

INTERNALIZATION OF STUDENTS' MORAL VALUES THROUGH THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM: LICKONA'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This analysis investigates the implementation of the hidden curriculum and its contribution to cultivating moral values in students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program. The research is motivated by the limited exploration of how character formation occurs outside formal instruction, particularly regarding the alignment of hidden practices with Lickona's character education framework. The main problem addressed is the gap between the formally planned curriculum and the moral values implicitly shaped through daily interactions, institutional culture, and lecturer-student relations. This qualitative descriptive study collects data through in-depth interviews with experienced lecturers and a review of relevant literature. Findings show that the hidden curriculum significantly supports the development of moral values emphasized in Lickona's framework, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action through modeling, classroom routines, implicit norms, and lecturers' interpersonal approaches. More concretely, students demonstrate increased discipline, responsibility, empathy, and respect as outcomes of these hidden curricular practices. These results indicate that the hidden curriculum functions as an essential complement to the formal curriculum, contributing to students' holistic character formation.

Keywords: Character Education, Curriculum, Hidden Curriculum, Lickona's Framework, Moral Values

INTRODUCTION

According to Semper and Blasco (2018), the hidden curriculum refers to elements that are implicit and embedded within educational experiences, rather than those explicitly stated in curriculum documents or visible in surface-level instructional activities. It consists of values, norms, and messages that students absorb indirectly through institutional routines, teaching behaviors, assessment practices, and interactions between lecturers and students. In essence, the hidden curriculum emerges from the gap between what the curriculum formally prescribes and what actually occurs in day-to-day learning situations.

Scholars such as Taba and Nasution also highlight that the curriculum extends far beyond written plans or subject lists; it encompasses the entire learning process that requires students to engage actively within their social context. Nevertheless, the formation of student character is not achieved solely through the formal curriculum. Many values, attitudes, and habitual behaviors develop through everyday experiences that are not documented in official guidelines and experiences that form what is known as the hidden curriculum. According to Khanifah (2024), the hidden curriculum refers to implicit messages and values transmitted through education that, while not written in the formal curriculum, significantly shape students' ways of thinking.

The hidden curriculum includes institutional norms, cultural expectations, interaction patterns, and the example set by educators, all of which subtly shape the learning environment. Prior studies (Yahya, 2013; Setiawan, 2020; Margolis et al., 2001) indicate that it can serve as a powerful basis for character development, even though it often operates unconsciously and is rarely designed intentionally. In higher education, its influence becomes even more intricate due to its connection with academic culture, lecturer-student dynamics, and repeated pedagogical routines.

Although numerous studies have examined the hidden curriculum in relation to character formation, notable gaps remain. For instance, research by Mumu and Danial (2021) focused on online learning in elementary schools during the pandemic, which does not adequately represent the complexities of higher education. Similarly, the study by Umagap et al. (2022) merely described how the hidden curriculum was implemented without analyzing the factors that shape its effectiveness or its alignment with the formal curriculum. Consequently, investigations concerning the hidden curriculum within higher education, particularly in Indonesian Language and Literature Education programs, are still limited.

