

# Researching the Role of Hidden Curriculum in Shaping the Lived Experience of Minority Students: Conceptualization, Development and Validation of Tools

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## ABSTRACT

Hidden curriculum research has been a challenge for educators because there are no standardized data collection tools and instruments to examine the manifestation, functions and role of the hidden curriculum in shaping minority students' lived experiences and identities. The goal of this study is to develop a research methodology and then conceptualize, develop and validate data collection tools to explore the role of hidden curriculum in shaping minority students schooling experience. Based on the hypothesis, a standardized, rigorous and systematic in-depth interview tool with 50 questions and a standardized observation checklist of 28 items was developed and validated to help in the investigation of the nature, manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum in shaping students' lived experiences. The expert panel, a pilot test and data collection for a PhD dissertation with 32 students and 8 teachers at multicultural contexts ensured the face and content validity of all the in-depth interview, observation, and document analysis tools. The researchers developed a conceptual framework to better explain the manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum. In-depth interview and observation checklists developed and validated that can be replicated in different multicultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Close observation; Document analysis; Equity; Hidden curriculum; In-depth interview; Lived experience; Methodology; Multiculturalism; Phenomenology; Qualitative; Research methods

## INTRODUCTION

The researchers developed the conceptual framework for this study through a thorough reading of existing theories and premises, empirical research findings and arguments and scholarly views on the operations, manifestations, functions and role of the hidden curriculum, the lived experience of ethno cultural minority students, dimensions of diversity and multiculturalism, educational reproduction, critical pedagogy, symbolic resistance and opposition to schooling [1].

In the conceptual framework developed by the researchers, schools are viewed as institutions that embody collective traditions and human intentions that are the result of identifiable social and economic ideologies. The macro level sociocultural and ethnic background, experience and beliefs of a society are thought to be implicitly embedded and manifested in national education policy and guidelines as the society's general interest in the general objective and purpose of education.

Similarly, at the macro level, the state's political interests are implicitly embedded and manifested in the general objectives and purposes of national educational policies and procedures.

These societal and state-level interests will be cascaded and instilled at the school level, specifically through the process and structure of schooling. The taught curriculum, classroom instructional approaches, classroom assessment techniques, classroom discipline techniques, school rules and regulations, school election systems for school leadership positions, co-curricular and extracurricular activities and others similar to these were all part of the process and structure of schooling at the micro level [2].

As implicit beliefs and school practices, the hidden curriculum manifests in all of these components of the structure and process of schooling. As manifested in these schooling structures and processes, the hidden curriculum also serves the interests of specific groups of students and teachers. The hidden curriculum,

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which is implicitly embedded and manifested in the process and structure of schooling, also plays a role in shaping the lived experience of ethnocultural minority students. And hence, the hidden curriculum both negatively and positively shaped the lived experiences of ethnocultural minority students.

Discrimination, exclusion, prejudice, stereotyping, stress, inequity and inequality in access to quality education are among the negative lived experiences of ethnocultural minority students as mediated by the hidden curriculum. Resistance to schooling that exacerbates inequity and inequality for quality education, as well as school opposition to exclusion, discrimination and prejudice, are examples of positive lived experiences of ethnocultural minority students as mediated by the hidden curriculum implicitly embedded and manifested in the process and structure of schooling.

The researcher believed that an analysis of power should be included as part of a theoretical framework to examine the role of the hidden curriculum of schooling in shaping the experience of ethnocultural minority students in school. Furthermore, the researchers focus on the underlying conflicts in both schools and society and investigate how this can contribute to a more radical theory of resistance that reflects the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping ethnocultural minority students' experiences of schooling.

Once the researchers recognized the relationship between schooling, the state and the larger society, they approached questions about the nature and meaning of schooling experiences from the theoretical perspectives of theory of reproduction, theory of symbolic resistance, theory of multiculturalism, theory of critical pedagogy and theory of hidden curriculum, all of which are capable of illuminating the often overlooked relationship between school knowledge and social control.

The researchers focus on the tacit beliefs and attitudes that occur in the structure and process of ethno culturally diverse primary schools, helping to uncover the ideological messages embedded in the social relations of classroom encounters and outside classroom situations by viewing schools within the context of a larger society. As critical investigators of the hidden curriculum have noted, the concrete modes of knowledge distribution in classrooms, as well as the common sense practices of teachers and students, can shed light on the relationship between school life and the ideological, power and economic resource structures of which schools are a part.

