

Manifestations of Hidden Curricular Messages in the PGDT Program: Covert Tasks in Focus

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Abstract: This study describes the experiences of student-teachers in the Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) program. The aim was to explore the hidden curricular messages within the program, covert tasks in focus, by answering two central questions: 1) What do student-teachers' experiences in the PGDT program tell us about their task compliance in their training 2) Do student-teachers' task compliance vary significantly with their background characteristics? Exploratory sequential mixed methods study was conducted in three public universities over the course of three academic terms. Data consisted of transcribed interviews and questionnaire survey. In the first phase of the study, data was collected and analyzed relying on the assumptions of phenomenological inquiry from purposively selected 25 student-teachers (male=15 and female=10). In the second stage, survey was conducted on a relatively large sample size consisting 356 student-teachers (male=216 & female=140) selected using systematic random sampling. The qualitative data were transcribed, coded and interpreted thematically; and quantitative data was reduced into descriptive statistics such as t-tests and one way ANOVA. Main findings from this study indicated that, various elements of covert tasks were manifested in the PGDT program and these elements of covert tasks attested superficial task compliance of the trainees. The results also indicated that hidden curricular messages in the PGDT program were experienced by student-teachers similarly regardless of their differences in gender, department, and university generation. Therefore, this study raises questions and concerns about the vigor of PGDT program in enabling student-teachers exhibit the minimum competency thresholds espoused by the secondary school pre-service teacher education program.

Key Words: Hidden curriculum, Hidden Curricular Messages, Covert tasks, PGDT program

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of teachers training in Ethiopia, various reforms were introduced to improve the quality of teacher education in the country. Studies trace the beginning of formal teacher education in Ethiopia to the mid 1940s (Tekeste, 1996; Kelemu, 2000; Kassahun, 2006; & Ayele, 2010) with the preparation of primary school teachers at Menelik II School in Addis Ababa. As a historical note, Tekeste (1996) has also mentioned that before this time

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there was no teacher education system in the country, and western teachers and principals populated Ethiopian schools.

Following this development, the first Faculty of Education that explicitly concentrated on the preparation of secondary school teachers emerged at the then Haile Sellassie I University, now Addis Ababa University, in 1959 (Tesfaye, 2014). Following this trend secondary school teacher education program, particularly at a bachelor degree with four years duration, was made part of many higher education institutions in Ethiopia until the espousal of a new teacher education reform called Teacher Education System Overhaul (Egne, 2014).

Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO), initiated in 2003, changed both the structure and content of curricula through reductions of programs from four to three years and by moving away from subject to vocational emphasis that includes practicum (MoE, 2003). Lack of professionalism and ethical values in the Ethiopian teacher education was one of the major reasons that initiated TESO (MoE, 2003).

However, studies (e.g., Kedir, 2007; Dawit, 2008) concluded that the rhetoric of TESO and the practice were not aligned. The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2009) has also reported, amongst others, that professional commitment and work ethics which TESO was meant to address were not demonstrated as desired. Hence, reforming the structure and content of secondary teacher education program was in order (MoE, 2009). To that end, in 2009, the Ministry replaced TESO with a new modality of secondary teacher education program entitled Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT). In this new modality, after finishing their undergraduate studies in applied disciplines, student-teachers undergo professional courses for one year to obtain a Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching (MoE, 2009).

The curriculum framework for PGDT (MoE, 2009) indicates that student-teachers are expected to accomplish lots of tasks in the university as well as in practicum schools for the attainment of minimum competency thresholds at the end of their training. However, literature puts forward that students' competence is not only the function of the official curriculum. Hidden curriculum, which is always and everywhere tied to all academic settings and always coexists with the official curriculum (Mariani, 1999; Rennert-Ariev, 2008; Rose, 2005), tacitly operates and result in hidden effects on students learning (Apple, 2004; Bayanfar, 2013; Snyder, 1971;). Apple (2004) for instance, demonstrated that behind the screen of official educational practices there is unofficial curriculum that tacitly operates and plays a significant role in resulting hidden effects. Apple cautions that educational theory and policy making without the recognition of this aspect of schools may have less of an impact than one might hope from education.

In spite of all these potential influences, researchers who are concerned with curriculum development practices are seen to stay talking and/or writing more about the official curriculum than the hidden curriculum, and hence it seems to me that hidden curriculum is a topic rarely spoken about in academic institutions in general and in teacher education programs in particular. Impliedly, therefore, several specific concerns could be emerged.

A first specific concern could be with regard to the message content being learned. Certainly, what hidden curricular messages are created and transmitted to students represents one concern. If hidden curricular messages are created and transmitted to students and do influence their learning (Apple, 2004; Bayanfar, 2013; Snyder, 1971), then it would seem important to document it. Besides, if we could document the hidden curricular messages being learned, then, it would be possible to make a decision on whether those messages should either be accepted or rejected.

