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IDENTIFYING THE DETERMINANTS AND EFFECTS OF EDUCATION BASED ON THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM THEORY¹

INTRODUCTION

When one analyses the functioning of a fragment of the educational reality, for example, when one tries to identify why the intentional influence of teachers often brings about effects different from those expected, one of the possible ways is to look at educational processes from a sociological perspective. It seems that there is no need to justify this approach in detail, because the interconnections between sociology and pedagogy have long been a source of theoretically and empirically fertile ideas². Furthermore, it should be recognized that

¹ Originally published: Wiktor Żłobicki, "Rozpoznawanie uwarunkowań i skutków edukacji na podstawie teorii ukrytego programu", [in:] *Wokół problemów socjologii edukacji i badań młodzieży*, ed. B. Wiśniewska-Paź, Wydaw. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2011, p. 53-71. Some of the statements in this article have been earlier published in my monograph: W. Żłobicki, *Ukryty program w edukacji. Między niewiedzą a manipulacją*, Kraków 2002.

² Interconnections between pedagogy and sociology are addressed by e.g. S. Wołoszyn, *Nauki o wychowaniu w Polsce w XX wieku. Próba syntetycznego zarysu na tle powszechnym*, Kielce 1998, p. 50-61; M. J. Szymański, "Pedagogika socjologiczna", [in:] *Pedagogika*, Vol. 4. *Subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji*, ed. B. Śliwerski, Gdańsk 2010.

modern educators have a chance to improve instruments for describing and understanding the educational reality and designing its changes, if they consider it a norm to cross the boundaries of their own discipline and use the achievements of many other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, etc. As Teresa Hejnicka-Bezwińska has rightly pointed out, contemporary pedagogy analyses

(pluralistic) educational practice in all its complexity and entanglement and, for this reason, must go beyond the purposeful processes of education and upbringing towards the processes of growth and natural ingrowth of the individual into the existing world and broadly understood processes of socialization. Therefore, we can speak of a broadening of the subject of research in contemporary pedagogy³.

Therefore, I will take up the issue of the “hidden curriculum” in education, which is increasingly the topic of research, in order to indicate its usefulness in the analysis of educational phenomena.

UNDERSTANDING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

If a debate on how to teach cooperative behaviour at school were to be initiated, the teacher could exemplify this by organising the teaching process in such a way that the pupils team up to address the problems to solve and gain positive experiences from the joint action. But the same pupils will cooperate with each other equally effectively if in another lesson, forced to recreate some parts of the material during a test, they pass on crib notes to one another. In both situations, they will improve cooperative behaviour, but the former one has all the features of a properly conducted education process, while the latter denies it completely. In this way we see the existence of something that fits into the continuum between intentionality and random action, something that exists next to every official action, independently from the nature of this action. Teresa Bauman commented on this,

³ T. Hejnicka-Bezwińska, *Pedagogika ogólna*, Warszawa 2008, p. 68–69.

assuming that “each phenomenon (including an educational phenomenon) has its obvious (overt) meaning, which is easy to read by anyone, as well as its covert meaning, hidden behind the obvious”⁴. The author refers here to the hidden curriculum, which has since the late 1960s become one of the instruments of scholarly exploration of the imperfections of the school environment. Educational research, as a result of which this concept has made its way to sociology and pedagogy, is considered one of the most important steps in the development of social sciences. However, before more or less successful attempts were made to define the hidden curriculum, the term was first used by Philip W. Jackson, who claimed that in order to survive in the classroom, students very often have to adapt to rules, routines and regulations and create survival strategies. In most considerations and theoretical approaches, the hidden curriculum is regarded in the school context and states that it is in conflict with the adopted or explicit curriculum, i.e. with a course or series of activities designed to achieve learning outcomes⁵. In a nutshell, the hidden curriculum is “all the things that are learnt during schooling in addition to the official curriculum”⁶. Jane R. Martin extends this definition, to encompass “the outcomes or by-products of schools or of non-school settings, particularly those states that are learned yet are not openly intended”⁷. From this point of view, what happens outside school is also important for educational outcomes. We also must agree with David Head that the hidden curriculum is related to the effects of staying at school, not only contacts with teachers⁸. Although teachers also sometimes have to be attributed to unconscious feelings, attitudes, needs, beliefs and

⁴ T. Bauman, “Ukryte aspekty edukacji”, [in:] *Kontestacje pedagogiczne*, ed. B. Śliwerski, Kraków 1993, p. 203.

⁵ See E. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, Macmillan, New York 1985, [after:] M. B. Ginsburg, R. T. Clift, “The Hidden Curriculum of Preservice Teacher Education”, [in:] *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, ed. W. R. Houston, M. Haberman, J. Sikula, New York, London 1990, p. 451.

⁶ R. Meighan, *A Sociology of Educating*, London 1981, p. 52.

⁷ J. R. Martin, “What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?”, [in:] *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education: Deception or Discovery?*, ed. H. Giroux, D. Purpel, Berkeley 1983, p. 124, [after:] M. B. Ginsburg, R. T. Clift, “The Hidden Curriculum of Preservice Teacher Education”, op. cit., p. 451.