There is a social distribution of knowledge within the classrooms of ethnoculturally diverse primary schools, just as there is a social distribution of capital in society. Different types of students (in this case, ethno culturally diverse students) receive different types of knowledge, access to resources and power in the leadership structure, social labeling and representation in reward and punishment. The process of social labeling, bias, discrimination, exclusion and stereotypes that occurs in ethnoculturally diverse primary schools is inextricably linked to the differential distribution of classroom knowledge, power and opportunity.

As a result, the researchers hypothesized that the function, manifestation and role of the hidden curriculum are implicitly embedded in the schooling process and structures (the formal curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom interaction, discipline activities and rules, school organization and structure, co-curricular activities, reward and punishment). And the hidden curriculum shapes the identity and lived experience of students from ethno cultural minorities [3].

## Research paradigm

In terms of paradigm, the researchers' approach to this qualitative phenomenological study had become increasingly influenced by the philosophical positions known as critical theory and constructivism. The usefulness of a radical critical perspective on education is in being able to move beyond the apolitical vision of the functionalist viewpoint as well as the subjective idealism of the new sociology. Furthermore, this viewpoint includes a convergence of theory, ideology and social practice. In this perspective, schools are considered as agents of ideological control that reproduce and perpetuate prevailing beliefs, values and norms. This is not to imply that schools are just factories that process students and reflect societal interests; such a viewpoint is mechanical and reductionist [4].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Qualitative research approach a choice for the study of hidden curriculum

Qualitative research is a way to examine the hidden curriculum because it is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help educators understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena (such as the hidden curriculum) with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. The study used a qualitative framework and a theoretical framework that recognizes the importance of hearing ethnocultural minority students' voices as well as the manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum in shaping ethnocultural minority students' schooling experiences.

### Rationale for selection of the research design

This was a qualitative phenomenological study. Phenomenological investigation, in its most basic form, analyzes the distinctly human perceptions of individuals, resulting in descriptions of such experiences that directly appeal to the senses of other people. Phenomenology is the methodical endeavor to identify and characterize the inherent meaning structures of lived experience that are intuited or comprehended through a study of particulars or instances as they are experienced in lived experience. Phenomenology seeks to comprehend the phenomenological significance of experiences [5].

The researchers believed that by using a qualitative phenomenological design, they could better understand the manifestations of the hidden curriculum, the purpose of the hidden curriculum, the role of teachers and students in combating or fostering social inequality and the role of the

hidden curriculum in shaping the ethnocultural minority students' experience of schooling in ethnoculturally diverse primary school settings. Perception is regarded as the main source of information in phenomenology, the one that cannot be questioned. The whole concrete act of perception is made up of intentions combined with sensations; the object reaches full-bodied presence. Human experience always includes perceiving, thinking and acting in tightly linked ways, but it all begins with perception and phenomenological inquiry is an inquiry into what is essential in human experience in this sense [6].

## Data collection methods and instruments

The researchers comprehended that the study of the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping the lived experience of minority students and hence its data can be gathered through in-depth interviews, close observations and document analysis. Thus the researchers entailed triangulating numerous data sources for information by evaluating evidence from the sources and using it to construct a cohesive case for themes. As a consequence, the researchers used both interactive (conversational in-depth interview) and non-interactive (observation and document analysis) data-gathering approaches to better explore and understand the manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum in shaping the lived experience and identity of ethno cultural minority students in multicultural contexts [7].

## In-depth interview

In this phenomenological study, the researchers suggested to use in-depth interviews for two purposes: It can be used to explore and gather experiential narrative material that served as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of the implicit beliefs, values, attitudes and practices that govern the daily experience of ethnocultural minority students in the ethnoculturally diverse schools [8].

The in-depth interview can also be used to establish a conversational relationship with a partner (interviewee) about

the manifestations of the hidden curriculum, the functions of the hidden curriculum, the role of teachers and students in fighting or preserving social inequality and the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping the ethnocultural minority students' schooling experience.

The interview items included semi-structured questions that assisted the researchers in exploring the hidden beliefs and values embedded in schooling (curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom interaction, school rules and discipline techniques, school club leadership and co-curricular activities), the functions of these implicit beliefs and attitudes, the role of students and teachers in constructing these beliefs and attitudes and the role of these beliefs in shaping the lived experience of ethno cultural minority students. The researchers developed a series of questions in advance in order to elicit a comprehensive account of the participant's experience of the manifestations, functions and role of the hidden curriculum, in shaping the ethnocultural minority students' experience of schooling [9].

