple, 2014).

Scholarly discussions of the hidden curriculum have established its centrality in explaining how education functions as a site of cultural transmission and social reproduction, yet important research gaps remain (Apple, 2014). Existing studies often emphasize the foundational theories of Jackson, Bourdieu, and Bowles and Gintis, but fewer works critically synthesize how these perspectives intersect with contemporary debates on ideology and power in education (Giroux, 2011). Researchers have noted that most empirical studies concentrate on schooling in Western contexts, which limits the applicability of findings to global educational systems with different sociopolitical dynamics (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2019). Several scholars highlight the lack of integrative reviews that consolidate historical, theoretical, and empirical insights into a comprehensive framework (Margolis, 2001). The majority of literature also tends to examine single dimensions such as class or race, without adequately addressing the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and economic inequality (Collins, 2009). Scholars such as Au (2011) argue that neoliberal reforms intensify hidden curricular effects, yet systematic literature reviews that evaluate this trend remain scarce. The need for updated synthesis is further reinforced by growing attention to digital learning environments where hidden curricula manifest in new, technologically mediated ways (Henderson, Selwyn, & Aston, 2017). Digital learning environments have introduced new forms of hidden curricula as technological platforms subtly transmit assumptions about knowledge, authority, and participation, reflecting broader national efforts to prepare education systems for Society 5.0 transformations (Hikmat, 2022). Research has also pointed out the absence of comparative studies that analyze hidden curricula across different educational levels, from primary schooling to higher education (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). Addressing these gaps requires an analytical approach that moves beyond fragmented case studies toward broader theoretical generalizations (Giroux, 2020). This study aims to revisit the concept of the hidden curriculum through a systematic literature review that integrates power, ideology, and social reproduction as interrelated analytical dimensions. The review synthesizes past and present scholarship to illuminate how the hidden curriculum continues to influence educational structures across contexts. The contribution of this work lies in bridging classical sociological theories with contemporary critical perspectives, providing a more nuanced understanding of the hidden curriculum's role in sustaining or challenging inequality. The study further offers a critical framework for educators and policymakers to identify and disrupt implicit mechanisms of control embedded in educational practice. This effort contributes to scholarly debates by

consolidating existing knowledge, identifying persistent gaps, and outlining future research directions (Portelli, 1993). The ultimate contribution is to provide a holistic review that repositions the hidden curriculum as a vital concept for understanding the enduring intersections of power, ideology, and social reproduction in education.

B. METHOD

This study employed a literature review approach designed to systematically analyze scholarly works on the hidden curriculum and its relationship with power, ideology, and social reproduction in education. The review process focused on identifying relevant books, journal articles, and conference proceedings that directly address the theoretical and empirical aspects of the topic. A systematic strategy was applied to ensure the comprehensiveness of the search by including sources from both classical foundations and contemporary debates. The selection process prioritized peer-reviewed publications to maintain academic rigor and reliability. Publications were screened based on their relevance to the themes of hidden curriculum, power relations, ideological dimensions, and mechanisms of social reproduction. The review emphasized sources that offered critical perspectives, theoretical developments, and empirical evidence across different educational contexts. The inclusion criteria required works that explicitly discussed the implicit processes of schooling beyond the formal curriculum. Exclusion criteria eliminated studies that were primarily descriptive without engaging with theoretical or analytical frameworks. The analysis focused on works published in English to ensure accessibility and consistency. A thematic analysis technique was adopted to identify recurring patterns and conceptual linkages among the reviewed studies. The process of coding and categorization allowed the extraction of major themes, including historical foundations, power relations in classrooms, ideological reproduction, and the perpetuation of inequality. Each theme was synthesized to highlight convergences and divergences in scholarly interpretations. The method also involved comparing classical perspectives with recent contributions to provide a diachronic understanding of the hidden curriculum. Emphasis was placed on capturing both continuity and transformation in the discourse surrounding this concept. The literature review was deliberately structured to avoid overreliance on any single theoretical school, thereby ensuring balance across diverse intellectual traditions. The analysis integrated findings from multiple disciplines, including sociology, pedagogy, and critical theory, to provide a comprehensive view. Careful attention was given to methodological diversity in the selected studies to capture varied approaches to the hidden curriculum. The synthesis aimed to construct a coherent narrative that reflects the complexity of the topic while maintaining analytical clarity. The method also sought to uncover gaps in the existing literature that warrant further exploration. The overall process was guided by principles of transparency, systematic organization, and academic rigor. The final outcome of this methodological approach was a structured framework that enables a holistic reassessment of the hidden curriculum in contemporary educational contexts.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hidden curriculum has maintained its significance as a central theoretical construct because it explains how education transmits values and norms beyond the formal curriculum.