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In addition, research that integrates Thomas Lickona's character theory into analyses of the hidden curriculum at the university level is relatively scarce. Lickona's model, comprising moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, offers a structured framework for evaluating how moral values are conveyed through unwritten educational practices. This perspective makes it possible to explore more deeply how lecturers foster value comprehension, nurture moral sensitivity, and demonstrate ethical behavior through their daily academic interactions.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining how the hidden curriculum contributes to the internalization of moral values among students in Indonesian Language and Literature Education programs, drawing on Lickona's character framework. The integration of these concepts not only enriches the understanding of the hidden curriculum as a sociocultural phenomenon but also provides theoretical contributions by positioning it as an intentional strategy for character development in higher education. As such, this study aims to offer a more comprehensive understanding of how moral values are implicitly internalized through lecturers' pedagogical practices.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods because it aims to understand the implicit values, meanings, and character-building processes that cannot be explained through quantitative measurements. This approach was chosen to describe how the hidden curriculum emerges in daily academic practice and how the process aligns with Lickona's framework, which includes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The researcher acted as the main instrument and maintained reflexivity throughout the research process by monitoring personal assumptions related to character education so as not to influence data interpretation. The research participants consisted of four lecturers of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program who were purposely selected based on their teaching experience and involvement in curriculum implementation and student character development. The main data were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews organized based on Lickona's character dimensions, while supporting data came from books, scientific articles, and institutional documents selected based on relevance and credibility.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Codes and themes were developed inductively from the interview transcripts and then adjusted to the research focus. To increase validity, source triangulation was applied more specifically by comparing interview data with literature findings to see the compatibility between the concept and practice of hidden curriculum with existing theories, matching interviewees' statements with institutional documents such as academic guidelines or the vision-mission of the study program, and using the criteria of repeatability of findings, consistency between sources, and compatibility with Lickona's framework as the basis for interpretation. The research was conducted for two months in a campus environment that has a strong academic culture, characterized by discipline, polite communication, academic ethics, and intense interaction between lecturers and students. These contextual characteristics become fertile ground for the emergence of hidden curriculum because moral and social values are transmitted not only through formal lectures, but also through exemplary lecturers, class norms, organizational activities, and deep-rooted academic culture.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents research findings obtained through in-depth interviews with three lecturers from the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program involved in the implementation of the hidden curriculum. In line with the research objective of determining the contribution of the hidden curriculum to student character development, this analysis emphasizes two main aspects: implementation practices in learning activities and challenges that arise during the process. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns, pedagogical approaches, and experiences that illustrate how lecturers instill moral and character values through non-formal classroom activities. Initial findings revealed a key theme regarding lecturers' use of the hidden curriculum as a tool for in-depth value absorption, which aligns with Lickona's model of character development through habituation, modeling, and moral reinforcement. This emphasis reflects a shift from purely procedural descriptions to thematic insights into the function of the hidden curriculum in shaping student behavior and perspectives.

Implementation of Hidden Curriculum by Lecturers

Lectures revealed that they have been implementing a hidden curriculum since the beginning of teaching in college. This practice is interpreted not only as an indirect value habituation, but also as a pedagogical strategy to build students' character through examples, communication, and interaction in the classroom occurs every day. The hidden curriculum provides a number of positive influences, including the formation of a healthy lifestyle, interest in scientific and religious activities, appreciation of art and beauty, moral behavior, meticulous attitudes,

respect for human dignity, a spirit of sporting competition, the ability to work together, and social concern for others (Raissi et al., 2021). The habituation does not stand alone, but plays a role in stimulating the development of students' character through the stages of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action as described by Lickona. The example and affirmation of values provided by lectures at the beginning of the stage help students understand moral knowing, where supportive interpersonal interactions strengthen students' affective aspect, so that they are motivated to do good or moral feelings. Meanwhile, academic routines that demand discipline, responsibility, and ethics encourage students to realize it in real action or moral action. Therefore, the application of hidden curriculum by lecturers not only inserts character values in the learning process, but also tries to internalize these values gradually until they become part of students' academic behavior. One respondent said:

"Because this curriculum encompasses values, norms, and behaviors that are learned indirectly, such as implementing one chapter per day. This can shape your character: a love for the Quran, a love for the Prophet, and a love for Allah." (Lecturer 1)

"The things we want to instill are character-based, such as literacy skills and critical thinking skills." (Lecturer 2)

Based on the quotes above, it can be understood that the implementation of the hidden curriculum includes values, norms, and behaviors obtained by students indirectly through habits and role models. The practice of one day one *juz* is one of the real ways of implementation. This habit not only aims to foster a sense of love for the Qur'an, Rasulullah, and Allah, but also encourages behavioral changes that can be seen clearly. For example, students who undergo this habit show progress in consistency in reading the Qur'an every day, discipline in managing worship time, and a tendency to participate in religious activities without the need for direct direction from lecturers. In addition, this habit can be seen in the attitude of students who are more polite, humble, and sensitive in maintaining social norms in the campus area. Prasetya, et al. (2020) explained that this hidden curriculum focuses more on activities that develop the social and spiritual aspects of students, with the ultimate goal of instilling good moral values in students. Therefore, the practice of one day one *juz* not only instills religious values theoretically but also produces measurable behavior that reflects the internalization of values, thus functioning as a character-building tool through a continuous habitual process outside of formal learning. According to Lickona (1991), religion for most people serves as a primary guide that leads them toward living a moral life. Khoiriah et al. (2022) point out that the purpose of implementing the hidden curriculum is to support the achievement of the school's goals, namely, enabling students to practice Islamic teachings through learning processes and habituation. These values are formed not only through the written curriculum but also through the hidden curriculum practiced during learning activities.