The interview items were developed through a thorough reading of theories and empirical findings concerning the conception of the hidden curriculum, the purpose of the hidden curriculum, manifestations of the hidden curriculum, lived experiences of ethnocultural minority students, the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping the ethnocultural minority students' schooling experience. The researchers also developed a deep understanding and conceptualization of the theory of critical pedagogy, critical theory, social reconstruction theory, the theory of multiculturalism, the theory of cultural reproduction, the theory of resistance and methods and approached of researching the hidden curriculum and lived experience. The researchers developed semi-structured interview questions based on the review literature and observations and personal experience (Table 1) [10].

**Table 1:** In-depth interview protocol.

S. no	Interview questions
1	<b>Manifestations of the hidden curriculum</b>
1.1	Do you believe your ethno cultural experiences included in teachers selection, organization and delivery of class room contents? How?
1.2	Do you believe your ethno cultural experiences considered in teacher's selection and application of classroom instructional approach and pedagogy? How?
1.3	Do you believe the practice of curriculum differentiation accommodates the interest and ability level of students in the school? How?
1.4	Do you believe your ethno cultural experience considered in teacher's selection and application of classroom assessment techniques? How?
1.5	Do you believe you do have the right to support any of the clubs and express your interest freely? How?

1.6	Do you believe there is a fair and inclusive election for school leadership positions? How?
1.7	Do you believe your voices have been considered in the school leadership structures? How?
1.8	Do you believe your ethno cultural experience included in the school extra and co-curricular clubs? How?
1.9	Do you believe you are fairly treated in school practices of discipline and punish? How?
1.10	Do you believe the school community can function well without school rules? How?
1.11	Do you believe you can question and critically reflect on the practice of discipline and punish? How?
1.12	Do you believe there are values learned from the school practice of discipline and punish? What are they?
1.13	Do you believe there are labeling language and terms used by students and teachers in the school? What are they?
1.14	Do you believe the school community used proper language in their communication towards ethno cultural minority students?
1.15	Do you believe the celebration of marked national and international days considered your ethno cultural experience? How?
2	<b>Effects of hidden curriculum on lived experience</b>
2.1	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a classroom where teachers-practice of curriculum adaptation for inclusion and exclusion of contents?
2.2	What does it look like to be ethno cultural minority student in a classroom where there is teacher dominated selection and application of instructional approaches?
2.3	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a classroom where there is a teacher led assessment techniques?
2.4	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where there is election for school leadership positions?
2.5	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where there is a practice of discipline and punishment?
2.6	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where there are unwritten moral values that guide overall interaction?
2.7	What does it look like to be a student in a school where there are different labeling language and terminologies?
2.8	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school during celebration of marked national and international days?
2.9	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where there are fans of different football clubs?
2.1	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where there are diverse students with different ethno cultural background?

2.11	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where the majority of teachers and students are from the majority ethno cultural majority group?
2.12	What does it look like to be an ethno cultural minority student in a school where?
<b>3</b>	<b>Functions of the hidden curriculum</b>
3.1	Do you believe the selection and organization of contents in the taught curriculum served all students in the school? How? Why? Who are they?
3.2	Do you believe teachers' selection and application of classroom instructional approaches served the interest of all students? How? Why? Who are they?
3.3	Do you believe teachers' selection and application of classroom assessment techniques served the interest of all students? How? Why? Who are they?
3.4	Do you believe school practices of election system for school leadership positions served the interest of all students in the school? How? Why? Who are they?
3.5	Do you believe school labeling language and terminologies served the interest of all students in the school? How? Why? Who are they?
3.6	Do you believe the schools practice of celebration of marked national and international days served the interest of all students in the school? How? Why? Who are they?
3.7	Do you believe the schools practice of discipline and punish served the interest of all students in the school? How? Why? Who are they?
3.8	Do you believe the schools distribution and allocation of resources served the interest of all students? How?
3.9	Do you believe the schools authority and management support staff served the interest of all students in the school? How?
3.1	Do you believe the schools co-curricular and extra-curricular clubs and practices served the interest of all students in the school? How?
<b>4</b>	<b>Effects of hidden curriculum on equitable education</b>
4.1	Do you believe the selection and organization of contents in the taught curriculum served all students in the school? How? Why? Who are they?
4.2	Do you believe teachers' selection and application of classroom instructional approaches served the interest of all students? How? Why? Who are they?
4.3	Do you believe teachers' practice of curriculum adaptation foster equitable quality education? How? Why?
4.4	Do you believe teachers practice of instructional approaches foster equitable quality education? How? Why?
4.5	Do you believe teachers practice of classroom assessment techniques foster equitable quality education? How? Why?

