

# Kohlberg and Hidden Curriculum in Moral Education: An Opportunity for Students' Acquisition of Moral Values in the New Turkish Primary Education Curriculum

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## **Abstract**

Even though hidden curriculum is influential on students' moral education, it is not sufficiently investigated. Among the researchers that studied the subject, Lawrence Kohlberg has attempted to systematically explain hidden curriculum's role and effects on moral education. In this article, the role and effects of hidden curriculum in moral education are explained in accordance with Kohlberg's suggestions. In particular, the inadequacy of conveying moral education in the form of a course and in an authoritarian way has been emphasized. The new primary curriculum in Turkey brings a new understanding about students' gaining moral values. The degree of gaining these moral values by students in classrooms is discussed according to Kohlberg's ideas about hidden curriculum.

## **Key Words**

Primary Curricula, Hidden Curriculum, Kohlberg, Moral Education, Moral Values.

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Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) is one of the most important educators and psychologists of our age and is renowned for his studies on moral development and education. His work and suggestions in moral development and education preserve their importance to this date.

In this study, Kohlberg’s perspective on hidden curriculum, which has a central place in his thought on and application of moral education are analyzed.

### **Hidden Curriculum in Moral Education**

One of the functions of education is to teach both current values that exist and new values that are not present in the society and convey them to upcoming generation. This function is expected to be fulfilled by administrators and teachers in line with educational curricula. Students are presented with various values that they are demanded to learn in schools through both the official curriculum and hidden curriculum. However, hidden curriculum is more effective than the official curriculum in the process whereby values are learned. In spite of this, the number of researchers that focus on the issue of hidden curriculum remains very limited. The most important of these researchers is Kohlberg.

### **The Concept of Hidden Curriculum**

The current literature shows that the application of educational programs identifies two sorts of curricula in schools. The first type is prepared by official authorities, contains a detailed description of objectives and activities, and is referred to as the “formal” or “official” curriculum. The second sort of curriculum, the essentials of which are not clearly and definitively laid out, contains elements that are not included in the objectives and activities presented in the official curriculum, and are referred as “hidden curriculum.” The hidden curriculum does not exist in the form of a written document. It consists of the order and regulations of the school, its physical and psychological environment, and the non-official or implied messages that the administrators or teachers convey to students (Apple, 1989; 1993; Dreeben, 1968; Giroux, 1983a; Giroux & Penna, 1983, Jackson, 1968; Snyder, 1971 ).

Two main approaches exist on the issue of hidden curriculum: functionalists and neo-Marxists. According to the functionalists who focus on ways that schools take part in carrying social order, schools should provide students knowledge, skills, values, and

opinions that the society is in need of in order to help them adjust to the current system in the society. This process is managed with the help of hidden curriculum (Cookson & Sadovnik, 2002; Giroux & Penna, 1981). On the other hand, the neo-Marxist approach asserts that the dominant classes and forces in the society influence education through hidden curriculum. According to this approach, schools help perpetuate an unjust social order through conveying beliefs, values, and norms that are effective in political, social, and economic life. These values, beliefs, and norms are put across to students through covert messages (Apple, 1979, 1980, 1980/1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1977, 1983a, 1983b; Gordon, 1991).

### **Moral Education in Kohlberg**

Moral education usually denotes an educational process that directly affects the child's moral development. Kohlberg, in a similar vein, elaborated a model of moral education in order to expedite the process of moral development and provide the appropriate conditions called "just community schools." (Hersh, Miller & Fielding, 1980; Kohlberg 1975). Kohlberg's theory of moral development provides the basis of moral education approach. According to this approach, the child experiences educational process that leads him or her to the next moral stage through the resolution of ethical conflicts or dilemmas. Kohlberg intends to initiate the processes of reasoning rather than convey certain values in moral education. This education is focused on the content of a particular course less than a framework for the entire school and education system (Kohlberg, 1985; Power, 1981; Reimer & Power, 1980; Wasserman, 1980).

### **Kohlberg and the Hidden Curriculum**

Kohlberg has an important status as the first researcher who focused on hidden curriculum in moral education. In his studies of moral education, he had various suggestions on the issue of the role of hidden curriculum in moral education. According to Kohlberg, not only the formal curriculum, but also the hidden curriculum is effective in providing a ground for the moral development of students. Most of the time, students learn through the moral environment and atmosphere that is established by the way of hidden curriculums rather than textbooks and educational materials. Kohlberg suggests that conveying moral education through formal curricula in the form of courses is not sufficient, and emphasizes the impor-

tance of establishing a just school and a just environment in providing a framework for the child's moral development.