A second specific concern could be with regard to the difference in hidden curricular messages across student's background characteristics, assuming that messages may vary across students' background characteristics (Gordon, 1984; Hanushek, 1998). It has also been my personal experience as a teacher educator in the PGDT program that many student-teachers have no particular interest for the training, and this appears almost the same across departments, gender, and university generations (year of establishment). Therefore, once the hidden curricular messages are explored, teacher educators need to do some kind of analysis based on differences so that they can change their practices, procedures, and factors in the learning environment to rule-out differential treatments they consider undesirable.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to explore the manifestations of hidden curricular messages in the secondary school pre-service teacher education program, covert tasks in focus. To that end, the study attempts to answer two central questions:

- 1) What do student-teachers' experiences in the PGDT program tell us about their task compliances in the training?
- 2) Do student-teachers' task compliances vary significantly (statistically) with their background characteristics?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hidden Curriculum

The idea of hidden curriculum is not new. Barrow (1976) mentioned that the idea of a hidden curriculum has a recorded history since the time of Plato. Brady (1995) cited in Dewey (1916) who said, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment". Similarly, Cornbleth (1984) referred to the work of Dewey dating back to 1938 referring to the "collateral learning of attitudes" that occurs in schools that may have more long-range importance than the explicit school curriculum.

The term hidden curriculum came into academic discourse in 1960s through the work of Jackson in his book "Life in Classrooms" (Portelli, 1993), and it came into the realm of higher education in the early 1970s. Snyder is credited as the first scholar who brought the term "hidden curriculum" into the attention of higher education practitioners when he studied the formal curriculum in Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1971 (Rabah, 2012).

The concept of the hidden curriculum has been used to analyze the experiences of teacher education programs since the late 1970s. In this regard, Rennert-Ariev (2008) has mentioned the works of Bartholomew (1976) and Dale (1977).

The term curriculum is conceptually seen to be analogous with an iceberg (Rose, 2005). According to Rose, the tip of the iceberg that we can simply see is metaphorical with the official curriculum and part of the iceberg that we do not easily spot out because it is submerged is, metaphorical with the hidden curriculum.

Hedge (2000) defines the hidden curriculum as the learning which goes on in covert ways beneath the surface of what the teacher sets out to teach. It encompasses the shaping of learners' perceptions about learning, their own role in it, and the nature of the subject they are studying, their teachers and so on, and their attitudes towards all of these.

As literature depicts, there seems a common conception among scholars that hidden curriculum encompasses two major dimensions although the expressions they have used in labeling the dimensions are not the same. For instance, Noel (2000) used "process" and "outcome" aspect; Razvani and Kianinezhad (2002) used "process" and "resolution"; and Vallance (1980) has used "contextual factors" and "covert messages" to label the two dimensions of hidden curriculum. Although the expressions used by these scholars to label the major dimensions of hidden curriculum are ostensibly different, conceptually they appear to denote those factors in the learning environment that would serve as the sources of hidden curricular messages on the one hand, and the hidden curricular message itself as an outcome aspect on the other hand.

Unfortunately, there is no clear agreement in the literature as to what constitutes the sources of hidden curricular messages. However, Ebadi (2013), in his extensive review, considered three distinctive dimensions of the learning environment to determine the most important influences of hidden curricula. Those are: school structure, school's social atmosphere and teacher-student interaction.

Reviews made on the theoretical traditions of the concept of hidden curriculum also designate that, the manifestations of hidden curricular messages as an outcome aspect of hidden curriculum could be summarized in to four major themes (forms): covert tasks (Rennert-Ariev, 2008; Snyder, 1971; Yuksel, 2006), implicit messages (Ilich, 1978; Meighan & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Gatto, 2005), unintended learning outcomes (Martin, 1976; Gordon, 1982) and unofficial expectations (Jackson, 1968).

Researchers defined "covert task" by contrasting the expectations of students with the expectations of teachers and the way in which students react to formal statements of tasks expected from them. In this regard, Snyder (1971) and Rennert-Ariev (2008), argued that students' views about what it is in fact necessary to do are usually different from the tasks as expressed by teachers, and students end up with covert tasks they infer as the basis for the rewards in the particular setting. According to them these covert tasks, the focus of investigation for the present study, form part of the hidden curriculum.

Review of related literature also portrays that there is no reason to suppose different settings will have identical hidden curricula. Regarding the relativity of hidden curriculum, Martin (1976) and Margolis and Romero (1998) argued that hidden curriculum is relative to a given context, time frame, and participants.