⁸ See D. Head, *Free Way to Learning*, Harmondsworth 1974, [after:] R. Meighan, *A Sociology of Educating*, op. cit., p. 52.

views, which in interactions with students may have a greater impact on education than the established and adopted official programme of action⁹. The way in which teachers perceive themselves and their students as well as their beliefs about the regularity of learning and teaching processes have a significant impact on the final outcome of school work. In interpersonal contacts with students, not only the level of teacher self-assessment and self-knowledge, the state of emotions, awareness of mechanisms disturbing personal communication, but also beliefs about students as partners and views on teaching and learning play an important role. It is in order to note the views of Elizabeth Vallance on the hidden curriculum, who pays attention to “nonacademic but educationally significant consequences of schooling that occur systematically but are not made explicit at any level of the public rationales for education”¹⁰.

The hidden curriculum was noticed, defined and accounted for by Polish pedagogues and found itself in the second edition of *Słownik pedagogiczny* [Dictionary of Pedagogy] by Wincenty Okoń, in the entry “latent program”, or the hidden curriculum:

a ‘program’ that actually impacts school pupils yet is not registered; its impact, both good and bad, varies depending on the level of the pupils, the educational community and the influence of planned educational work of the school and the implementation of actual → school curricula¹¹.

Thus, unlike many other ways of defining the hidden curriculum, Okoń observes that its effects are both negative and positive. In his commentary, the author emphasizes the broad understanding of this term and indicates that the hidden curriculum

is composed of multiple factors, e.g. the atmosphere at home and at school, opinions of parents and peers about the school, peer impact, style of work

⁹ See H. Rylke, G. Klimowicz, *Szkoła dla ucznia. Jak uczyć życia z ludźmi*, Warszawa 1992, p. 34.

¹⁰ E. Vallance, “Hiding the Hidden Curriculum. An Interpretation of the Language of Justification in Nineteenth-Century Educational Reform”, [in:] *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education*, op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹ W. Okoń, *Słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 1987, p. 244–245.

of significant teachers, impact of the outside social environment, including mass communications media¹².

This interpretation places the education's outcomes in the context of intentional versus unintentional activities, not only at school itself but also outside of it. Such a broad understanding of the essence of the hidden curriculum may be the basis for identifying the possible consequences of the clash of intentions contained in official, open curricula with activities outside the set goals. Krzysztof Kruszewski saw the hidden curriculum as

a recurrent element of the pupil's experience at school, which exerts influence on the pupil although it is not commanded by the documents that regulate school operation, is not publicly manifested as the intention of the teacher, administration and textbook authors¹³.

The author highlights the fact that the phenomenon is a result of social reproduction of knowledge and limits it to the school institution. A slightly different approach to the hidden curriculum is presented in *Leksykon pedagogiki* [*Lexicon of Pedagogy*], which sees it as

an educational program not contained in curricula documentation (e.g. core curriculum or the school statute) and not recognised by students and teachers, taking place at school, arising from the fact that educational institutions are not neutral and independent of the political, economic, social, and cultural situation¹⁴.

The theatre metaphor used by Andrzej Janowski can be considered as a reflection of the hidden dimension of the school's operation¹⁵. The school classroom symbolically resembles a stage where a performance with pupils and teachers as actors takes place. Each of the actors plays his or her part on stage and then goes backstage, which can be the school lavatories and the playground for the pupils, and the

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ K. Kruszewski, *Zrozumieć szkołę*, Warszawa 1993, p. 112.

¹⁴ *Leksykon Pedagogiki*, ed. B. Milerski, B. Śliwowski, Warszawa 2000, p. 253.

¹⁵ See A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, Warszawa 1989.

teachers' room for the teachers. There, the actors rest after the performance and relieve tension.

Referring to the considerations about the manifestations of the hidden program, one can look at the exemplary phenomena present in the school reality¹⁶. We will see situations where students learn how to "survive" boring lessons, how to please the teacher; they will learn that there is "one correct answer" to every question, that competition with others is more expected than cooperation, etc. Students are forced to learn to deal with the following:

- delays, i.e. constant waiting for the beginning of the lesson, access to instruments or teaching aids, contact with the teacher during the lesson (e.g. by raising a hand and waiting for the permission to speak);
- refusal and prohibition in situations when, for example, they want to ask questions they consider important, to talk, to cooperate, to take care of the chosen activity, etc.;
- interruption, when a bell rings for recess during class or the teacher decides that the student's utterance should end.

Faced with such difficulties in school, students begin to use survival strategies such as apparent engagement, patience, and abandonment of potential opportunities for capacity development. Although they bring spectacular benefits in terms of good relations with teachers, in fact they also reduce the effectiveness of learning. Students of higher education institutions (and more and more often also secondary school students) are familiar with the strategy used to pass certain exams known as "cram, pass and forget". Increasingly, these activities are followed by another one – excessive drinking. This and other observable facts lead to a belief, as Donald R. Green claims, that the knowledge gained by a student during a dozen or so years of school education may include, for example, knowledge of history, but it may also include knowledge of the fact that some statements please and others irritate the subject teacher¹⁷. While the author does not use the concept of the hidden curriculum, in fact this is the program he describes. All the knowledge gained at school may serve the understanding of many complex problems, but

¹⁶ See R. Meighan, *A Sociology of Educating*, op. cit., p. 58–63.