Kohlberg's work on hidden curriculum began in 1970\* Kohlberg aggregates his thoughts on hidden curriculum among three main headlines (Kohlberg, 1983):

- ◆ Hidden curriculum relates to social relationships in schools.
- ◆ Hidden curriculum is the most effective and elaborate curriculum in the moral development of students.
- ◆ Moral development should be directed at the direction of moral maturation that is based on being fair.

Kohlberg's perspective on hidden curriculum is closer to the functionalist approach. Additionally, Kohlberg declares that his perspective is in line with John Dewey's "progressive" standpoint. (Kohlberg, 1983).

In his later studies, Kohlberg analyzed certain situations that were results of the influence of hidden curriculum on moral education. He focused on three main subjects in relation with the hidden curriculum.

1) *Cheating*: In the suggestions that he presented on cheating incidents at schools, Kohlberg identifies a relation between cheating and hidden curriculum. According to him, hidden curriculum provides the necessary conditions for cheating and encourages it. While teachers, administrators, and families forbid cheating at school, because of the competitive environment formed by these people, students are consequently put under pressure to receive better grades than their peers, and are thus encouraged cheating (Kohlberg, 1983; Power & Kohlberg, 1986).

2) *Teacher behaviors and authority*: The behavior of teachers in classrooms is one of the factors that determine hidden curriculum, and has an important place in moral education. Teachers convey social and moral messages through punishing or rewarding students in line with the rules that they set up and by the way of authority. Whereas the official curriculum declares that courses will be carried on in a democratic manner and that the students will be encouraged to think creatively, the school's conventions emphasize the use of authority. The lectures are carried on in a teacher-centered way, creating an environment where the only authority is the teacher. A

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\* Kohlberg first mentioned the topic of hidden curriculum in his paper that he presented at a conference in 1969 and was published in 1970

school that officially seems to be democratic can thus have an authoritarian hidden curriculum (Kohlberg, 1983; Kohlberg & Turiel, 1971).

3) *Changing and improving hidden curriculum*: Kohlberg made some suggestions on the issue of changing the hidden curriculum that affects moral education negatively. While efforts to change and improve the official program can be carried with ease and finalized in a short time, changing and improving the hidden curriculum are more difficult and time-consuming tasks. According to Kohlberg, in schools that are transformed to just communities, administrators and teachers can change the hidden curriculum in a sincere moral atmosphere. He suggests that teachers and administrators should state moral values clearly and provide democratic participation and democratic environments in schools to change the hidden curriculum in their own schools (Power & Kohlberg, 1986).

Students learn most of the values that are necessary for living at school. These values are conveyed to students through the official and hidden curricula. However, the hidden curriculum is much more effective in conveying values (Jackson, 1968; Kohlberg, 1975; 1983; Wynne & Ryan, 1993). In spite of this, studies on moral education are almost always conducted in connection with the official program. The affective and cognitive dimension of education is considered similar and it is thought that values can be taught by lecturing students as if giving them theoretical information. The new curriculum prepared for primary schools aims to abolish this incorrect consideration. The purpose of the new curriculum is to relate the topics to students' life and enable their participation in classes. There are teacher activities which give students various skills such as critical and creative thinking, questioning, problem solving, participation, tolerance, collaborative working, and honesty (MEB, 2005a; 2005b). When these activities are examined, it might be thought that they could be helpful to students. However, can these activities be practiced in every school as they are written in the curriculum? This study aims to take into consideration the hidden curriculum proposed by Kohlberg in the evaluation of the new programs.

Kohlberg, who is the first among moral educators to have taken an interest in the hidden curriculum, asserted that moral education can be deployed through the just environment in schools, and that the hidden curriculum has an important place in school environment, having a more profound affect on the students than the formal curriculum. In his studies, Kohlberg emphasized certain influences of

hidden curriculum on moral development. He focused particularly on the process through which democratic values are developed among students and the incidents of cheating.

The only study that holds Kohlberg's thoughts on hidden curriculum under scrutiny is by Gordon (1986). Gordon asserts that Kohlberg's studies lack a detailed analysis of the unplanned and untargeted dimension of hidden curriculum and its cognitive and physical environment, and emphasizes that the hidden curriculum consists of frequently conflicting messages and the students' reluctance towards certain messages conveyed through the hidden curriculum.

