

Introduction

One of the things teachers face every day is the curriculum. Whether it is during lesson planning, teaching or as a part of performance review teachers will come across the various representations of the curriculum. In this essay the role of the teacher in relation to the formal, informal and hidden curriculum is explored. This is done by examining these representations and the influence a teacher has on them. Personal examples are given to further illustrate this influence.

Responsibilities with regard to the formal curriculum

With regard to the formal curriculum the teacher has a lot of responsibilities. Although he/she has a limited influence on the curriculum itself, his/her role in the delivery is crucial. In a decentralized system, such as in the Netherlands, teachers are free to choose their own books. They are even free to develop their own teaching materials as they wish to do so. Also, teachers are free to plan their activities with a high degree of autonomy. However, they have to take into account the formal curriculum which is provided to them. As long as a lesson meets the content they are free to choose the way of teaching they prefer.

Furthermore, teachers need some knowledge on the curricula of classes that relate to them (especially if you teach only one subject). For example, as a physics teacher I require some knowledge of the mathematics curriculum as my subject sometimes requires understanding of mathematical content (eg algebra). As a result of additional knowledge of other curricula I can take this into account in my lesson planning (to make sure they can do the math behind the physics) and to refer to other subjects or to future lessons if needed (eg *'we will cover this topic again next year when you know the required mathematics'*).

Responsibilities with regard to the informal curriculum

When it comes to the informal curriculum the teacher has to be aware about implicit assumptions that are made in the formal curriculum. This relates to both the planning and execution (teaching) phase of lessons. For example, as mentioned earlier, as a physics teacher I have to be aware of the fact I assume my students can do certain calculations to solve problem sets. During my lesson planning I have to make a small (mental) note of these requirements and remind myself of this when I see my students fail to do a specific problem which requires this calculation.

Responsibilities with regard to the hidden curriculum

With regard to the hidden curriculum the role of the teacher is perhaps the biggest of the three types of curricula discussed here. When it comes to planning the learning activities, it is the teacher who decides what these activities look like. As a result of this he/she influences the degree to which students can learn things not mentioned in the official curriculum. For example, I (the teacher) know the

acquisition of certain skills (such as collaboration in groups) is better facilitated by using certain teaching methods (eg when I decide to make group work part of my lessons (as compared to individual work)). However, I can also decide other skills are important (such as individual work) in my lessons (as I want to simulate independent thinking and perseverance (as opposed to group work)) and facilitate those. When it comes to the actual execution of my plan, I also have to be aware that unexpected learning outcomes can be produced. This can be the result of parts of my lesson or by a completely unrelated event. As a teacher I have to be able to recognize these moments and be flexible enough to leverage them even though they are not part of the official curriculum. Once, a student of mine started crying during the lesson as one of her best friends was diagnosed with a serious disease. Instead of continuing the lesson, we (I, the student and the rest of the class) discussed on how it is to handle grief. Afterwards, the student was very relieved and thanked me for it. This is not on the curriculum (I'm a physics teacher) but it was a valuable learning opportunity for them (my students) to learn something. Therefore, I thought it was necessary to act upon and change my lesson at a moment's notice. These opportunities do not happen only during the actual lessons, but also during moments between them. An example of this is when I walk across the hall during a break and see a student drop some litter on the floor. At this moment it is part of my job as teacher to kindly remind the student to pick it up as they are supposed to drop it in the litter bin instead of on the floor.

Conclusion

Overall, the role of the teacher is significant when it comes to the planning and execution of the curriculum. When it comes to the official curriculum teachers have to be aware of it in order to plan the right activities. The informal curriculum is important to teachers as they need to know which implicit assumptions are made and are required in order for activities to take place. Finally, the hidden allows teacher to plan for learning outcomes other than those are required by the official curriculum. Teachers need to be aware of learning opportunities both in- and outside of the classroom to leverage these moments of learning.