Although there are studies carrying the title of hidden curriculum, most of them were investigations designed at the level of primary and secondary education. Only few studies have investigated hidden curriculum in the context of higher education. (e.g., Ahola, 2000; Bergenhenegouwen, 1987; Margolis & Romero, 1998; Yuksel, 2006). Locally, Alemayehu (2008) analyzed the impact of hidden curriculum on multicultural education in Ethiopian universities. In his analysis both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used. The results indicated that, there exists strong negative correlation between students' self concept and their perception of multiculturalism. In his report it was also indicated that, there existed a significant correlation among the sociological variables with all components of hidden curriculum. Wudu (2016) has also investigated the hidden curriculum elements university students learn in Jimma University classroom and how these elements are used as a means of cultural reproduction. The study indicated that the main hidden curriculum elements students learn in the university classroom site include: self-control, male dominance, tactical study orientation, teacher power, social relations, indifference, cooperative work, punishment, reward and dependence on technology.

Rennert-Ariev (2008) analyzed the experiences of students on pre-service teacher education program in a university. The aim was to understand the hidden curricular messages within the program. The program's central hidden curricular message, as his investigation revealed, was that superficial demonstrations of compliance with external mandates.

Paradigms of Teacher Education: Brief Description

Several efforts have been made to reform teacher education worldwide on the basis of an explicit theoretical paradigm during the past half-century (Huizen; Oers, & Wubbels, 2005). The paradigms that achieved clear recognition and strong influence on teacher-education practice include: competency-based teacher education of the late-1960s and 1970s, personal orientation to teaching and teacher education, and the paradigm based on reflection and inquiry of the late-1980s and 1990s (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Zeichner, 1983). Competency-based teacher education is that which defines a public standard for teaching as a framework for teacher education, and hence it has been criticized for reducing the teacher's role to that of a 'technician' (Valli & Rennert-Ariev 2002). The personal orientation to teaching, the reverse of the competency-based paradigm, emphasizes that one of the chief instruments a teacher uses is his or her own person (Combs, 1982). This model has been criticized in a point that a one-sided attention to the personal side of teaching tends to overlook the public, institutional, and corporate aspects of teaching (Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2002). The paradigm advocating reflection and inquiry (Schon, 1983) is noteworthy in its emphasis that professional repertoires are not established once and for all and are not given from outside a practice, but have to be continually reappraised, reaffirmed, or modified by questioning experiences in the light of standards of evaluation.

The paradigm of reflective inquiry recommends social constructivist pre-service teacher education program and at the heart of it is building a program that is integrated, inquiry-oriented, and community-based (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). These values are used as the basic principles guiding the PGDT program (MoE, 2009) to alleviate the problems following the implementation of TESO which teachers' professional commitment and work ethics are not demonstrated as desired.

METHOD

Exploratory sequential mixed methods design was used in this study. Exploratory sequential mixed design is a popular design used when existing instruments, variables, and measures may not be known or available for the population under study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Creswell, 2012). In the exploratory sequential mixed design, qualitative data are collected first and findings are tested with subsequent quantitative data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In this type of mixed methods design, data analysis is separate, corresponding to the first qualitative phase of the study and the second quantitative phase of the study.

Studying the hidden curricular messages of educational settings is a complex process that involves researchers who must go to search for the lived experiences of students first. Regarding this idea Martin (1976) argued that a hidden curriculum is not something one just finds easily; rather one must go hunting for it. As she pointed out, hidden curriculum is experienced individually and particular students receive different messages from and respond differently. The study of hidden curriculum primarily requires gathering an experiential form of knowledge that student-teachers develop through their involvement in a certain setting. In other words, hidden curriculum is not just imprinted on student-teachers, but is formed over time through interaction with various factors in the learning environment. Thus, one of the beneficial ways to understanding its different aspects would be to examine it from the student teachers' perspectives. Moreover, there are no readymade instruments to collect data to study the hidden curriculum. Therefore, it requires the researcher to develop a tool first and then make use of it for the survey. Consequently, based on the knowledge claim assumptions, from different strategies of qualitative research approach, the researcher initially (in the first stage of this study) used the principles associated with strategies and assumptions corresponding to "phenomenology".

Since the ultimate goal of this investigation is to determine the hidden curricular messages of secondary school pre-service teacher education as a setting, attention is directed to exploring common themes running through the learning states in the setting (Martin, 1976). The learning states which do not fit readily into the general pattern are shunned, even though they are in fact produced by the setting. Regarding this idea, Martin (1976) suggested that idiosyncratic learning states are ignored when the determination of the hidden curriculum of a setting is the focus of attention. According to her, although the hidden curriculum of a setting is an abstraction from the standpoint of learners, a portrait of the hidden curriculum of a setting consists not in all the learning states therein attained, but rather in the dominant ones. In the second stage, the determination of the hidden curriculum of a setting (secondary school pre-service teacher education) is the focus of attention. This requires drawing data from a

relatively large sample size. To that end, the popular quantitative research method (i.e. survey) has been used.