4.6	Do you believe the schools practice of election for school leadership positions foster equitable quality education? How? Why?
4.7	Do you believe the practice of school labeling language and terminologies? How? Why?
4.8	Do you believe the schools practice of school discipline and punish foster equitable quality education? How? Why?
4.9	Do you believe the practice of resistance to schooling fosters equitable quality education? How? Why?
4.1	Do you believe the schools practice of celebration of marked national and international day's foster equitable education? How? Why?
4.11	Do you believe the schools distribution and allocation of resources foster equitable quality education? How?
4.12	Do you believe the schools authority and management support staff foster equitable quality education in the school? How?
4.13	Do you believe the schools co-curricular and extra-curricular clubs and practices foster equitable quality education in the school? How?

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Close observation

Close observation produced various types of experience material than the researcher typically obtains through the interview technique. Close observation, in contrast to more experimental or behavioral observational research methodologies, attempts to break through the gap produced by observational methods. Close observation by the researchers entailed adopting as intimate a relationship as possible while maintaining hermeneutic attention to events that allowed continuously stepping back and reflecting on the meaning of those situations [11].

The selected schools' classroom and outside classroom environments were the primary sites of careful observation in the study. The researchers identified implicit beliefs and perceptions embedded and manifested in the curriculum in use, the pedagogical and instructional techniques used, the classroom assessment techniques used, the social interactions, sitting arrangements, reward and punishment, communication and conversations, teaching aids, rules and regulations, discipline techniques and assessment and feedback techniques were all observed in the classroom.

The researchers aimed to uncover the ideological concepts contained in the selection, organization and structure of content, form and knowledge through the teacher's practice of curriculum adaptation, selection and organization of classroom content, instructional approach and assessment techniques. The internal organizing methods that go into their assembly were revealed in order to expose the ideology they symbolize. The organizing notions that lie silently within instructional content, instructional approach and assessment techniques were recognized by the researchers. These materials were decoded not

just in terms of content, but also in terms of form and composition [12].

School knowledge was examined to see how far its form and content represented the unequal presentation of ethnocultural groups' cultural capital; that is, how does classroom knowledge embody modes of language, systems of meaning, and cultural experiences that invalidate other forms of cultural capital directly or indirectly. Throughout our classroom observation, we paid close attention to how children, teachers, staff and administrators interacted with one another.

Many strong things occur in the classroom that goes beyond the typical course of study. Many verbal encounters invariably contain concerns of attitude, belief and morality. Students, like other institutional citizens, develop ideas of fair play, fairness and morality from how the institution, its officials and fellow constituents treat them. In the numerous school regulations and practices ranging from the trivial to the substantial, schools surely educate about authority, justice, what is right and wrong and priorities. Teachers were observed within the classroom while mediating, resolving disagreements, correcting, disciplining and shielding students' misbehavior and encouraging or discouraging collaborative efforts of students in problem solving.

Outside the classroom, the researchers closely observed the principal's office, teacher's staff room, playgrounds, student restrooms (latrine), library, resource center, ICT center, laboratory, notice board, sign boards, co-curricular activity areas and school club offices, location of the flag ceremony and school gate. There were also counseling and guidance services, athletic programs and extracurricular activities like theater, music clubs or debating club. Any of these programs presented opportunity for morally charged topics to emerge, for example winning and losing in a program of competitive athletics; or



deciding who gets the leading, the talented but uncooperative or the modestly talent. I witnessed assemblies or rallies that aimed to emotionally and experientially engage students in moral, value and belief concerns [13].

The researchers also comprehended that one of the major methods of gathering experiential material from others is the more indirect method of close observation with the partner students if it is difficult to generate written descriptions or to engage in conversational interviewing. To gain access to the experience of young children, it was important to follow them into their play spaces and into the things they did while the researchers remained attentively aware of the way it was for them.