¹⁷ See D. R. Green, *Educational Psychology*, New Jersey 1964.

it may also not have such a meaning for an individual. Certainly, however, as the author states, learning at school is accompanied by changes in the thinking processes, judgements, attitudes towards the presented material, attitudes towards the school and teachers. Moreover, these changes can have a significant impact (both positive and negative) on personal and social development. In this sense, modifications of the teaching and learning process can be seen as a result of the existence of a hidden curriculum in the work of teachers, organisational systems and school regulations, teaching content, etc.¹⁸ It is therefore important to note that students' characteristics such as e.g. capabilities, expectations and value systems do not so much influence learning as they can become a consequence of learning at school.

Similarly, Catherine Cornbleth believes that ultimately the hidden curriculum consists of sets of mutually exclusive, contradictory expectations, rules and messages¹⁹. I found confirmation of this hypothesis in one of the schools I have studied, in which the problems of unstable ecological balance on our planet were an element of the educational and upbringing programme²⁰. In this school, separate containers for paper, used batteries, glass and plastic were placed at the entrance to encourage and accustom pupils to separate waste. At the same time, due to sanitation authorities' recommendations, the school's canteen used disposable plastic dishes, which are known to decompose over hundreds of years.

To sum up, therefore, the hidden curriculum should be understood as all the experiences of the participants in education, which accurately reflects the view that education is what remains when we forget everything we have been taught. It is assumed that the knowledge gained from the clash of an official and hidden program is based on familiarity with rules, rejection or acceptance of their existence, pretended obedience, etc., which is reflected in the student's adage: "school must be survived like the flu".

¹⁸ Many such examples are included in: M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, *Oblicza szkoły. Oblicza nauczyciela*, Toruń 2001.

¹⁹ See C. Cornbleth, "Beyond Hidden Curriculum", *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 1984, Vol. 16, No. 1, [after:] A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁰ I presented relevant research in the monograph: W. Żłobicki, *Ukryty program w edukacji*, op. cit.

AREAS OF ANALYSIS OF THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

In addition to the above authors, there are also newer publications allowing for a broad view of the hidden curriculum in: pre-school education (Elżbieta Siarkiewicz), school environment (Aleksander Nalaskowski), academic education (Martyna Pryszmont-Ciesielska), education of students with disabilities (Andrzej Lis-Kujawski)²¹. The table below offers a review of selected publications and in the further part of the article I wish to introduce some of the issues raised in the books.

EXAMPLES OF STUDY AREAS ON THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM	SELECTED PRIMARY SOURCES
Educational space management	A. Janowski A. (1989); R. Meighan (1993); M. Karkowska, W. Czarnecka (1994); E. Siarkiewicz (2000); A. Nalaskowski (2002); W. Żłobicki (2002); M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska (2010); A. Lis-Kujawski (2010)
Interpersonal relations	A. Janowski A. (1989); R. Meighan (1993); H. Rylke, G. Klimowicz (1992); M. Karkowska, W. Czarnecka (1994); E. Siarkiewicz (2000); W. Żłobicki (2002); M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska (2010); A. Lis-Kujawski (2010)
Organisation conditions	A. Janowski A. (1989); R. Meighan R. (1993); M. Karkowska, W. Czarnecka (1994); E. Siarkiewicz (2000); W. Żłobicki (2002); M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska (2010); A. Lis-Kujawski (2010)
Violence (structural and symbolic)	R. Meighan (1993); Z. Kwieciński (1995); B. Śliwerski (1998); E. Siarkiewicz (2000); W. Żłobicki (2002); M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska (2010); A. Lis-Kujawski (2010)

²¹ See E. Siarkiewicz, *Ostatni bastion. Jawne i ukryte wymiary pracy przedszkola*, Kraków 2000; A. Nalaskowski, *Przestrzenie i miejsca szkoły*, Kraków 2002; M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Ukryty program edukacji akademickiej*, Wrocław 2010; A. Lis-Kujawski, *Moje „ja” i szkoła integracyjna. Zjawiska ukrytego programu w nauczaniu uczniów niepełnosprawnych*, Kraków 2008.

EXAMPLES OF STUDY AREAS ON THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM	SELECTED PRIMARY SOURCES
Textbooks, curricula and education and upbringing expected outcomes	R. Meighan (1993); E. Siarkiewicz (2000); W. Żłobicki (2002); M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska (2010); A. Lis-Kujawski (2010); A. Jurek (2011)
Professional role of the teacher, teacher training	A. Janowski (1989); H. Rylke, G. Klimowicz (1992); R. Meighan (1993); M. Karkowska, W. Czarnecka (1994); M.B. Ginsburg, R.T. Clift (1997); R. Kwiecińska, Z. Kwieciński (1997); B. Śliwerski (2001); E. Siarkiewicz (2000); W. Żłobicki (2002); A. Lis-Kujawski (2010); M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska (2010)

Table 1. Review of selected publications on the hidden curriculum (source: author's study)

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Speaking of the hidden curriculum of the school environment, it is worth considering how the building itself is perceived by different groups of people connected with it. It can be assumed that for pupils it is a meeting place with other pupils; it is the venue where they spend a significant part of the day and experience the diverse, sometimes toxic activities of teachers; it is where survival strategies are often resorted to²². For teachers, the school building is a few selected rooms: the teacher's room where the time at school usually starts and ends; the classroom(s) where students sit in a fixed arrangement of benches, but no one can predict the course of events that will take place during the lesson. For parents, this will be the school classroom they know from their periodic meetings with teachers, the principal's office, and the school auditorium where the celebrations take place. Parents are rarely really "invited" to come to a school other than for parent-teacher conferences, where they sit on the same side of the room as their children, while the teacher takes his or her privileged position at the front. Staying in the school building at the