The participants, instruments used for data collection, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques are described below.

Participants

In the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), one of the nine regional states in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), there are seven universities all funded by FDRE. University of Gondar and Bahir Dar University are grouped first generation Universities, while Debre Markos University, Debre Birhan University and Wollo University are grouped in the second generation. Woldia University and Debre Tabor University are newly established universities grouped in the third generation. Five of these Universities (except University of Gondar & Debre Tabor University) were practicing secondary school pre-service teacher education in the year 2016/17 based on the framework of PGDT guidelines given from the Federal Ministry of Education.

From the five universities that were running secondary school pre-service teacher education, three universities were selected for the present study using multi-stage sampling techniques (stratified, purposive and convenience sampling). Debre Markos University was selected from second generation universities based on convenience. Bahir Dar University and Woldia University were selected purposively from first and third generation universities respectively.

The sample of the respondents was chosen randomly from a population representing 1023 (male=623 & female=400) students according to the universities statistics for the year 2016/2017. Respondents for the interview (male=15 & female=10) in the phenomenological study were selected purposively based on their will to involve in an in-depth interview that required an extended time of contact. Whereas, the respondents in the survey, 356 in number (male=216 & female=140), were selected based on systematic random sampling technique considering different strata.

Instruments

Given the research objective of this study, the goal of data collection was to explore the manifestations of hidden curricular messages, covert tasks in focus, by gaining insight into the student-teachers' lived experiences. Thus the investigative tool used should enable the researcher to go deep enough into the experiences of student-teachers through an in-depth interview in the first place and next to this gathering survey data to understand how covert tasks manifest in the program through the analysis of trainees' task compliance. Therefore, the main tools used for meeting this demand were an interview and questionnaire. The interview items were a type of questions that allowed the research participants freedom to tell their story without constraint. A questionnaire was developed based on the findings of the first stage qualitative study. A likert type questionnaire that contains 18 items, of which 8 items reversely scored, was used to measure the lived experiences of student-teachers on their

task compliances. The rating scales in the questionnaire represented 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4=Mainly, and 5= Always.

Data collection procedure

Manifestations of hidden curricular messages were going to be explored through student-teachers' lived experiences. Therefore, the researcher decided to select the participants purposively from those that have been attending classes at least 95 per cent. To look for student teachers that would actually participate in the first stage of the study (qualitative study), the researcher provided a descriptive summary of the research plan and its major tasks to student-teachers who have been attending classes at most. The aim of doing this was to find the respondents on a voluntary base. Student-teachers indicating their decisions to participate were considered in the sample. The next step was to meet student-teachers in person in order to discuss the duration and conditions of the study, and the terms of their cooperation.

In the initial stage of the study, phenomenological strategy that requires an in-depth interview with the students has been used so as to hunt for a hidden curricular messages experienced individually. The content and questions of these interviews were prepared before the interviews began. The initial list of questions and the concepts in the semi-structured interview for collecting data were common for all participants. The data collected through these interviews were the initial source of knowledge production in this study. Subjects received a copy of their response to validate that it reflected their perspectives regarding the phenomenon that was studied. Fortunately, there was no discrepancy between their reports and textual data compiled.

Determination of the hidden curriculum of the PGDT program was the focus of attention in the second phase of the present study. Therefore, to shun hidden curricula which do not fit readily into the general pattern (Martin, 1976), questionnaire was developed and administered to large number of students in the quantitative phase of the study. Before administering the questionnaire to the respondents, it was presented to critical friends consisted of 5 instructors (assistant professors and above) who were chosen from the department of teacher education and curriculum studies in Bahir Dar University (BDU). Based on their comments, notes were taken into consideration in terms of adjustment, addition and deletion. The instrument was pilot tested to check its reliability on an initial sample consisting of 38 student-teachers. The pilot study was conducted in Wollo University, which is similar to the ones included in the main study. The researcher used Pearson Correlation to estimate the reliability of Task Compliance Rating Scale, and it was found to be 0.750. This correlation coefficient was generally considered appropriate for the purpose of the present study.

Data analysis techniques

Analysis of qualitative data was displayed first. For the ease of the laborious task of analyzing text-based data through rapid and sophisticated searches and line-by-line coding, the qualitative analyses was supported by an open software package called Weft-QDA

(version 3.6.2.0, 2017) software. The data collected through questionnaires were coded, entered, cleaned and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20) computer software. The quantitative data was reduced into descriptive statistics such as t-tests, and one way ANOVA.

RESULTS

This research aimed at finding answers to the questions: (1) What do student-teachers lived experiences in the PGDT program tell us about their task acquaintance in their training, and (2) Do student-teachers' task acquaintance in the PGDT program vary significantly (statistically) with student-teachers' background characteristics?