One of the out of the classroom observation places was the principal's office. Principals used to stamp different tabular, pictorial and descriptive reasons for student categorization. Lists of students characterized as the most disruptive and disciplined students, leaders of co-curricular groups, students' council and parliament members and other leadership responsibilities, for example. Another point of interest was the staff room. It was included in the research because it hosted staff meetings, student council meetings, other student organizations and school club meetings. The informal discourse and dialogue of school teachers concerning norms, beliefs and values rooted in schooling, their beliefs and perceptions regarding parts and parcel of the process and structure of schooling was comprehended.

Other outside classroom sites that were observed in the study included restrooms/latrine huts. These were places where people expressed their latent views, depositions, perceptions, resistance and opposition to schooling through wall inscriptions, paintings or graffiti. The location of the flag

ceremony was another outside classroom venue seen throughout the inquiry. Throughout the academic year, the principal and teachers communicated messages and updates to students, general student meetings were held, misbehaved students were punished and the president of the students' council, students' parliament and student leaders of various associations and clubs delivered speeches at the flag ceremony [14].

The researchers also followed some of the research participants to their homes in order to gain a better understanding of the students' social and cultural capital, as well as the impact of primary socialization by family members of ethnocultural minority student's perception and belief on the process and structure of schooling. Outside of the formal framework of conducting interviews, the researchers spent time observing, listening and debating in various educational settings and groups. In brief, the researchers investigated the implicit beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, dispositions, perceptions, messages, rules and practices mediated by ethnicity and culture and molding the lived experience of ethnocultural minority students.

The researchers therefore through their in-depth understanding and conceptualization of the manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum developed observation checklist with 28 items. The researchers in-depth analysis of and comprehension of the theories of cultural capital, cultural reproduction, hidden curriculum, social reconstruction, critical pedagogy, multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness also supported them in the development of a precise observation checklist that enabled them to generate data both inside and outside classroom context at the multi-cultural and ethno culturally diverse primary school settings. Items of the observation checklist (Table 2) [15].

**Table 2:** Observation checklist.

S. no	Observation indicators	Yes	No	Descriptions
1	Teacher selection, organization and delivery of class room contents considered the experiences of ethnocultural minority students			
2	Teacher selection, organization and delivery of contents served the interest of all students			
3	Teacher selection and application of classroom contents fostered equitable quality education			
4	Teacher selection and organization of lesson content considered both the contemporary and past histories			

5	Teacher selection and organization of lesson content is inclusive and multiple perspectives included
6	Teacher selection and organization of classroom pedagogy considered ethno cultural minority students experiences
7	Teacher selection and application of classroom instructional approaches served the interest of all students
8	Teacher selection and application of instructional approaches fostered equitable quality education
9	Teacher selection and organization of instructional approach enhanced critical thinking, creativity and problem solving
10	Teacher selection, organization and application of instructional approach provided equitable utilization of resources such as time and space for all students
11	Teacher practice of differentiated instruction considered ethno cultural minority students experiences
12	Teacher application of differentiated instruction served the interest of all students
13	Teacher selection and organization of classroom assessment techniques is based on constructive support and level of achievement
14	Teacher selection and organization of classroom assessment techniques promoted critical thinking, creativity and problem solving



15	Teacher selection, organization and application of classroom assessment techniques served the interest of all students
16	Teacher selection, organization and application of classroom assessment techniques fostered equitable quality education
17	Teacher assignment and election of students for classroom leadership positions considered the experience of ethno cultural minority students
18	The practice of school election outside the classroom for school leadership positions served the interest of all students
19	The practice of election for school leadership positions fostered equitable quality education
20	Teacher practice of co-curricular and extracurricular activities considered the experiences of ethno cultural minority students
21	Teacher practice of discipline and rule systems is fair and inclusive
22	The practice of school discipline and rule system served the interest of all students
23	Teacher provided ample critical reflection and questioning opportunities to students about school discipline rules and the consequences of breaching them
24	Teacher classroom discipline practice communicated positive values for students

25	Classroom interaction is free from any form of stereotyping and labeling language and terminology
26	School celebration of marked national and international days is inclusive
27	School celebration of marked national and international days served the interest of all students
28	School sport games and computations promoted fair game and fair play

## Document analysis

Individual schools and school systems as a whole communicated certain implicit beliefs, attitudes and concepts that constitute the hidden curriculum. As a result, it was critical that the researchers become acquainted with the school's operating concepts. Therefore, the researchers performed through reading of official materials such as bulletins, codes, rules and regulations, as well as being sensitive to the schools' implicit mores [16].

