

The Hidden School: The Use of Poetry and Photography to Reveal Aspects of the Hidden Curriculum for Critical Reflection

SESSION I

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EXPLORATIVE STRATEGIES

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The hidden school is implicitly experienced, embodied and perpetuated by staff and students through the hidden curriculum, defined by Sambell and McDowell (2006) as those aspects of the curriculum 'implicit and embedded in educational experiences, in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and surface features of educational interaction'. Kolberg and Meyer (1972) regard the behavior of the teacher as complicit in the production of hidden curriculum, positing that 'the hidden curriculum arises when an educator splits his/her own life from the act of teaching.' The 'habitual curriculum' is arguably a more appropriate term as Gair and Mullins (2002) note 'the hidden curriculum is not actually hidden, but merely constituted by all those things that are so taken for granted that they are rarely given any attention.' Illich (1971) took a more sinister view that the 'hidden' elements within curricula mask societies subversion of real learning, in a covert enactment of hegemonic ideology and power. Whether the hidden curriculum is the product of intent or ignorance, Apple (1971) declares that in the pursuit of a reflective and critical pedagogy, 'the hidden political and ideological agendas... must be uncovered if they are to be critically addressed.' The contingent question arises; Can the deployment of poetry as a text-based mode of practice and photography as a visual-based mode of practice reveal aspects of the hidden curriculum for critical reflection?

Szto, Furman and Langer (2007) make a robust case for the epistemological and applied research possibilities of poetry and photography, citing the extensive use of both media in social research (Furman, Chan, Richardson, Hine). Szto highlights the social impact of the photograph as a catalyst for social change, the photographic image projecting the authenticity of 'being there' and casting the documentary photographer as an ethnographer. Furman argues for the potential of the poem that 'allow(s) for (an) holistic understanding that transcends quantitative data, noting the 'congruity' of poetry with the many ways people experience the world, echoing Hirschfield's view that 'poetry is the clarification and magnification of being, through words'. Both Szto and Furman posit 'the arts... as a valuable means for communicating complex social phenomena, for which 'statistical means for representation is limiting', citing the work of (Finley and Knowles (1995).

This research uses the tools of poetry and photography to produce qualitative data on the daily practices and processes embedded within the hidden curriculum, for the purposes of critical analysis, evaluation and reflection. The research adopts an auto-ethnographical approach (in their own 'words') using student participatory workshops to explore the social processes and inter-personal relationships within the learning

and teaching environment, offering insights to student experiences of the 'curriculum-in-action'. Using the lens of reflective practice (Schon and Argyris), the process will enable students to bring into focus the multitude of phenomena informing their learning on a daily basis, and by raising their awareness, enhance their agency in the construction of their individual learning. Dissemination of the research findings will afford educational practitioners the opportunity to critically reflect on those 'hidden' aspects embedded in their day-to-day learning and teaching practices. As the primary learning and teaching space within architectural education, the studio as both place and process provides the locus for the research investigations.