Qualitative Findings

In the interviews, student-teachers were asked to describe what their task compliances are like as trainees in the PGDT program. Qualitative data indicated that, interviewed student teachers were likely to hold a range of task compliances that stretched from “superficial” to “genuine” demonstrations of task compliances (Table 1).

Superficial demonstrations of task compliance

Student-teachers were asked about their task acquaintances in the PGDT program and the experiences of most of the interviewees represent weak aspirations to take teaching as a career, displaying apathy in accomplishing tasks, and demonstrating tactical study orientations.

a) Indifference

Asked about their task acquaintances in the PGDT, participants of the interview expressed that they are apathetic in accomplishing tasks given to them from teacher educators. The following quoted responses from four participants echo this assertion.

Quoted Response6:

I get nobody cared about the PGDT program; I feel that course guide books, course works, and exams are given to us only for formality. I think, the Ministry of Education focuses on only to fill the severe shortage of teachers in secondary schools rather than the quality of graduates. Honestly speaking, I am not doing well as a trainee in this program....., (Respondent 8).

Quoted Response 7:

...my dream was to be a good business consultant. So I am not trying to do anything fully in this program,(Respondent 18)

Quoted Response 8:

.... Everything in the PGDT program is loosely executed. Because of this and other personal reasons, I do not believe that I am working as much as I can as a trainee (Respondent 22).

Quoted Response 14:

I do not find courses in the PGDT program interesting..... so I keep my effort to the minimum.....I only read hand outs given to us (Respondent 5)

The above responses indicate that tasks planned by teacher educators are not given proper consideration by most of the student-teachers as the bases for their teaching competence development. These findings are consistent with that of Wudu (2016), who found that students in the university learn to be indifferent from their teachers because they usually observe that the latter do not properly use resources, do not get prepared to teach, use the same note year after year, do not correct the exam timely and sometimes fail to do correctly their activities.

b) Tactical study orientations

Probed to state their task compliances in the interviews, student- teachers have also reported that they go for tactical study orientations to complete the program. This assertion is evident in the following verbatim statements given by some of the participants:

Quoted Response 10:

I usually do tasks given from teacher educators bearing in mind that are not critically evaluated by instructors. Had there been critical evaluation of tasks, teacher-educators would have provided us critical comments on our performance. Therefore, working more on the decoration of written assignments than working on the quality of its content, to get better scores, is our usual practice in this program... I mean this is not only the experience of me (Respondent 25).

Quoted Response 11:

I, together with my friends, urge our instructors to give us more group assignments than individual assignments, if there are opportunities, I attempt to join competent peers for group work aiming to be free from burden. Because group assignments are usually completed by few knowledgeable peers. Moreover, scores given for group assignments are usually a 'pass mark' which is almost the same for each group (Respondent 17).

Quoted Response 12:

I give little emphasis for the tasks in the content based courses compared with subject area method courses. Because I know it is mandatory to score at

least 'C' in Subject Methodology and Practicum to qualify for graduation
(Respondent 24)

Quoted Response 13:

.....why should I suffer!....., I mean I don't want to do a lot in this program, because teaching is not my destiny. To complete the program I simply figure out topics from handouts that are most likely to be asked in exams and I simply look for tips and exam pointers in classroom discussions. By doing this I can simply pass exams. Fortunately, most of the time questions for tests or exams are directly coming from handouts or PowerPoint notes(Respondent 9)

The above responses indicate that student-teachers went for tactical study orientations in the PGDT program. This result is congruent with a research conducted by Wudu (2016). As noted by him, one of the hidden curriculum elements students learn in the university is tactical study orientations explained in terms of recognizing different easy ways to score grades and be successful in the university by using different strategies without exerting much effort.

c) Occupational preference

Student-teachers responses are extremely apprehensive regarding their occupational preference. It appears that student-teachers occupational preferences are the jobs in their applied degree areas rather than teaching. This has been reflected in their responses during interviews. The following word for word statements that were made by four of the participants confirm the above view:

Quoted Response 17:

I am looking for jobs in my applied degree area other than teaching...Hence, I am doing tasks in this program mostly not to be said incomplete, and my at most effort in this program is nothing more than collecting pass marks
(Respondent 10).

Quoted Response 18:

....., I attend classes in this program for only 2 to 3 days in a week and search other jobs in the rest of my time. I don't like to be a teacher...(Respondent 2)

Quoted Response 19:

... my primary reason for joining this program is unemployment, but not be affectionate of the teaching profession (Respondent 23).

Quoted Response 20:

.....had I had another job opportunity, I would have withdrawn from this training (Respondent 14).