²² See A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, op. cit., p. 199–222.

parent-teacher conference may be associated with feeling discomfort not only mentally, but also physically, because parents are often forced by circumstances to spend the meeting in uncomfortable, too small chairs, and in winter they sit in outer clothes for lack of a cloakroom. For administrative staff, school can be a place of complications in the form of cleaning classrooms, repairing benches and chairs, replacing broken windows and broken power switches. For the visitor, the school consists of several selected rooms, which can be proudly shown during meetings of educational professionals. A politician, in turn, may associate the school with the assembly hall, the venue of major events and being cast in the role of a *guest of honour*. It can be assumed that all the above participants in the process of using the school building have their own, very specific image of it. At the same time, each of them feels or creates some barriers or difficulties in using specialised rooms. For example, the teacher's room and the principal's office are usually difficult to reach for students. A politician rarely looks into the school classroom and a visiting teacher-pedagogue rarely looks into the room of a school janitor. Even the school principal, depending on his or her own pedagogical competence, can bypass pupils' locker rooms or corridors during breaks. Security companies and camera systems, which are becoming increasingly common in school buildings and are supposed to provide security for students and teachers, add to the image of secrecy of the school environment. Restrictions on the availability of school premises for its customers (students and parents) may therefore justify associations with a fortress, a defensive and inaccessible place. However, there are also examples of the school being sensitive to the needs of students and arrange the school space in such a way that common, typical inconveniences and difficulties disappear.

In the context of giving meaning to school premises, let's try to explain the functions that school lavatories can perform. Stereotypically commenting on the lamentable condition of many of them, the most common opinion is that students lack personal culture and that their manners have reached the bottom. But from the point of view of the hidden curriculum one can hypothesize that the school is a place of permanent control of students by teachers, while the restrooms are one of the few enclaves free from such control. It seems that students

consider lavatories as their territory, as opposed to classrooms, corridors and offices. The size of the sanitary facilities in the school is probably also important. It is hard to imagine a group of friends meeting in a home toilet, but such opportunities are provided by the school's large-room sanitary facilities. The difference between school and home toilets is not only the size, but often the house one is clean, there is no shortage of toilet paper and soap. If there is a shortage of cleaning products in these places at school, not only does this have unpleasant visual and olfactory consequences but it also leads to the perception of contradictions with the functions they are supposed to perform – students among them particularly emphasize the acute lack of intimacy and poor hygiene. Here, in particular, frustration with bad grades and conflicts with teachers can be vented and school subculture can develop. This also explains the circumstances under which this place changes its original purpose. The credibility of this claim is enhanced by clean, intimate teachers-only lavatories which are inaccessible to students.

It is also worth noting the research of Aleksander Nalaskowski, who together with his team conducted a survey among 98 students, 35 teachers and 45 parents in junior high schools. The nature of the research did not justify far-reaching generalizations, but it helped to compare the perception of the school by educational entities. It turned out that nearly half of the students did not like the school the most, followed by teachers (41 percent) and about a third of the surveyed parents. This means a clearly low level of acceptance of the institution in which the teachers and the learners live. Clear discrepancies can also be noticed when we look at the comparison of parents', pupils' and teachers' opinions on the places where students feel good. According to 63 percent of parents, the classroom is such a place, yet only 9 percent of pupils share this view. Moreover, every fourth pupil signals that they would rather spend time in the corridor, yet only every twelfth parent believes that the children feel well there. The reality described by pupils is therefore not in line with the parents' opinion that school (identified with the classroom and lessons) is a child-friendly space.

	LOCKER ROOM	WC	PLAY-GROUND	AREA OUT-SIDE THE SCHOOL	OFFICE ²³	NOOKS AND CRANNIES ²⁴
STUDENTS	11%	17%	4%	18%	0%	48%
TEACHERS	8%	34%	18%	0%	7%	0%
PARENTS	0%	0%	28%	6%	39%	0%

Table 2. Where students go when they feel bad? (source: A. Nalaskowski, *Przestrzenie i miejsca szkoły*, op. cit., p. 18)

If we look at the above table, we will see that the parents' and teachers' image of the use of school space by students is disturbingly different from the truth revealed by the kids themselves. According to nearly 40 percent of parents, in difficult situations their children go to school to get help from a school pedagogue, teachers, etc. Such belief in the effectiveness of school authorities is undermined by students, every other one of whom hides in the nooks and crannies, and every fifth one goes outside the school grounds or to the toilet. Every third teacher thinks that the place where the students experiencing problems meet is the school toilet, which, according to Aleksander Nalaskowski²⁵, can be considered a kind of an opinion about the kids. The above discrepancies in the perception of school space can be seen as another proof of the existence of a hidden curriculum in the school.

A. Lis-Kujawski's research on the functioning of students with disabilities also provides examples of a hidden curriculum of school space²⁶. For example, students who use a wheelchair and stay in the classroom during recess (often for safety reasons) may be perceived as isolating from informal contacts with their peers. Contradictions can also be found in the school's separate toilets for students with disabilities. They see it as a convenience, provided that it is not accompanied

²³ The overall term "office" means contact with the school pedagogue, principal, teachers, etc.

²⁴ For the purposes of this interpretation, "nooks and crannies" means places that are under permanent supervision of teachers and school staff. These may be window niches, wall bends, distant and darkened corners, mezzanines, etc.