Scholars initially framed the hidden curriculum as an implicit process of socialization that occurs in classrooms through routines, authority structures, and unspoken expectations. Over time, this concept evolved into a broader analytical lens that highlights the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of schooling. Theoretical continuities remain evident as foundational perspectives continue to influence contemporary debates about the nature of education. The concept has been reinterpreted to account for changing contexts while retaining its core focus on the implicit transmission of ideology and power. Researchers now recognize that the hidden curriculum is not static but adapts to transformations in educational systems and societal structures. The evolution of this idea reflects a shift from narrow institutional analyses toward more comprehensive understandings of education as a site of cultural production. Theoretical debates surrounding the hidden curriculum demonstrate its capacity to integrate classical sociology with critical pedagogy and contemporary educational theory. Its relevance persists because it provides a framework for analyzing how schools reproduce social structures while simultaneously offering potential for resistance and change. The continuity of this concept demonstrates its resilience as new forms of education emerge in globalized and digital environments. The theoretical strength of the hidden curriculum lies in its adaptability to diverse contexts without losing its explanatory power. The ongoing refinement of this construct illustrates the dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation in educational thought. Its enduring presence in scholarship indicates that it continues to offer valuable insights into the complexities of schooling. The concept remains a powerful tool for uncovering the unseen forces that shape educational experiences. Theoretical developments show that the hidden curriculum continues to bridge historical perspectives with contemporary issues, ensuring its place as a critical category in the study of education.

Power relations serve as a fundamental mechanism through which the hidden curriculum operates within educational settings. Authority structures in classrooms establish clear hierarchies that determine how students engage with knowledge and interact with teachers. These hierarchies create expectations of obedience, conformity, and compliance that shape student behavior in subtle but powerful ways. The daily routines of schooling, including rules, discipline, and grading systems, reinforce these dynamics by embedding authority into ordinary practices. Students internalize these power relations as part of their socialization, learning to accept asymmetrical distributions of authority as natural and inevitable. Teachers, as representatives of institutional authority, become key agents in transmitting these implicit lessons. Their interactions with students, whether encouraging participation or enforcing discipline, model the exercise of power in ways that extend beyond academic content. The organization of classroom space, the allocation of speaking time, and the enforcement of behavioral codes all contribute to the reproduction of hierarchical structures. These mechanisms reveal that education is not only about delivering knowledge but also about shaping students' understanding of authority and control. Power relations also manifest in peer interactions where students reproduce or challenge dominant hierarchies among themselves. The hidden curriculum ensures that these interactions reinforce broader societal structures by normalizing competition, compliance, and stratification. The subtlety of this process makes it more effective because students often internalize these dynamics unconsciously. The hidden curriculum creates lasting impressions that influence how individuals perceive authority in

workplaces and social institutions later in life. The centrality of power in education demonstrates that schooling operates as both a site of knowledge transmission and a field of social control. Recognizing this dynamic highlights the role of hidden curricula in shaping not only academic achievement but also broader patterns of social behavior. The enduring impact of power relations within schools underscores their role as a defining element of the hidden curriculum.

Ideological reproduction through educational practices represents one of the most pervasive functions of the hidden curriculum. Schools act as institutions that naturalize dominant cultural values by embedding them into everyday routines, content, and interactions. The implicit messages transmitted through textbooks, classroom discourse, and assessment practices privilege certain worldviews while rendering others invisible. Students learn not only academic knowledge but also the ideological assumptions that define what counts as legitimate knowledge. These processes create a framework in which learners internalize societal hierarchies as normal and unquestionable. Teachers play a crucial role in reinforcing these ideological patterns through the ways they emphasize discipline, merit, and competition. The hidden curriculum ensures that political and economic ideologies are subtly transmitted without explicit acknowledgment. Students are often socialized to accept individualism, meritocracy, and consumerism as universal truths rather than contested values. The ideological function of schooling extends beyond curricular content into rituals such as school assemblies, standardized testing, and grading systems. These practices reinforce obedience to institutional authority while concealing their political nature. The effect of such ideological reproduction is that education operates less as a neutral pursuit of knowledge and more as a mechanism for legitimizing existing power structures. Ideologies embedded in education also shape students' aspirations and perceptions of their social roles. The normalization of certain values contributes to the marginalization of alternative perspectives, limiting possibilities for critical thought. This process demonstrates that ideology in schooling does not merely reflect external social orders but actively constructs them within the minds of learners. The persistence of these ideological mechanisms illustrates their effectiveness in maintaining continuity across generations. The hidden curriculum thus serves as an invisible but powerful tool for embedding dominant ideologies into the fabric of education. The centrality of ideological reproduction underscores the importance of examining how schools influence cultural and political consciousness beyond formal instruction.