In addition, respondents also revealed that the hidden curriculum not only focuses on the religious dimension, but also on developing students' academic character. Values such as literacy skills and critical thinking are instilled through learning activities designed to encourage students to be active, analytical, and reflective. In their implementation, lecturers use a variety of specific strategies, such as requiring students to read literary works or research articles before class begins, keeping reflective journals about the readings, presenting the results of reading analysis in sequence, and connecting the readings with current social phenomena during class discussions. These activities allow teachers to monitor students' development in measurable ways, such as fluency in expressing opinions, ability to compose arguments supported by references, and accuracy in citing academic sources. In this way, academic character development is not only expressed as a theoretical goal, but is realized through a series of regular learning experiences that result in visible changes in academic behavior during the learning process.

Obstacles that Lecturers Face in Implementing the Hidden Curriculum

Lecturers implementing the hidden curriculum face a number of challenges in instilling these implicit values. While differences in enthusiasm, lack of interest in literacy, and unwillingness to collaborate are often cited as key challenges, these factors are not isolated. For example, differences in student responses may reflect the impact of an institutional culture that has not yet fully embraced character development as an essential element of academic pursuits. Furthermore, low interest in reading and a preference for visual media may be seen as a result of the increasingly dominant digital learning patterns among students, which influence how they absorb and process data. Similarly, student participation in value-oriented activities is often influenced by their academic load and their perceptions of the significance of those activities. Therefore, the challenges that arise are not only related to student behavior but also stem from the structural interactions and learning patterns that have developed within the university environment. This can be seen from the following statements of the respondents:

"The challenge lies in working together with students. If the students do not follow the hidden curriculum that I have designed, that becomes a challenge for me." (Lecturer 1)

“Since students respond differently when asked to read supplementary books, some do it gladly, while others complain because they feel it adds to their burden. The challenge depends on each student’s enthusiasm. Moreover, Indonesians generally have a low literacy culture and prefer watching, so this also becomes an obstacle for me in implementing the hidden curriculum.”
(Lecturer 2)

The quote suggests that lecturers face challenges not only in cultivating reading habits but also in encouraging students to participate in the process of absorbing values. Students' tendency to choose visual media over reading is not only a barrier but also signals a shift in learning patterns that impacts how they understand academic aspects and character. Lecturers' initiatives to assign additional reading assignments aim to foster discipline and a sense of responsibility, but this approach does not always directly result in a deep absorption of values. If these assignments are simply perceived as additional obligations, students may simply demonstrate compliance without deeper moral reflection. Furthermore, student resistance to collaboration may reflect the implicit nature of the hidden curriculum, where desired values are often not explicitly stated, leaving students unaware of the moral or pedagogical intentions behind the assignments. This is because when lecturers assign assignments, students are forced to read the necessary reference materials to complete them (Yuki, 2020). According to Mustikaweni et. al (2025), the hidden curriculum aims to shape students’ strong character and equip them to face various social and moral challenges outside the classroom. Therefore, the success of habit formation through these assignments is largely determined by how well lecturers convey their character expectations and goals, as well as their ability to connect these activities to meaningful moral experiences for students.

Furthermore, students' reluctance to cooperate and lack of active participation in learning activities pose a challenge for lecturers implementing the hidden curriculum, hoping to shape their character. Lickona (2019) proposes that character building is more important than what is conveyed in the learning process. If we want character education to be applied in real practice outside the classroom, then the classroom must be used as a learning arena that facilitates students to practice good behavior. In each learning session, lecturers can ask questions that encourage students to search for as much data as possible, both from books and online sources, and exchange ideas about what they have read with their friends. In this way, students will indirectly become accustomed to literacy skills and gain broad insights.