²⁵ A. Nalaskowski, *Przestrzenie i miejsca szkoły*, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁶ A. Lis-Kujawski, *Moje „ja” i szkoła integracyjna*, op. cit., p. 166-167.

by a whole series of difficulties in the form of searching for the key to the toilet, the behaviour of auxiliary staff, etc.

Analyses of Martyna Pryszmont-Ciesielska on the hidden curriculum of academic education also provide multiple intriguing conclusions about the arrangement of the teaching and extra-curricular space of the university²⁷. It turned out that dominant in seminar rooms was the traditional frontal arrangement of chairs and benches, which made it easier for academics to communicate with their audiences, but which also made discussion and exchange of views between students more difficult. In the case of large rooms, it cannot be ruled out that the fact that students occupy the last benches makes it easier for them to participate passively in class. Formally increasing the distance between academic education actors and even strengthening the teacher's domination over students is also fostered by the specific location of the teacher's desks, which clearly emphasises the division of the classroom into student zones and teacher sections.

TEXTBOOKS, CURRICULA AND EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Reflections on the hidden curriculum of textbooks are supposed to sensitise teachers, parents and pupils to the incongruency, manipulation and negligence that may be characteristic of the books currently used in schools. This may make it easier to mitigate the negative effects of the hidden curriculum. In mass schools, books (textbooks, compulsory reading) continue to be the most important and widely used teaching resource. Depending on the concept of didactic work, they can serve as the sole and most important guide to the subject, or they can be only one of the many elements through which students gain knowledge. The existence of a curriculum hidden in textbooks for many post-war years was related to the practice of ideological treatment of the servant role of school textbooks in relation to the often similarly servant ideological agenda. In practice, there was only one curriculum for a given subject which was assigned one single

²⁷ M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Ukryty program edukacji akademickiej*, op. cit., p. 199-205.

textbook. Furthermore, the stigma of ideology had an impact on every innovation in Polish education, since the majority of changes, both concerning the curricula and the textbooks, were the result of political changes. The social and political breakthrough after 1989 restored “textbook pluralism” which was present in the interwar period. The growing number of textbooks admitted for school use does not mean that the problem of unintentional messages or deliberate manipulations contained in them has disappeared. *Słownik języka polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish Language] defines a textbook as a “a book used for education, containing a set of fundamental information from a specific discipline, presented in a clear and transparent manner”. In the context of the hidden curriculum, we may actually take interest in the clarity and transparency of the presented knowledge and the educational outcomes that may result from the student’s contact with the textbook. In classical analyses, we would rather evaluate the informational, transformational, research, self-education, control, and corrective functions²⁸. However, let us look at it from the point of view of the credibility of knowledge, the substantive reliability of the information provided and the attractiveness and aesthetics of the content provided, both in terms of language and visuals (quality of paper, print, drawings, illustrations, etc.). The results of Anna Jurek’s research, whose PhD thesis on “Methods of learning to read and write from the perspective of students’ difficulties” can be considered a great example of revealing the hidden curriculum of Polish language teaching in early childhood education, are shocking, indeed²⁹. Although the author herself does not use the concept of the hidden curriculum, she claims that the lack of thinking about reading and writing as a long-term process, requiring systemic methodological solutions, is the main cause of difficulties in mastering reading and writing skills for many students. This is confirmed by the far, 29th position of Polish students in the 2006 PIRLS International Reading Literacy Study, where 45 countries participated³⁰. The doctoral dissertation showed that there are

²⁸ C. Kupisiewicz, *Podstawy dydaktyki ogólnej*, Warszawa 1976, p. 106–110.

²⁹ See A. Jurek, *Metody nauki czytania i pisania z perspektywy trudności uczniów*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wrocław, Wrocław 2011.

³⁰ See PIRLS 2006. *Jak czytają dzieci w Polsce i na świecie*, ed. K. Konarzewski, Warszawa 2007.

many inconsistencies, contradictions and errors in the textbooks and exercises of integrated education used in Polish schools.

It is worth noting at this point the theory of reconstructing culture presented by Basil Bernstein³¹. The author emphasizes that textbooks play a singular role in exercising symbolic control over education. From the moment a child has acquired reading and writing skills, in a sense he becomes independent of the teacher and enters a personal, unique educational pathway. Books can be used to search for knowledge in an individual way. However, textbooks often impose and organize knowledge according to a clearly outlined scheme of learning progress, establish relatively clear, simplified criteria, show hierarchies and seemingly remove uncertainties. In the structure of the classroom team, they become a source of specific information for each child about their learning progress in relation to other students. Thus, a hierarchy is created in the classroom, with the teacher as the manager of the textbooks at the top. Roland Meighan looked at the problem from a different perspective, claiming that “The classroom may also be said to be haunted by the book writers [...]”³². In order to prove this claim, he presents the results of analyses according to which in the readings of early school education, which are aimed at improving reading skills and gaining knowledge about the world, nationalistic and racist content was also conveyed, containing elements of gender discrimination and social prejudices. Radical views on this issue were expressed by John Holt, who scathingly denounced traditional education, claiming that “even in the most uncontroversial areas of our teaching, the books and textbooks we give to children represent a dishonest and distorted image of the world”³³. In the transmission of knowledge, the category of truth is replaced by immediate usability or even manipulation. The aim is to ensure that children at school think, live and act in a way that is consistent with the aims adopted by adults. Similar tendencies were noted by Andrzej Janowski in his multifaceted study of school class, based on analyses of Western literature³⁴. He pointed out that in school, myths

³¹ See B. Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, Vol. 3, London 1977, p. 118.