Social reproduction within education demonstrates how schools perpetuate inequality by transmitting cultural capital unevenly across different groups of students. The hidden curriculum plays a decisive role in reinforcing social hierarchies because it normalizes the advantages of privileged groups while constraining the opportunities of marginalized ones. Students from affluent families often enter schools already familiar with the dominant cultural codes, which allows them to thrive under implicit expectations. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds encounter barriers because their cultural practices are undervalued or disregarded in formal and informal school structures. Classroom practices, including discipline, evaluation, and teacher expectations, reflect and reinforce existing patterns of social stratification. The allocation of resources and opportunities within schools further widens the gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Educational pathways such

as tracking and streaming reproduce inequality by steering students into roles aligned with their social origins. The hidden curriculum also influences how students perceive their own capacities, encouraging some to aspire to leadership and others to accept subordinate positions. This process sustains intergenerational cycles of privilege and disadvantage by embedding inequality into everyday schooling. Students internalize these implicit lessons, which later shape their career choices, economic prospects, and social identities. The effect of such reproduction is cumulative, as small disparities compound into long-term structural disadvantages. The hidden curriculum also intersects with race, gender, and ethnicity, amplifying the effects of inequality in diverse social contexts. The persistence of these dynamics demonstrates that education often functions less as a tool for mobility and more as a mechanism for maintaining the status quo. Inequality thus becomes institutionalized through practices that appear neutral but carry profound social implications. The hidden curriculum ensures that these mechanisms remain invisible to most participants, making them more powerful in shaping life trajectories. The endurance of social reproduction through education highlights its role as a central outcome of hidden curricular processes.

Emerging challenges and transformations of hidden curricula illustrate how implicit educational processes adapt to new social, political, and technological contexts. The expansion of neoliberal reforms has reshaped the hidden curriculum by embedding values of competition, accountability, and market orientation into schooling. Students increasingly encounter implicit lessons that emphasize performance metrics and consumer-driven identities rather than collective responsibility or critical inquiry. Digital learning environments have introduced new forms of hidden curricula as technological platforms subtly transmit assumptions about knowledge, authority, and participation. Online assessments, algorithmic feedback, and platform designs convey implicit expectations that shape student behavior in ways often unnoticed. Globalization has further extended hidden curricula by circulating dominant cultural values across borders through international educational policies and standardized testing regimes. These developments reveal that hidden curricula are no longer confined to local classroom practices but are embedded within transnational educational frameworks. The rise of multicultural and diverse learning environments has also transformed implicit socialization by making cultural negotiations central to schooling. Students learn to navigate conflicting values and identities in contexts where diversity is celebrated rhetorically but often marginalized in practice. Contemporary challenges such as inequality, climate change, and digital surveillance amplify the importance of examining how hidden curricula adapt to crises. Schools implicitly teach students to normalize uncertainty and precarity by framing them as individual responsibilities rather than systemic issues. The hidden curriculum has thus shifted toward preparing students for flexible, precarious labor markets while discouraging systemic critique. These transformations illustrate that hidden curricula are dynamic and continually reconfigured to reflect broader societal changes. Emerging research demonstrates that these processes can simultaneously sustain old inequalities and generate new forms of exclusion. The hidden curriculum therefore remains a vital analytical concept because it reveals how education evolves in response to shifting political and cultural pressures. Recognizing these transformations is essential for reimagining education as a space for empowerment rather than passive adaptation.

