

The Power of the Social Curriculum



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Preamble

Have you ever, as a student, set out to read, only to find out that two hours later you are still scrolling over posts on Facebook? Or perhaps, you realized you have wasted too much time on Instagram or Twitter and wanted to lock your phone to concentrate on your studies, only to find out that a better chunk of your study time has been wasted on social interactions? Well, within and around the academic system, this is a normal and daily showdown within students. Students oftentimes are carried away searching/scrolling through social media sites; and most times, what they read, watch or listen to is far removed from their course work. It is against this backdrop that this concern was raised.

Introduction

In any formal system of learning, there is often a structured coursework that guides the material, activities and content used in such learning environment. This undertaking is

referred to as the curriculum. A university curriculum is the totality of planned actions put in place to modulate what happens in a university environment. In the educational terrain, there are several types of curriculum which guides the operation of a particular educational system. However, within the university environment, the core curriculum is the basic curriculum which guides the learning pattern of the school. Nevertheless, other curriculum exists which includes but not limited to subject centred curriculum, teacher centred curriculum, learner centred curriculum, activity/experience curriculum, integrated curriculum, core curriculum, broad field curriculum, hidden curriculum, religious curriculum, social curriculum etc. For the purpose of this paper, the social curriculum will be given adequate and very robust attention.

Concept of Curriculum

A curriculum has been defined variously especially in different dimensions. It is a plan for learning, which contains assumptions about the purpose of education in our society. It also has a definite structure with which what the planners envisioned can be translated into learning experiences for the learner. Curriculum can also be defined by its length – hence, it comprises of all experiences learners

have under the guidance of an institution or teachers. The dimensions of curriculum are so numerous but the attempt to discuss them all is outside the focus of this paper. Consequently, for the purpose of this paper, a curriculum is defined as the totality of learning experiences designed for university students throughout their stay in school. It is intended, planned, implemented, followed up and evaluated.

Concept of Social Curriculum

Today, the social dimensions of the schooling experience are important elements in achieving curricular effectiveness. Social curriculum can be defined as the totality of unplanned learning experiences within social groups both offline and online within a given space. Every school system operates a rather sleeping social curriculum that guides certain actions and inactions in school. Students may not be expected to learn and practice these rules where they are scored, but they are there to guide students operations. Another aspect of the social curriculum includes all the learning experiences from social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, email etc. During the course of conducting research works, students also go online to review related literature in their area of endeavour; from these review, they pick one or two

learning experiences from the internet. By the time they graduate from the university, they must have learnt a lot from the internet, making them vibrant in the social space and having better social skills like civility, courtesy and discernment within the immediate and remote societies. The social curriculum which is also referred to here as the internet curriculum is at least the most vibrant and adaptive curriculums and it holds more contents and potentials than many other curriculums.

Advantages of the Social Curriculum

Just as social life has some form of disadvantages, so some forms of advantages accrues to it. Without social life, it would be difficult to learn some social behaviours. Within the university environment, most students come with certain bad habits, some with abnormal behaviours. It is within the university environment that many students learns how to take care of themselves, cook, do house chores, learn respect, values amongst other societal norms which are requisite for effective societal integration.

Again, for the social media aspect of it, the online media has proved to be a reservoir of knowledge where chunks of knowledge are articulated and posted for the betterment of society. Many social media actors may

immediately be inspired about a particular indigenous knowledge/idea, articulate it, develop it and publish it on Facebook or other media outlet. Students scroll past these information and utilize them for their own benefits; knowledge that they would not have known even after exhausting the school's core curriculum.

Disadvantages

Social media is filled with numerous information that if it's usage is not adequately scrutinized, it will consume a whole lot of time for learning. Students often find themselves using their hand held devices more than they do their books. It is very possible to set out for learning only to discover that few hours later, one hasn't really picked up a book to study. It happens especially to students who are fully engrossed in social media usage. Despite its benefits to academics, it takes a lot of learning time from students.

Also, within the offline media space, students can also learn bad habits from the social space. Students have been reported to have started smoking for their first time in school, others joined cultism, engage in malpractices through imitation of friends and there are those who had also joined prostitution. These and many other bad attitudes are some of the

challenges of the social curriculum. While some of these behaviours can be adjusted, some takes a lifetime to unlearn.

Should We Be Concerned

At the superficial part of it, one would easily throw away any serious discuss on the influence of social curriculum, but as the discuss deepens, concerns becomes inevitable. Although it must be stated without ambiguity that as a student, one cannot totally do without the use of the social curriculum. However, what we should be concerned about is that excessive use of it can be harmful. Students will become too focus on their social media accounts that only last minutes are left for reading which will make reading not total as it was supposed to be. Therefore, students should as a matter of principles set their target and priorities and work according to them.

Summary/Conclusion

The concept of the social curriculum has been briefly discussed as all the unplanned learning experiences within social groups. These learning experiences can occur both on the internet and within peers. It is therefore, concluded that students who are engaged in social activities in school should not see it as a threat to their success. What they should however guide against should be excessive use of social media. Whence it is becoming

clear that social engagements it taking all our time, leaving little time for academics before concerns can be raised and actions taken. But it should however, not be seen as a bad omen for academic success. The social curriculum as stated above is a sister curriculum to the core curriculum that involuntarily determine learning effectiveness. Therefore, a good use of it is very imperative.

Suggestions

Following the issues raised above, it is expedient to suggest ways forward to guide our teeming students on the use of the social curriculum since there is not restriction on its use by any authority. The following are thereby suggested:

1. Social curriculum is very imperative, students must learn to use it effectively.
2. Educators should strive to guide students through tasks on what to do using the social curriculum.
3. Students must guard against excessive use of the social curriculum, otherwise, it will cut into their academics.
4. Students should only utilize the good aspect of the social curriculum since it can also negatively influence students' behaviours.
5. Students should set target and priorities. When reading, state or target the time

you wish to use for social media activities. Once it is time for reading, kindly turn off your data to avoid unnecessary messages and chats.

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