The participant's view expressed above represents that they were not motivated to be a teacher from the beginning and even now they are not aspiring to take teaching as their future career. These findings correspond with Villegas-Reimers's (1998) review that presents a list of problems in teacher education program. The problems include: the less-than-ideal characteristics of most candidates who enter the profession, and lack of attractive characteristics of the teaching profession, which, in turn, affects who enters the profession, who stays and for how long.

Genuine demonstrations of task compliance

Student-teachers were not unanimous in their responses when they were probed to state their task compliances. It has also emerged from the interviews that some of the student-teachers participated in the interviews demonstrated task compliances that were genuine in orientation. The following quoted responses that were made by some of the participants attest this assertion:

Quoted Response 1:

I work hard at my studies..... I spend a lot of my time working more on the topics which have been discussed in classrooms for different courses (Respondent 3)

Quoted Response 2:

I accomplish the tasks given to me very carefully assuming that they are the bases for my professional development in teaching (Respondent 19).

Quoted Response 3:

I read topics in advance,I come to most classes with questions in mind that I want more clarifications....., besides, I make my own notes for most of the suggested readings to enrich my understanding....(Respondent 11)

Table 1

Categories and Elements of Covert Tasks Established from Interviews

Categories	Elements of Covert Tasks
Superficial Demonstrations of Task Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak aspirations of student-teachers to take teaching as their future career, • Not to care about anything • low contribution in group works • Tactical study orientation • Preferentially valuing tasks • Temptation to keep their effort to the minimum • Temptation towards group assignments than tests and exams • Hunting and join competent peers for group work • Figuring out topics that are likely to be asked in exams • Dependence on handouts and power point notes • Looking for tips and exam pointers during discussion • Accomplishing tasks focusing more on decoration than the quality of its content • Fake communication with people in the program
Genuine Demonstrations of Task Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courage to accomplish tasks through investigations • Submitting complete and defect-free assignments

Categories and elements of covert tasks established from interviews are summarized in Table 1 above. As Table 1 illustrates, the main categories extracted from the verbatim statements of student-teachers were “genuine demonstrations of task compliance” and “superficial demonstrations of task compliance” as to how the hidden curricular messages are manifested in a form of covert tasks. Besides, Table 1 represents that various elements of covert tasks were manifested in the PGDT program. The experiences of some of the interviewed student-teachers indicated that they were courageous to accomplish tasks through investigations, submitting complete and defect-free assignments, and proud in joining the teaching profession. Experiences like these suggest how genuine demonstration of task acquaintance is manifested in the learning environment and how student-teachers are striving to accomplish tasks to exhibit the minimum competency thresholds espoused by the secondary school pre-service teacher education program. On the other hand, there were experiences of most of the interviewed student-teachers in this program indicating the existence of tactical study orientation, preferentially valuing tasks, temptation towards minimal effort, temptation towards group assignments than tests and exams, hunting and join competent peers for group work, figuring out topics that are likely to be asked in exams, dependence on handouts, and

looking for tips and exam pointers. Reports like this suggest how superficial demonstration of task compliance is manifested in the PGDT program.

Quantitative Findings

Preliminary analyses included checking the data for the number of respondents in each group (N), missing data points for an item on a scale, and reliability statistics in the SPSS output. Missing data points for an item on a scale were found in 5 cases and this was handled by substituting mean scale scores for the missing value and the correlation coefficient found to be 0.788 was generally considered appropriate.

Manifestations of hidden curricular messages

One sample t-test was conducted to compare the observed mean scores of student-teachers enrolling in the secondary school pre-service teacher education program (N=356) with the expected mean scores as measured by the Task Compliance Rating Scale (TCRS) to determine the elements of covert tasks as the hidden curricular messages of the setting.

Table 2: Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and One Sample t-test Results (N=356)

	Exp. Mean	Obs. Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	Test Value = 0		
					t	df	Sig.
TC-1: I complete the tasks given from teacher educators on time	3	2.266	.981	.0519	43.59	355	.000
TC-2: I am careful as much as I can to submit complete and defect-free assignments	3	2.339	1.05	.0559	41.80	355	.000
TC-3: I am courageous to accomplish tasks through investigations	3	2.331	.991	.0525	44.37	355	.000
TC-4: I contribute a lot in group works	3	2.373	1.08	.0577	41.11	355	.000
TC-5: I exert my at most effort to become professionally competent teacher	3	2.213	.943	.0499	44.28	355	.000
TC-6: I accomplish tasks more focusing on the quality of its content than submitting many decorated pages	3	2.553	1.09	.0577	44.18	355	.000
TC-7: I hate plagiarizing works deliberately from other sources.	3	2.303	.948	.0502	45.83	355	.000
TC-8: I do not go for tactical study orientation	3	1.966	.575	.0305	64.46	355	.000
TC-9: I do not value tasks preferentially	3	2.404	1.11	.0588	40.85	355	.000
TC-10: I attempt to pass exams with minimal effort	3	2.331	.977	.0517	45.02	355	.000
TC-11: I insist teacher educators to give us more group assignments than tests and exams	3	2.432	1.04	.0556	43.71	355	.000
TC-12: I believe that grade is the only measure of professional competence	3	2.292	.975	.0516	44.34	355	.000
TC-13: I hunt and join competent peers for group work aiming to be free from tasks	3	2.370	.980	.0519	45.63	355	.000
TC-14: I figure out topics that are likely to be asked in exams	3	2.536	1.03	.0550	46.10	355	.000
TC-15: Reading handouts suffice to me to get pass mark	3	2.292	.924	.0490	46.76	355	.000
TC-16: I look for tips and exam pointers	3	2.466	1.06	.0565	43.58	355	.000
TC-17: Success in this program depends on my superficial task acquaintance	3	2.351	.985	.0522	44.99	355	.000
TC-18: I feel proud in joining the teaching profession	3	2.303	.948	.0502	45.83	355	.000
Task Compliance	54	43.52	8.32	.441	98.64	355	.000