³² R. Meighan, *A Sociology of Educating*, op. cit., p. 56.

³³ J. Holt, *How Children Fail*, Harmondsworth 1970, p. 168, [after:] A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, op. cit., p. 197.

³⁴ See A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, op. cit., p. 66–69.

and fairy tales are used to convey some moral, although sometimes they may carry messages that contradict the intentions of teachers.

The choice of content in textbooks can be considered as a measure of the presence of the hidden curriculum. A specific example of this hidden curriculum in books is also content that makes it difficult for students to recognize the cultural aspects of gender identity. Sara Delamont described this as “sexism”, which is “stereotypical judgement of people, using their sex as the principal factor”³⁵. Like racism, based on biased thinking about people’s characteristics according to their skin colour, sexism perpetuates and reinforces cultural differences in the perception of women and men. The author points to many examples of stereotypical gender division in mother tongue primers: e.g. doctors are men and women are nurses; garden work is done by the father rather than the mother; arithmetic tasks refer not to the father but to the mother, who sends the child to a shop for purchases. Stereotypes of male and female behaviours are also present in the context of aesthetic values belonging to the sexes. The integrated education textbook introduces the notions of order and mess, emphasizing the educational significance of caring for the aesthetics of the environment. This is illustrated by two drawings depicting a girl playing with dolls in a tidy, spic and span room, while a boy’s room is in total disorder. Both illustrations may imply that the love of order is typical of girls, while boys typically lack aesthetic sense and adore mess³⁶.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

As Hanna Rylke and Grażyna Klimowicz have indicated, of more importance in interactions with students than the established and adopted official curriculum may be teachers’ unconscious feeling, atti-

³⁵ See S. Delamont, *Sex Roles and the School*, London 1980, [after:] A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, op. cit., p. 67–69.

³⁶ See S. Łukasik, H. Petkowicz, H. Dobrowolska, P. Karaszewski, J. Straburzyńska, E. Witkowska, *Wesoła szkoła. Kształcenie zintegrowane w klasie 1. Podręcznik, Część 4*, Warszawa 2000, p. 53; S. Łukasik, H. Petkowicz, H. Dobrowolska, P. Karaszewski, J. Straburzyńska, E. Witkowska, *Wesoła szkoła. Kształcenie zintegrowane w klasie 1. Podręcznik, Część 1*, Warszawa 2000, p. 30.

tudes, needs, believes, and views³⁷. In other words, the level of teachers' self-assessment and self-knowledge, emotional state, awareness of the mechanisms that distort personal communication has a major impact on the education process.

Among many attempts to determine the role of interpersonal relations in building a hidden educational curriculum, one should indicate e.g. the study by Magda Karkowska and Wiesława Czarnecka, which described the interactions between teachers and students in everyday school life, i.e. during classes³⁸. The ethnographic research of school lessons helped to distinguish between the different stages of the lesson and the corresponding specific interactions. Thus, in the first part of the lesson, the pupils waited for the arrival of the teacher (it took from 5 to 15 minutes), who then checked for a few minutes who was present, tried to silence the pupils and commented on their behaviour. These were some of the statements made at that time:

- *“Oh, Jesus, how many are absent!” “Be quiet, it’s not a village fair!” “You’re not in the woods”.*

The following section of the class was usually dedicated to knowledge control, ushered in with such phrases:

- *“And now we’ll revise our last lesson. Who has few grades here? Krawczykówna, here we go”;*
- *“Close your textbooks and copybooks. Let us revise our last lesson”.*

The pupils giving answers heard often ironic comments:

- *“He’s grunting here, o my! I have a supplementary question. Are you prepared? Because it seems to me that you’re not”;*
- *“Do not pull the wool over my eyes; just answer the questions”.*

During assessment, such opinions were uttered, among others:

- *“Marek! I am giving you a C plus. I can tell you that you can learn, but you need to be present in class. Yet you can be found more often in the canteen than in the classroom”.*

Only after the completion of the audit phase did the lesson proper start, during which the teachers often gave lectures or dictated the content to be noted down. This was accompanied by authoritative opinions and interpretations that took the initiative away from the pupils:

³⁷ See H. Rylke, G. Klimowicz, *Szkoła dla ucznia. Jak uczyć życia z ludźmi*, op. cit., p. 34.

³⁸ See M. Karkowska, W. Czarnecka, *Przemoc w szkole*, Kraków 1994, p. 53–62.

- “What did the poet mean here? Listen up!
- (here the teacher reads out a fragment of a hymn by Słowacki) – *In front of me you’re putting out a flaming star in azure waters...*
- *A flaming star – what did the poet mean here? – Come on?* (there is silence in the classroom) – *The sun! In other words, instead of using the word sin he used a feature of the sun, the most characteristic one, or the luminosity, and referred to the luminous star, or a flaming star [...]*”

The study found far more observations of the teacher’s verbal behaviour that can be considered as hampering student work at school. The few examples presented above are only an illustration of the problem.