The following documents were examined in the study national and regional policy and guideline documents, the standard of procedures, annual reports, curriculum framework, the blacklist, list of members and leaders of school clubs, lists and minute of students counsels and student parliament, list of students who have had access to school resources such as the library, computer center, pedagogical center, laboratory, PTA minute, staff meeting minute, office documents.

These documents assisted the researchers in understanding the manifestations, the purpose and the role of the hidden curriculum teachers and students in the construction of the hidden curriculum and its effect in shaping the ethnocultural minority students' schooling experience. Studying these documents also allowed the researcher to assess if there were any trends inclusion and exclusion based on students' ethnocultural minority status in accessing school resources and power structures. It also supported the researchers to examine who was penalized for misbehaviors and deviations to school discipline rules and regulations and why, such that patterns in terms of ethnocultural minority status emerged.

The same reasoning might be used to school reward programs. Who was awarded, why, and if there was any significance in terms of dimensions of diversity were extensively investigated. The blacklist was a document that featured a list of misbehaved students as well as their parents' names and signatures in most Ethiopian elementary, junior and high schools. It also includes reasons for the violations of school regulations committed by students, as well as the type of punishment and remedial actions

implemented by the school. These schools used to call parents of those students who were perceived as the most disturbing and resistant to teachers and principals authority, give oral and written warnings and coerce them to make commitments with their signatures to strictly control their child so that the student will never repeat the same mistake. The researchers examined over representation and under representation of students based on their ethno cultural background from the blacklists [17].

Lists of the most troublesome students, the most disciplined students, special class students, members of the students' council, monitors, student policies and leaders of various clubs, flag ceremony leaders, computer users, library pocket users, meeting minutes were all included and analyzed in the document analysis so as to understand the role of hidden curriculum in shaping the identity and lived experience of minority students.

The researcher also developed a document analysis checklist so as to explore implicit beliefs and perceptions embedded in the official documents, standards of procedures and policy accounts of the studied schools.

## Data collection procedures

In this phenomenological study, data was collected using field notes, tape recorders, video recorders, diaries and checklists. The ethnocultural minority students' lived experience descriptions were found in a variety of expressions or forms; in transcribed taped conversation; in interview materials; in daily accounts or stories; in super time talk, informally written responses; in passing comments; in reflections on other people's writing; in accounts of vicarious experiences of school events; in the play acting of small children; in heart to heart conversations among friends. Each narrative of a lived experience is a good source for eliciting theme features of the thing it represents.

In this phenomenological interview; the researcher began with a social chat or a brief meditation practice aimed at generating calm and trusting environment. Following this introduction, the researcher advised that the co-researcher spend a few seconds to

focus on the experience, particularly times of special awareness and impact, before completely describing the event. The interviewer was responsible for providing a comfortable environment in which the study subject may react honestly and completely. The interviews were conducted face to face.

The researchers tape recorded talks with students who were presenting personal life stories in order to acquire reports of personal experiences for use in the study (anecdotes, stories, experiences, incidents. The researcher was involved in the Epoche process prior to the interview, so that major past connections, understandings, facts and prejudices were set aside and did not color or guide the interview. Participation in the Epoche process may also be required during the interview [18].

Field notes and video recordings were used to document the observation. The histories of the events were documented, including the location, time and a complete history of the incident. Furthermore, the researchers were an external observer who was closely involved in the life world of the research participants through careful observation of classroom and out of classroom circumstances.

Observation checklists for the classroom and out of classrooms visited were created and implemented in order to collect data on the implicit beliefs and attitudes embedded in the activities and interactions conducted both within and outside of the classroom. The researchers conducted a 2:00 hour's interview with each of the 40 research participants.

The interviews were recorded by tape recorder and notes. Document analysis was also carried out using pre-set checklists developed by the researcher for this purpose. The data obtained from the different documents was shown in tabular form.

At the end of the data collection, the researchers had detailed interview data from 40 ethno cultural minority students from four schools. A detailed note of the researchers' observation of the four schools and a broad description of data collected from document analysis was also secured. When the researchers thought that there was nothing new that could be acquired from the participants and so data redundancy occurred, the data collection was terminated.

## Data analysis

**Familiarization and transcription:** Reading the interview transcripts, observational notes or materials to be analyzed was the first stage in this phenomenological qualitative study. Listening to interview recordings before transcription, as well as the actual process of transcribing interviews or editing and rearranging basic observation notes, provided opportunities for analysis. During this listening and reading, the researchers made notes and memoranda about what they saw or heard in the data. The data gathered from the interviews of the participants and captured on tape recorder was transcribed. Because the interview was done in Amharic, it was translated into English.