Moral education is an issue that should not be left to the liability of a single course. In cases where student cannot relate the values that are explained in lectures to his or her experience at school, the student will memorize the theoretical information that relates to values and write this information in the examination, but will not be able to reflect these in his or her attitude and behaviors.

It can be recognized that moral education is usually carried out in an authoritarian environment in our schools. Consequently, the hidden curriculum, which contains principles that run against those laid out in the formal curriculum, is put into practice. Whereas the official curriculum intends to raise individuals who can comfortably express their ideas in a democratic environment, the hidden curriculum intends to produce students that are submissive, susceptible, and quiet. However, in the face of the complexities of the age we live in and of moral problems, the understandings of moral education that aim to raise traditional and submissive children should be altered.

As a result, in order for our youth to gain the moral values needed by modern society, it is not enough to develop only formal curriculum but also hidden curriculum should be taken into consideration. Policy makers should also know that the problems cannot be solved with only official curriculum. It should be made clear that official curriculum and hidden curriculum are related to each other. Hidden curriculum cannot be developed without developing formal curriculum (Kohlberg, 1973). The curriculum workers at the Ministry of Education should not think that their responsibility is over when the new curriculum is being used in schools. While they are following the practice of the new curriculum at schools and helping teachers with the new curriculum, they shou

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The numerous studies investigating moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's theory have confirmed basic tenets regarding the topic area. Cross-sectional data have shown that older individuals tend to use higher stages of moral reasoning when compared with younger individuals, while longitudinal studies report "upward" progression, in accordance with Kohlberg's theoretical order of stages. Moreover, age trends in moral development have received cross-cultural support. Lastly, data support the claim that every individual progresses through the same sequence of development; however, the rates of development will vary. Measurement of moral development. Moral values are too often missing from our educational curricula today. While it is crucial that students gain knowledge and skills in school, it is just as important that they also take on moral virtues such as love, honesty, hard work, and compassion. Another primary goal of education should be enabling students to gain moral values. Our children will need both knowledge and morality to prepare themselves to be good friends, parents, colleagues, coworkers, and citizens in society.

2. Because Many Parents Aren't Teaching Moral Values. Answer: Moral values should first be taught in the home so that children are trained to be compassionate, honest, and hard-working. They should continue to be taught in schools to prepare students to be good parents and citizens in society.

Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development constitute an adaptation of a psychological theory originally conceived by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Kohlberg began work on this topic while being a psychology graduate student at the University of Chicago in 1958 and expanded upon the theory throughout his life. The theory holds that moral reasoning, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for ethical behavior, has six developmental stages, each more adequate at responding to moral dilemmas Kohlberg and Hidden Curriculum in Moral Education: An Opportunity for Students' Acquisition of Moral Values in the New Turkish Primary Education Curriculum. Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 5(2), 329-338. Download ppt "Lawrence Kohlberg David Cavazos Learning and Cognition University of Texas at Brownsville." Similar presentations. Student Development Theory Importance, history and utility.

YAKSEL S. Kohlberg and hidden curriculum in moral education: An opportunity for students' acquisition of moral values in the new Turkish primary education curriculum. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*. 2005;5(2):329-338. Google Scholar. Cite this chapter as: Dimitriadou C., Gakoudi A., Kalaitzidou-Leontaki A., Kousaridis K. (2012) Students' Trends and Attitudes on Exam Cheating in Greek Primary and Secondary School Settings. In: Alt D., Reingold R. (eds) *Changes in Teachers' Moral Role. Moral Development and Citizenship Education*, vol 6. SensePublishers, Rotterdam. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-837-7\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-837-7_3). Moral values are too often missing from our educational curricula today. While it is crucial that students gain knowledge and skills in school, it is just as important that they also take on moral virtues such as love, honesty, hard work, and compassion. Seldom do I hear or read about moral values being part of educational curricula in the modern world. This creates a unique problem. Neglecting to teach moral values alongside academic concepts in schools is hurting our students and causing problems in society. If an individual doesn't learn moral values as they develop, how will they be able to discern the difference between right and wrong? Moreover, if they develop poor ethics and no moral values, they could harm society. A direct education approach that involves teaching students a basic moral literacy to prevent them from engaging in immoral behavior and doing harm to themselves or others. The argument is that behaviors such as lying, stealing, and cheating are wrong, and students should be taught this throughout their education. Values clarification. Helping people to clarify what their lives mean and what is worth working for - encourages students to define their own values and understand values of others. Cognitive moral education. True or False: According to Kohlberg, children's advances in cognitive reasoning account for their advancement in moral reasoning. False. The major criticism of Kohlberg's theory has been that