Table 2 illustrated that the difference in mean scores for all the elements of covert tasks as measured by TCRS was found statistically significant ($M = 1.966$ to 2.553 , $SD = .575$ to 1.11 and $t(355) = 40.85$ to 64.46 , $p = 0.05$, two-tailed). Furthermore, besides reaching statistical significance in mean scores differences, it also shows that the expected mean scores (3) exceeded the observed mean scores (1.966 to 2.553) for all the elements of covert tasks. Table 2 has also demonstrated the difference in mean scores for task compliance as a whole ($M = 43.5225$, $SD = 8.32455$ and $t(355) = 98.646$, $p = 0.05$, two-tailed) was found statistically significant. Furthermore, besides reaching statistical significance in mean scores

differences, Table 2 also illustrated that the expected mean scores for task compliance as a whole (54) exceeded the observed mean scores (43.5225). This implies that various elements of covert tasks were manifested in the PGDT program (see Table 2) and all these elements of hidden curricular messages attested superficial task compliance of student-teachers in the training.

Differences in experiencing covert tasks

One-way between-groups Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to investigate the differences among the mean scores on the experiences of student-teachers for groups of universities, as measured by the Task Compliance Rating Scale (TCRS). Participants were divided into three groups according to university's generations (Group 1: 1st generation; Group 2: 2nd generation; Group 3: 3rd generation).

Table 3

Summary Table for One-way between-groups analysis of variance (N=356)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	40.558	2	20.279	.291	.747
Within Groups	24560.262	353	69.576		
Total	24600.820	355			

Summary table for one-way between-groups analysis of variance for covert tasks presented in Table 3 illustrated that the difference in mean scores in the three universities for TCRS ($F(2; 353) = .291, p = .747$) was not found statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. This implies that the perception of student-teachers on hidden curricular messages is not significantly different across university generations.

Similarly, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was also conducted to explore the differences among the mean scores on the lived experiences of student-teachers for groups of departments, as measured by the Task Compliance Rating Scale (TCRS). From all the 14 departments only 3 (same departments in the three universities) were considered for the analysis. Therefore, participants were divided into three groups according to their departments (Group 1: Biology, Group 2: Chemistry, and Group 3: Sport Science).

Table 4

Summary Table for One-way between-groups analysis of variance (N=94)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	36.023	2	18.012	.217	.805
Within Groups	7626.924	92	82.901		
Total	7662.947	94			

Summary table for one-way between-groups analysis of variance for covert tasks presented in Table 4 revealed that the difference in mean scores in the three departments for TCRS ($F(2; 92) = .217, p = .805$) was not found statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. This implies that the perception of student-teachers on hidden curricular messages is not significantly different across departments.

Besides, an independent sample t-test was conducted to explore the differences among the mean scores on the lived experiences of student-teachers between male and female student-teachers (N=356) as measured by the Task Compliance Rating Scale (TCRS).

Table 5

t-Test Results for Differences on Task Compliance Rating Scale Between Males and Females

Gender group	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	216	43.83	.5724	.888	354	.375
Female	140	43.03	.6923			

The means, standard deviations, and independent sample t-test values for covert tasks presented in Table 5 illustrated that, the difference in mean scores for TCRS (for males $M = 43.8380, SD = 8.41354$ and females $M = 43.0357, SD = 8.19142; t(354) = .888, p = .375$, two-tailed) was not found statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. This implies that the perception of student-teachers on hidden curricular messages is not significantly different across gender.

DISCUSSION

The qualitative phase of the study discovered important variables underlying hidden curricular messages and informed the quantitative phase of investigation. Besides, the

qualitative and quantitative results are found to be convergent in provide numerous elements of hidden curricular messages.