The researchers then studied the data several times and thoroughly comprehended it. As a result, data from texts that support and contradict the emerging themes were selected and examined. Each unit was thoroughly questioned to determine

what it revealed. The transcription of the data and translation of the transcriptions was made for each of the research participants.

After completing the transcription and translation of the interview data, the researchers immersed in the data, review each transcription and repeatedly read each interview transcript for further understanding. The data obtained from observation of the research sites through field notes and observation checklists were also organized and coded. The evidence for this phenomenological study came from first-person accounts of life events. According to phenomenological principles, scientific investigation was valid when the knowledge sought was obtained through descriptions that allow for an understanding of the meanings and essences of experiences.

**Method validation:** The development of items for the in-depth interview, observation checklists and document analysis checklists followed steps that includes; defining the characteristics of the hidden curriculum through the development of a conceptual framework was done. Then based on their in-depth understanding of the manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum, researchers construct a 50 item interview protocol, 28 item observation checklist and document analysis checklist after refining the initial pool of items so that overlapped and those not relevant to explore the manifestation, function and role of hidden curriculum were deleted. The researchers also hold preliminary item tryouts and revise as necessary. Face validity and content validity of the items developed were done with expert panel comprised of the professors and PhD candidates in the department of curriculum and instruction at Addis Ababa University. Subsequently the researchers developed four factors as characteristics of the hidden curriculum namely; the manifestations of the hidden curriculum, the impacts of the hidden curriculum in shaping the lived experience of minority students, the functions of the hidden curriculum in serving the interest of specific groups, the role of the hidden curriculum used to explore the nature of the hidden curriculum in ethno culturally diverse primary schools.

A pilot research was done with students from ethno cultural minority groups in an ethno culturally diverse elementary school in Ethiopia. The pilot study allowed the researchers to identify methodological and practical issues that must be addressed during data gathering for the dissertation. Recruitment of study subjects, in particular, became a major practical difficulty for which the approach was fine-tuned. Finally the tools were effectively used to generate data for a full dissertation report done on four ethno culturally diverse and multicultural contexts of Ethiopia with a participation of 32 students and 8 teachers. The title of the dissertation completed with the support of this in-depth interview tool, observation checklist and document analysis checklist was 'Ethno cultural minority student's experience of schooling the manifestation, function and role of the hidden curriculum in ethno culturally diverse primary schools of the Amhara region, Ethiopia'.

**Credibility and trustworthiness:** The researchers used many methods to preserve the study's integrity and reliability. One of the tactics to assure the reliability and credibility of this research was triangulation, which is the collecting of evidence from a

varied range of people and locations using a number of approaches. This procedure lowered the possibility of chance connections and systematic biases caused by a single method, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the generality of the explanations developed. As a result, theory, instrument and source triangulations were employed in the data analysis.

The emerging themes were accompanied by supporting data triangulated from all data gathering procedures and data sources. Lastly, the themes were analyzed and observed through the lenses of the theories of reproduction, symbolic resistance, hidden curriculum, theory of multiculturalism, theory of culturally responsive pedagogy and empirical study on the subject.

To improve the validity, data that contradicted the themes was discovered and included in the analysis from all observations, interviews and document analysis. A crucial aspect of the logic of validity testing in this qualitative research was searching for discrepant evidence and negative instances, which included locating and evaluating discrepant data and negative cases. The essential premise here was that the researchers meticulously analyzed both supporting and contradictory evidence to determine if it was more reasonable to keep or alter the result. By soliciting comments on our conclusions, the researchers were able to uncover their biases and preconceptions, as well as check for faults in their logic or techniques. In especially tough circumstances, the most the researchers could do was publish the contradictory data and enable readers to analyze it and make their own judgments.

In addition, the researchers arranged and led respondent validation sessions. Respondent validation, also known as member checks, is an approach that involves routinely obtaining input regarding data and findings from the people researched in the study. This is the single most significant means of ruling out the chance of misinterpreting what participants say and do, as well as their viewpoint on what is going on, as well as detecting your biases and misconceptions of what is witnessed. A series of interviews with selected participants were arranged for this purpose, allowing for reflection on the text (transcripts of earlier interviews in order to get as much interpretative insight as possible).