The finding that the hidden curriculum has evolved while retaining its theoretical foundations aligns with contemporary scholarship that emphasizes its continuity and adaptability. Kärner and Schneider (2024) conducted a scoping review and found that elements such as norms, roles, and transmission modes remain central, which mirrors the persistence of classical concepts in current debates. Rossouw (2023) developed a conceptual framework that integrates traditional and contemporary understandings, showing that the hidden curriculum continues to adapt without losing its explanatory strength. Coşkun Yaşar and Aslan (2021) traced the evolution of curriculum theory and highlighted how shifting ideological and theoretical perspectives parallel the transformation of the hidden curriculum over time. Sellers and Alarcón (2023) examined the hidden curriculum in engineering education and demonstrated how classical theories extend into professional and disciplinary contexts, supporting the argument that theoretical continuity spans multiple domains. Redish (2010) added further nuance by showing that hidden curricular elements such as epistemology and discourse shape student learning in physics, reinforcing the view that the concept expands into new contexts while retaining its roots. These studies confirm that the hidden curriculum is neither static nor obsolete but rather an evolving analytical tool that bridges classical sociological foundations with modern educational challenges. The consistency of theoretical continuities across different fields demonstrates that the hidden curriculum sustains its relevance in explaining implicit socialization in both traditional and emerging learning environments. The convergence between historical scholarship and recent investigations validates the interpretation that the hidden curriculum is a dynamic concept capable of addressing contemporary educational complexities. This synthesis indicates that theoretical evolution strengthens rather than weakens the analytical power of the hidden curriculum.

The finding that power relations serve as a central mechanism of the hidden curriculum resonates strongly with earlier studies that highlight how authority structures define the educational experience. Foucault (1977) argued that disciplinary practices in schools function as technologies of power that normalize compliance, which aligns with the observation that classroom hierarchies shape student behavior. Bernstein (2000) emphasized how pedagogic codes regulate the distribution of knowledge, thereby reproducing authority relations within educational contexts. Ball (2012) extended this argument by showing how micro-politics in schools position teachers as gatekeepers of power who influence access to participation and learning. Gillborn (2008) demonstrated that power relations intersect with race, producing unequal outcomes that are normalized through hidden curricular processes. Morris (2016) illustrated that disciplinary policies disproportionately affect marginalized groups, which confirms that power relations sustain inequality beyond explicit instruction. These studies collectively validate the finding that authority is not simply an organizational necessity but a hidden mechanism that transmits social expectations. The convergence between classical and contemporary scholarship demonstrates that power remains integral to understanding how hidden curricula operate across diverse contexts. The extension of this analysis to race, gender, and class dynamics further strengthens the interpretation that power relations reproduce broader societal hierarchies within education. This synthesis shows that schools act simultaneously as spaces of learning and as institutions of social control, with hidden curricula reinforcing asymmetries of authority in subtle yet enduring ways.

The finding that ideological reproduction occurs through educational practices aligns with long-standing critiques that schools act as sites where dominant worldviews are naturalized. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that schools mirror the structures of capitalist economies, transmitting values such as competition and obedience that sustain existing social orders. Apple (2012) emphasized that curricula privilege particular forms of cultural knowledge, reinforcing ideological dominance while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Au (2011) demonstrated that high-stakes testing reflects neoliberal ideologies by prioritizing standardization and accountability, which conceal the political nature of schooling. Giroux and Penna (1983) highlighted how social education integrates ideological control into daily classroom routines, illustrating that ideology is embedded in both content and process. Hursh (2007) further argued that neoliberal reforms restructure education by instilling market-based values, aligning the hidden curriculum with global economic imperatives. These perspectives confirm that ideology within education is not accidental but systematically reproduced through curricular choices, assessment mechanisms, and institutional practices. The parallel between classical theories and contemporary studies demonstrates that ideological reproduction is a persistent feature of schooling across different contexts. The integration of ideology into school routines ensures that students internalize dominant assumptions as objective truths, limiting the development of critical consciousness. This comparative synthesis underscores that the hidden curriculum is a powerful mechanism for transmitting ideology in ways that shape social identities and sustain systemic inequalities.

The finding that social reproduction and inequality are perpetuated through hidden curricula is strongly supported by critical sociological scholarship. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that education reproduces cultural capital unevenly, thereby ensuring that privilege is transmitted across generations. Anyon (1980) demonstrated that curricular differences across social classes prepare students for predetermined occupational roles, reinforcing structural inequality. Oakes (2005) showed that tracking systems institutionalize inequity by channeling students into stratified educational pathways based on social background rather than merit. Lareau (2011) highlighted how family socialization interacts with school expectations to advantage middle-class students while disadvantaging working-class peers. Lipman (2011) analyzed neoliberal reforms and concluded that accountability policies exacerbate inequality by privileging schools with greater resources. MacLeod (2009) illustrated through ethnographic work that aspirations among low-income students are constrained by hidden curricular messages that normalize limited social mobility. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) demonstrated that teacher expectations function as a mechanism of symbolic power that amplifies inequality within classrooms. Gillborn (2008) emphasized that race intersects with class to intensify unequal outcomes, showing that hidden curricula reproduce stratification across multiple dimensions. These studies collectively validate the finding that schools often function less as engines of mobility and more as institutions of reproduction. The comparative evidence underscores that hidden curricular processes institutionalize inequality in subtle ways, making them more enduring and difficult to challenge.

