# Types of Curriculum

## 1. Overt, Explicit, or Written Curriculum

Is simply that which is written as part of formal instruction of schooling experiences. It may refer to a curriculum document, texts, films, and supportive teaching materials that are overtly chosen to support the **intentional instructional agenda** of a school. Thus, the overt curriculum is usually confined to those written understandings and directions formally designated and reviewed by administrators, curriculum directors and teachers, often collectively.

## 2. Societal Curriculum (or Social Curricula)

As defined by Cortes (1981). Cortes defines this curriculum as: [the] massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, churches, organizations, occupations, mass media, and other socializing forces that "educate" all of us throughout our lives.

This type of curricula can now be expanded to include the powerful effects of social media (YouTube; Facebook; Twitter; Pinterest, etc.) and how it actively helps create new perspectives, and can help shape both individual and public opinion.

## 3. The Hidden or Covert Curriculum

That which is implied by the very structure and nature of schools, much of what revolves around daily or established routines.

Longstreet and Shane (1993) offer a commonly accepted definition for this term – the *hidden curriculum, which refers to the kinds of learnings children derive from the very nature and organizational design of the public school, as well as from the behaviors and attitudes of teachers and administrators….*"

Examples of the hidden curriculum might include the messages and lessons derived from the mere organization of schools — the emphasis on: sequential room arrangements; the cellular, timed segments of formal instruction; an annual schedule that is still arranged to accommodate an agrarian age; disciplined messages where concentration equates to student behaviors were they are sitting up straight and are continually quiet; students getting in and standing in line silently; students quietly raising their hands to be called on;

the endless competition for grades, and so on. The hidden curriculum may include both positive or negative messages, depending on the models provided and the perspectives of the learner or the observer.

In what I term floating quotes, popularized quotes that have no direct, cited sources, David P. Gardner is reported to have said: *We learn simply by the exposure of living. Much that passes for education is not education at all but ritual. The fact is that we are being educated when we know it least.*

## 4.  The null Curriculum

That which we <u>do not teach</u>, thus giving students the message that these elements are not important in their educational experiences or in our society. Eisner offers some major points as he concludes his discussion of the null curriculum. *The major point I have been trying to make thus far is that schools have consequences not only by virtue of what they do teach, but also by virtue of what they neglect to teach. What students cannot consider, what they don't processes they are unable to use, have consequences for the kinds of lives they lead.*

 Eisner (1985, 1994) first described and defined aspects of this curriculum. He states: *There is something of a paradox involved in writing about a curriculum that does not exist. Yet, if we are concerned with the consequences of school programs and the role of curriculum in shaping those consequences, then it seems to me that we are well advised to consider not only the explicit and implicit curricula of schools but also what schools do not teach. It is my thesis that what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach. I argue this position because ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems. ...*

From Eisner's perspective the *null curriculum* is simply that which is not taught in schools. Somehow, somewhere, some people are empowered to make conscious decisions as to what is to be included and what is to be excluded from the overt (written) curriculum. Since it is physically impossible to teach everything in schools, many topics and subject areas must be intentionally excluded from the written curriculum. But Eisner's position on the "null curriculum" is that when certain subjects or topics are left out of the overt curriculum, school personnel are sending messages to students that certain content and processes are not important enough to study.

Unfortunately, without some level of awareness that there is also a well-defined implicit agenda in schools, school personnel send this same type of message via the hidden curriculum. These are important to consider when making choices. We teach about wars but not peace, we teach about certain select cultures and histories but not about others. Both our choices and our omissions send messages to students.

**5. Phantom Curriculum**

The messages prevalent in and through exposure to any type of media. These components and messages play a major part in the enculturation of students into the predominant meta-culture, or in acculturating students into narrower or generational subcultures.

**6. Concomitant Curriculum**

What is taught, or emphasized at home, or those experiences that are part of a family's experiences, or related experiences sanctioned by the family. (This type of curriculum may be received at church, in the context of religious expression, lessons on values, ethics or morals, molded behaviors, or social experiences based on the family's preferences.)

**7. Rhetorical Curriculum**

Elements from the rhetorical curriculum are comprised from ideas offered by policymakers, school officials, administrators, or politicians. This curriculum may also come from those professionals involved in concept formation and content changes; or from those educational initiatives resulting from decisions based on national and state reports, public speeches, or from texts critiquing outdated educational practices. The rhetorical curriculum may also come from the publicized works offering updates in pedagogical knowledge.

**8. Curriculum-in-use**

The formal curriculum (written or overt) comprises those things in textbooks, and content and concepts in the district curriculum guides. However, those "formal" elements are frequently not taught. The curriculum-in-use is the actual curriculum that is delivered and presented by each teacher.

## 9. Received Curriculum

Those things that students actually take out of classrooms; those concepts and content that are truly learned and remembered.

## 10. The Internal Curriculum

Processes, content, knowledge combined with the experiences and realities of the learner to create new knowledge. While educators should be aware of this curriculum, they have little control over the internal curriculum since it is unique to each student. Educators can explore this curricula by using instructional assessments like "exit slips," reflective exercises, or debriefing discussions to see what students really remember from a lesson. It is often very enlightening and surprising to find out what has meaning for learners and what does not.

## 11. The Electronic Curriculum

Those lessons learned through searching the Internet for information, or through using e-forms of communication. (Wilson, 2004) This type of curriculum may be either formal or informal, and inherent lessons may be overt or covert, good or bad, correct or incorrect depending on ones' views. Students who use the Internet on a regular basis, both for recreational purposes (as in blogs, wikis, chatrooms, listserves, through instant messenger, on-line conversations, or through personal e-mails and sites like Twitter, Facebook, or Youtube) and for personal online research and information gathering are bombarded with all types of media and messages. Much of this information may be factually correct, informative, or even entertaining or inspirational. But there is also a great deal of other e-information that may be very incorrect, dated, passé, biased, perverse, or even manipulative.

The implications of the electronic curriculum for educational practices are that part of the overt curriculum needs to include lessons on how to be wise consumers of information, how to critically appraise the accuracy and correctness of e-information, as well as how to determine the reliability of electronic sources. Also, students need to learn how to be artfully discerning about the usefulness and appropriateness of certain types of information. Like other forms of social interaction, students need to know that there are inherent lessons to be learned about appropriate and acceptable "netiquette" and online behaviors, to include the differences between "fair and legal usage," vs. plagiarism and information piracy.