The qualitative findings showed several elements of hidden curricular messages pointing to covert tasks, most of which indicating lack of authentic task engagement (Portalli, 1993; Rennert-Ariev, 2008; Yuksel, 2006). The quantitative finding also confirmed that all those elements of hidden curricular messages attested that superficial task compliance is as to how covert tasks manifest in the program.

The implication of these findings seems quite clear that the expectations stated by the curriculum framework for PGDT program and the way in which student-teachers react to are found contrasting. This result is congruent with a research conducted by Rennert-Ariev (2008). As noted by him in his study on pre-service teacher education program at Markham University to understand the “hidden” curricular messages within the program, the program’s central hidden curricular message was that of superficial demonstrations of compliance with external mandates rather than authentic intellectual engagement. Locally, Wudu (2016) in his study on hidden curriculum in higher education classrooms, the case of Jimma University, has also reported that tactical study orientation, indifference, and dependence on technology are some of the elements students learn in the university classroom.

Dozens of explanations might be given as the possible factors that may resulted in the unintended task compliances of student-teachers. The researcher believes the salient factors would possibly be entrenched with the training modality employed in preparing teachers. The training requites B.Sc or BA in areas directly related to secondary school subjects plus an additional ten months professional teacher training to obtain a Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching. The duration for PGDT training seems too short that give little room for discursive practices and consideration for the impacts of time and place factors. In this regard Buchberger and Byrne (1995) argue that, duration of training is one of the factors that affect the quality of teacher preparation. Another significant factor might be students’ readiness, predisposition, and motivation to become secondary school teachers (MoE, 2009). Still another significant factor could be that teacher educators were sidestepped in the reform process when the PGDT was introduced as a new modality of teacher education in the country. As a result, teacher educators might have become gradually less interested in the program. Besides, in the practice component of the teacher education program, mentors in schools may not properly follow up student teachers.

The quantitative findings also revealed that, the differences in mean scores regarding the manifestations of covert tasks across student teachers background characteristics were not found significant statistically. This implies that the various elements of covert tasks that were manifested in the PGDT program were experienced by student-teachers similarly regardless of their differences in gender, department, and university generation. These results are contrasted with the contentions of Martin (1976) that hidden curriculum is relative to a given context and participants. Besides, the results of the present study do not support Anyon’s (1980) findings on hidden curriculum. Anyon documented evidence to support the relativity of hidden curriculum with class structure. Locally, Alemayehu (2008) has reported that the

hidden curriculum in Ethiopian universities differentially treats students across gender, ethnicity, and religion and parental monthly income. The alternative explanation for the inconsistency of results might be due to the fact that the previous studies were carried out with stratifying factors other than the present investigation (e. g., Anyon's investigation focused on the analysis of hidden curriculum across contrasting social class communities, and Alemayehu's analysis focused on the impact of hidden curriculum across sex, ethnicity, religion, and parental income).

CONCLUSION

The Ethiopian government envisions seeing secondary school teachers who are responsible, competent, and committed to their profession. This vision is reflected in national policies, educational proclamations and other subsequent documents. For instance, the development of responsible, competent, and professionally committed citizens is one of the pillars of the Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994) which is currently under operation to guide the overall education system. More specifically, the policy states about the mission of that of higher education, as to enable students become problem-solving professional leaders in their fields of study and in overall societal needs. With a similar vein, the Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 650/2009), stated that "curricular design, delivery, and assessment of learning outcomes in any institution shall aim at enabling the learner to acquire pertinent scientific knowledge, independent thinking skills, communication skills and professional values that together prepare him [her] to become a competent professional." The curriculum framework for secondary school teacher education program in Ethiopia (MOE, 2009) has also clearly described the need for the preparation of secondary school teachers who are adaptive experts (reflective practitioners).

However the reform in this pre-service teacher education program seems, in Corrales (1999) words, an "access reform" that calls for only increasing the availability of educational programs and opportunities commonly understood as expanding the coverage of the education system. As a result, one of the consequences of such superficiality of student-teachers could be that they may not be equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to become effective secondary school teachers. More specifically, they may not develop professional knowledge and skills, the understanding of the nature of teacher professionalism, the responsibilities of teachers, and the professional values and ethical practice expected of them. Another noticeable consequence of the current situation could be student-teachers taking teaching primarily as an occupation only to stay with it until they get other jobs in their applied degree area.

In sum, it is conceivable to conclude that explored manifestations of hidden curricular messages in the PGDT program are against the standards set by the government for a qualified teacher (MoE, 2009, p. 7) as well as the basic principles of contemporary paradigms for teacher education; and hence the hidden curricular messages may have an adverse effect on student-teachers forthcoming teaching role, ultimately it may result in a negative impact on students learning in secondary schools. Therefore, the researcher would recommend those

teacher education institutions working with the framework of PGDT to ensure the vigor of the program.

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