The analysis of the hidden curriculum was also undertaken by Elżbieta Siarkiewicz, who recorded radically different relations in the sphere of communication in the kindergarten environment, in two groups of children functioning in very similar conditions³⁹. Based on the observation of communication processes in two groups of pre-school children with similar characteristics (six-year-old children, teachers with similar work experience and education backgrounds, classes in rooms with similar spatial arrangement, the same observation hours from 6.00 a.m. to 8.30 p.m.), the author pointed to a significant difference in the educational outcomes of the work of two teachers. In group A, the teacher’s communication with children was based on the following: statements about the legitimacy of her own actions and the need to comply with directives; threats, mocking, questions. The teacher’s use of rewards, suggestions or deceptions was clearly instrumental. In group B, on the other hand, the communication between the teacher and the children was based on the rules in force in the kindergarten, but in the area defined by the norms (orders and prohibitions) the children were free to create their own rules. The teacher’s communication with children showed: information and directives, justifications for action, incentives, positive assessments, questions. In this group, external impact was replaced by agreement. The table below shows the different effects of the acts of communication as registered by Elżbieta Siarkiewicz.

³⁹ See E. Siarkiewicz, *Ostatni bastion*, op. cit., p. 160–175.

GROUP A	GROUP B
Learning to wait, be patient and do nothing.	Learning to wait.
Exercise in taking a submissive or rebellious attitude (giving at least a temporary profit).	Learning shared decision-making.
Learning to look for illegal ways of avoiding imposed rules (picking up toys, using the teacher's inattention).	Getting used to asking the teacher about all intentions and appealing to the teacher as an authority in all matters.
Becoming convinced that nothing depends on them (the kids themselves), that they have very limited influence on what can be done, sometimes even teaches helplessness.	Children explore a clearly defined area in which they can make their own decisions, and clearly defined limits.
Acquiring resistance to prohibitions, orders and shouting, a growing sense of own helplessness.	Learning to obey prohibitions and instructions.
Strengthening the belief that the teacher's decisions are valid only in the situation of control.	Learning to respect the teacher and his or her decisions, developing a belief in the existence of constant control and real consequences of decisions.
Acquiring the conviction of impunity for reprehensible actions when the controller is inconsistent (washing hands).	Training in basic social skills (washing hands before and after meals, greeting, avoiding noisy conversations).
Feeling threatened in non-transparent situations.	Ensuring a sense of security thanks to the constant presence of a teacher with children.
Increasing shyness or aggression in children.	Learning to respect one's own individuality and identity.

Table 3. Intended and "side" educational outcomes in the work of a nursery in two observed groups (source: E. Siarkiewicz, *Ostatni bastion*, op. cit., p. 170)

Analysing the above table we can see that we are dealing with the consequences of the hidden curriculum (contrary to the official one), implemented by the teacher of group A. An additional argument in favour of such an interpretation of the effects of interpersonal behaviour may be the recording of free conversations with children from both

groups⁴⁰. Asked: “Do you like being to the nursery?” – kids from group A responded briefly: “well; so-so; yet, I do; it is great”. What is striking is the lack of spontaneous development of these statements. The answers of the group B children were radically different and offered reasons: “there are a lot of toys here; it’s funny; in kindergarten I have Tomek, Jarek and other friends; here you can fool around; I’m not bored; our teacher is nice; she sings us songs; she reads fairy tales; we can talk to her and play charades; the teacher only shouts when someone messes up; our teacher likes children”. It is therefore clear that the hidden dimension of interpersonal communication also has a clear negative impact on the pre-school education process.

STRUCTURAL AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

The claim that educational outcomes are politically, socially and economically conditions is not new. This conditioning makes “Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them”⁴¹. The discourse referred to above should be understood as a system of knowledge, concepts or thoughts legitimized in social practices. Thus, an indivisible configuration of power and knowledge is created, because whoever holds power has knowledge and vice versa. This phenomenon is referred to as structural violence to emphasize that we are dealing, generally speaking, with the dependence of education and teaching on the political, social and economic context of the functioning of the state⁴². In education, this is reflected, among other things, in the imposition of organisational structures by the state authorities, which enable the implementation of a centralist model of management and supervision. Management of this nature is initiated at the central level and has a clear hierarchical character.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 176.

⁴¹ M. Foucault, [after:] *Foucault and Education. Disciplines and Knowledge*, ed. S. J. Ball, London 1990, p. 3.

⁴² See J. Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Research”, *Journal of Peace Research* 1969, Vol. 6, [after:] Z. Kwieciński, *Socjopatologia edukacji*, Olecko 1995, p. 124–125.

The reflections on the involvement of people working in schools in the mechanisms of secret violence in no way attempt to discredit the competences of teaching professionals. It is rather a matter of indicating phenomena dangerous for the participants of education, i.e. students, parents and teachers. Consideration of the possibilities of “softening” the violence transmitted by the school can be concluded with a sceptical conclusion. When we think about school and relations between generations that meet within its walls, a conviction about limited possibilities of experiencing creative confrontation between younger and older people is inexorably revealed. According to Heinrich Dauber, adults since Hammurabi deprived the emerging generation to impart meaning and sense to their own experiences⁴³. Has the inscription engraved in cuneiform about four thousand years ago, attributing laziness, stubbornness and disrespect for tradition to the “youth of the time”, become obsolete? It turns out that it has not, because the school has been using behavioural assessments, an effective tool for structural violence, for years⁴⁴.