After the researcher's identification of transcript themes, these themes became topics of reflection in follow-up hermeneutic dialogues in which both the researchers and the interviewee contributed. In other words, both the interviewer and the interviewee sought to understand the preparatory themes in light of the original phenomenological inquiry.

The researchers were also engaged in extensive long-term participation at the field level for more than four months. Long-term participant observation yielded more detailed information on individual settings and occurrences than any other approach. It not only offered more and more diverse types of data, but it also allowed the researcher to verify and corroborate my observations and deductions. The researcher gathered a wealth of information from the study's participants.

Long-term involvement and intensive interviews enabled the researchers to collect rich data that is detailed and varied

enough to provide a full and revealing picture of manifestations of hidden curriculum, functions of hidden curriculum and roles of the hidden curriculum in shaping the experiences of ethnocultural minority students, as well as teachers and students' roles in fighting or fostering social inequality through the hidden curriculum of schooling.

**Data analysis:** Data analysis was initially done on a case-by-case basis. Each school was a separate, unique and special case for which the researchers conducted data analysis. The data obtained from 32 students and 8 teachers and the data obtained from the observation of each school context were analyzed at a case level. Therefore, four separate data analyses were made for each of the research sites and hence, unique themes emerged that characterize each research context [19].

The essence of qualitative research is interpretation. This signifies that the researchers interpreted the data. This involved creating a description of an individual or place, evaluating data for themes or categories and lastly, interpreting or forming a conclusion about its personal or theoretical significance.

Then, we continued with a cross-case pattern analysis of data among the four case schools based on the major themes that emerged from the individual case analysis. Analyzing the data allowed the researchers to see the main similarities and differences and code based on them. Ultimately, significant themes developed that demonstrated parallels across the majority of the data. These themes or categories were expanded into broad patterns, which were then compared to existing literature on the subject [20].

The cross-case data analysis among the four unique cases, four schools, was made using a qualitative research matrix. The repeated reading of the transcribed and translated data and the cross-case analysis enabled the researchers to explore and understand implicit meanings, emerging statements and categories about the ethno cultural minority student's lived experience of schooling and the manifestations, functions and role of the hidden curriculum in the ethno culturally diverse primary schools.

Therefore, from the cross-case analysis, major themes built from a matrix of data from the four research sites that answered the research questions of this study emerged. The emerging codes and categories were clustered around themes that corresponded to the research questions and literature review. The researchers triangulated different data sources by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. Then, the researchers coded and sorted the data to identify and record major themes across the cases, identified commonalities and variations among experiences in the different cases and categorized the patterns of repeated statements, phrases and words that match across the different case accounts [21].

Finding major themes across all four cases was done and a critical reflection and intuition of these emerging themes were done by the researchers. Then, four major themes were developed as per the research questions of the study and sub-themes for each of the major themes have also emerged. Finally, these themes that answered the research questions were

scrutinized through the lenses of the theories of multicultural education, culturally responsive education, critical pedagogy, symbolic resistance and educational reproduction.

### Ethics statements

The researchers established a moral commitment to the research participants, which should avoid an exploitative scenario. The study adhered to the appropriate ethical standards, created explicit agreements with research participants, acknowledged the importance of confidentiality and informed consent and devised processes to ensure full disclosure of the nature, purpose and needs of the research endeavor.

### CONCLUSION

The study included volunteers who volunteered to be co-researchers, highlighted open processes and methodologies and procedures that could be changed and allowed for alternatives in response to participant thoughts and recommendations, as needed for accuracy, safety and comfort. Co-researchers were well informed that they might withdraw at any moment. Before selecting research participants, as well as during the study the researchers gave clear and extensive information on the nature and goal of the study to the participants. To safeguard the identity of the research participants, the researcher erased information that they regarded private and potentially detrimental. The confidentiality of the data to be utilized was protected unless the co-researchers was fully informed and consented to its use. There is no a national standard and a request for having ethical clearance for studies related to education and hence the researchers secured a support letter from Addis Ababa University, department of curriculum. In addition to this, the researchers developed a consent form and obtained the consent of all students and teacher participants of the study to use the data for publication in journal articles and in the dissertation report.

### AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

**Tesfaye Ebabuye:** Conceptualization, methodology, validity tests, data curation, writing-original draft preparation, writing-reviewing and editing.

**Amare Asgedom:** Supervision, validity test, data curation, writing-reviewing and editing.

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