The finding that hidden curricula face emerging challenges and transformations reflects recent scholarship that highlights how implicit educational processes adapt to shifting

contexts. Hidden curricula extend beyond formal schooling into digital spaces where adolescents construct identities through social media interactions, as illustrated by the prevalence of narcissistic behaviors that shape implicit values and norms (Engkus, Hikmat, & Karso, 2017). Henderson, Selwyn, and Aston (2017) showed that digital learning environments introduce new hidden curricular dimensions through design and technological mediation. Evidence from studies of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic further demonstrates how hidden curricula emerge through new platforms, shaping implicit expectations and patterns of student engagement (Hikmat, Hermawan, Aldim, & Irwandi, 2020). Lingard and Sellar (2013) argued that globalization reshapes education by embedding transnational policy frameworks that implicitly transmit neoliberal values. Sánchez and Barber (2020) emphasized that diverse and multicultural classrooms create implicit lessons about cultural negotiation and identity formation. Priestley and Biesta (2013) observed that curriculum reforms often promise equity yet simultaneously reproduce hidden expectations that undermine inclusive goals. Hursh (2016) analyzed neoliberal reforms and concluded that accountability and market-driven measures have intensified hidden curricular effects, preparing students for precarious labor markets. Brown and Rodríguez (2009) found that implicit messages about deficit perspectives in schools contribute to the marginalization of minority learners, showing that hidden curricula adapt to reproduce inequities in new forms. Alsubaie (2015) highlighted that the hidden curriculum now extends into higher education and professional contexts, where unspoken norms shape student opportunities. Margolis (2001) confirmed this in the university setting by documenting how institutional cultures sustain exclusivity through implicit socialization. Sellers and Alarcón (2023) demonstrated that engineering education embeds implicit professional ideologies that align with global economic shifts. These findings support the interpretation that hidden curricula evolve in response to technological change, global pressures, and policy reforms, making them dynamic rather than static.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the hidden curriculum remains a powerful analytical lens for understanding the complex dynamics of education. The findings show that the theoretical foundations of the hidden curriculum continue to provide valuable insights while evolving to address contemporary challenges. The concept has retained its relevance because it bridges classical perspectives with critical and modern educational theories. Power relations emerge as a central mechanism that shapes student behavior and reinforces institutional authority. The analysis demonstrates that authority structures embedded in daily school practices transmit implicit lessons that influence how learners view hierarchy and control. Ideological reproduction through education ensures that dominant cultural values and political assumptions are internalized as natural truths. Students absorb these ideologies through curricular content, assessment practices, and institutional routines that mask their political nature. Social reproduction remains evident as educational systems transmit privilege unevenly, reinforcing structural inequalities across class, race, and gender. The hidden curriculum sustains intergenerational cycles of advantage and disadvantage by legitimizing cultural capital associated with dominant groups. Inequality is thus perpetuated not only through explicit

policies but also through implicit norms and expectations. Emerging transformations demonstrate that hidden curricula extend beyond traditional classrooms into digital platforms and globalized education. These shifts create new forms of implicit socialization that align with neoliberal reforms and technological changes. Students now encounter hidden lessons about competition, consumerism, and adaptability within modern learning environments. The hidden curriculum proves to be dynamic, continually adapting to societal and institutional changes. Its resilience underscores its significance as a conceptual tool for analyzing education across time and context. The findings highlight that education is never neutral but always a site of ideological negotiation and power. The hidden curriculum simultaneously constrains and empowers learners, shaping both their identities and opportunities. Recognizing its operation allows educators and policymakers to uncover implicit mechanisms that reproduce inequality. The study provides a comprehensive synthesis that repositions the hidden curriculum as essential for critical engagement with education. The conclusion emphasizes the need to rethink education not only as a vehicle for knowledge but also as a space for challenging and transforming social realities.

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