Taking up the topic of the phenomenon of symbolic violence, it is worth mentioning Basil Bernstein’s view that the educational knowledge disseminated and its methods of selection, classification, distribution, transmission, and evaluation reflect both the distribution of power and the principles of social control⁴⁵. From this point of view, class relations permeate in a covert way to the “assumptions, rules and practices of the school, differentiating and contrasting students according to their class origin, giving privilege to the few, and many refusing it”⁴⁶. The author therefore drew attention to the relationship between communication and the effectiveness of educational processes. As a teacher in one of London’s districts, he noticed a discrepancy between the forms of communication characteristic of the school institution and those spontaneously practiced by some students. As a sociolinguist, he began a pioneering research in which he tried to answer the question why children from working class backgrounds

⁴³ See H. Dauber, *Podstawy pedagogiki humanistycznej. Zintegrowane układy między terapią i polityką*, Kraków 2001, p. 35–36.

⁴⁴ B. Śliwerski, *Program wychowawczy szkoły*, Warszawa 2001, p. 135–147.

⁴⁵ See B. Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, Vol. 3, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴⁶ B. Bernstein, *Odtwarzanie kultury*, Warszawa 1990, p. 277.

displayed relatively weaker school performance compared to middle class children (they achieved lower school results, dropped out earlier, had poorer test results, had a low percentage of “academic success”, etc.). The sources of these inequalities were found in the existence of two types of communication codes: an advanced one (characteristic of the school) and a limited one (characteristic of some students). Social conditions were closely related to them and therefore the essence of the restricted code is, among others, its small linguistic complexity. The majority of working families, due to their cultural position, use the limited code and the socialization of the child takes place in a very simple language, while the school created by the middle class, by definition, uses the advanced code⁴⁷.

Contemporary critical pedagogy analyses the conditions of school activity, taking into account the forms and content of educational codes, organizational solutions, working methods, etc. It would be worthwhile to answer the question whether theoretical and empirical aspects of the analysis of the hidden curriculum of the school itself should not be used more widely in research on the educational context of social phenomena in general. Assuming that the hidden curriculum exists not only in the school but also in every institution or group of people, perhaps it should be treated as an element of the surrounding reality. For the educator, a meaningful example of this is what can be termed a discriminatory treatment of children by public television (in comparison with the treatment of adults). Most TV news and commentary programmes are accompanied by subtitles visible on the screen with the speaker's given name and surname. Especially when well-known politicians speak, subtitles appear shortly afterwards and we can read the speaker's name, even when they are well-known and sometimes too frequently appear on the silver screen. This is not

⁴⁷ Scientists taking into account Polish social realities also spoke on this issue. The works of Maria Dąbrowska-Bąk (See *Szkoła w systemie przemocy strukturalnej*, Poznań 1999), Zbigniew Kwiecieński (See *Socjopatologia edukacji*, op. cit.), Anna Sawisz (See “System oświaty jako system przemocy symbolicznej w koncepcji Pierre Bourdieu”, *Studia Socjologiczne* 1978, No. 2), and Bogusław Śliwerski (See *Edukacja autorska*, Kraków 1996; *Jak zmieniać szkołę? Studia z polityki oświatowej i pedagogiki porównawczej*, Kraków 1998) provide many valuable theoretical and empirical analyses that show the problem of covert structural and symbolic violence in Polish education. In the above publications one can find a considerable amount of knowledge on this subject.

the case when young people speak. They usually remain anonymous for the viewer. A similar phenomenon can also be found in many programmes directed especially at children. In theatre performances with the participation of children and professional actors, the names of adults are always indicated, while the participation of children is usually confirmed by a succinct phrase “and children”. This impersonal treatment of children in TV programs should be considered another manifestation of the hidden curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The above considerations can be seen as an example of radical criticism of education and its conditions. In fact, however, the concept of the hidden curriculum seems to make it easier to diagnose and verify empirically the discrepancies between what is official and declared and what is implicit and real. It is also necessary to mention the strategies that can be adopted in relation to the hidden curriculum in education⁴⁸. First of all, to recognise its existence, but not to use it to study and interpret reality. Secondly, to take a completely different view: taking advantage of the concept of the hidden curriculum, changing school practice, the environment and the way teachers act. Thirdly, to consider the radical idea of de-schoolers, thanks to which the liquidation of the school institution will obliterate the hidden curriculum as well. Fourthly, to recognise that if the school creates neat, obedient and polite people who are at the same time focused on individual competition, there is no need to argue and fight because this is probably what society needs.

Observation of the educational reality leads to the conclusion that passivity is the dominant approach to the existence of the hidden curriculum; attempts are made to maintain a specific status quo or to completely ignore this phenomenon. In this article I have tried to show, like some researchers and practitioners involved in the mainstream of humanistic approach to education, that I tend to recognize various contradictions and deformations of education and creative involvement in designing changes.

⁴⁸ See E. Vallance, “Hiding the Hidden Curriculum”, *op. cit.*

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Abstract:

The hidden curriculum concept is an example of an interdisciplinary approach in which educational processes were analysed from a sociological perspective. It turns out that education is not neutral to political, economic, social, and cultural influences. This results in the emergence of phenomena that disrupt the teaching and learning process in the entire education system, not excluding kindergartens, schools of all types and universities. As a consequence, we can talk about limiting the subjectivity of man and strengthening in education the tendency to authoritarianism and symbolic violence.

Keywords:

education, school, student, teacher, hidden curriculum