According to Lickona (2019), this approach is closely related to research findings, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on the obstacles that arise during implementation. When students show a lack of interest in reading, are less enthusiastic in discussions, or are reluctant to cooperate, the character-building process described in the theory cannot be maximized. These barriers disrupt Lickona's character development stages, from moral understanding (understanding values through reading and seeking information), moral emotion (cultivating empathy and the drive to participate), to moral action (applying values through collaboration and discussion). Therefore, the relationship between theory and findings suggests that without active student participation, opportunities to practice kindness in the classroom can turn into passive compliance rather than authentic absorption of values. This explanation emphasizes how these barriers limit students' transition from moral understanding to actual moral behavior

Student Responses to the Implementation of the Hidden Curriculum

This section describes students' responses to lecturers' implementation of the hidden curriculum in their learning activities. Interviews revealed that each lecturer implemented the hidden curriculum differently, tailored to the nature of the course and the values they intended to instill. This diversity of approaches then triggered a variety of student responses, not only in terms of acceptance or rejection of these values, but also in terms of the motivations behind them. These varied responses were influenced by various internal and external factors affecting the students. Students who responded positively generally had educational backgrounds that emphasized independent learning, so activities such as additional reading and analytical exercises were seen as opportunities to expand their knowledge. Conversely, less enthusiastic students generally came from learning environments that emphasized direct instruction, making the transition to a pattern of habits based on discipline and independence quite challenging.

Furthermore, students' expectations regarding workload also influence their responses. Students who understand the academic demands of college from the outset tend to view the hidden curriculum as part of their professional development. Conversely, students who view college solely as a means to fulfill obligations often view additional reading or literacy as an unnecessary burden. Overall, these student responses indicate that the process of absorbing moral and character values does not occur suddenly, but rather through continuous learning experiences and ongoing habituation. One respondent stated:

"Usually, some people are happy to receive additional reading material, while others complain that it adds to their reading load. So, it depends on the student; some are happy, while others feel like the workload has increased." (Lecturer 1)

"Generally, students have difficulty reading, so it's a bit of a burden for them. But if they force it or make it a habit, they might get used to it and do it wholeheartedly." (Lecturer 2)

The lecturer's quote shows that the differences in students' responses to literacy habituation are not only related to their interest in the readings but also to the way they interpret the learning design and the objectives of the assignments given. Students who felt that the additional reading was relevant to the course competencies generally showed noticeable behavioral changes, such as being more active in linking the content of the reading with the material during discussions, using references to strengthen their arguments, and showing the ability to analyze the elements of literary works more critically. In contrast, students who consider lecturers' expectations to be unclear or feel that reading assignments do not contribute directly to the assessment tend to follow minimal reading habits, are less involved in discussions, or provide descriptive responses only. Thus, the indicators of student behavior, whether they show improvement or not, become the basis for assessing the extent to which the internalization of academic values through the hidden curriculum actually occurs, not just assumed based on exposure to the text.

Meanwhile, there is the implementation of a hidden curriculum through reading habituation as a measure to strengthen academic literacy. At the beginning of the course, some students expressed a sense of pressure and overwhelm because they were not used to reading long texts or engaging in academic discourse; some even felt anxious when they could not keep up with the tempo of the class. Over time, consistent encouragement and an organized accountability system slowly transformed their experience to not only build reading habits, but also foster the values of responsibility, perseverance, and self-discipline. Students who felt a sense of satisfaction after successfully presenting their readings showed a deeper emotional attachment to the habit, as they perceived it as evidence of their own academic progress. On the other hand, some students described the process as draining and just a way to avoid criticism, reflecting that the internalization of values has not been fully realized. Therefore, habituation in the hidden curriculum not only affects academic improvement but also influences how students interpret the learning process emotionally, and the strength of value internalization depends on how students respond to the demands and meanings of the literacy activities.

Regarding the stages of moral development according to Lickona (1990), the results of the study show that the process of internalizing values in the hidden curriculum occurs gradually and produces varying results among students. At the moral knowing stage, a number of students acknowledge that additional reading and analytical exercises are intended to expand their knowledge and train their critical thinking skills, but this understanding does not always influence behavioral change. Students in the moral feeling stage begin to show emotional interest in literacy activities, for example, feeling proud when they successfully present their reading results or receive recognition from lecturers, but they still need external encouragement to maintain consistency. Meanwhile, the moral action stage is seen in a small number of students who independently maintain the habit of reading and analyzing texts, even without guidance from lecturers, and take the initiative to connect their reading with the social context and current phenomena in class discussions. Therefore, students' moral achievements are not uniform but are influenced by their internal readiness, motivation, and awareness in responding to the habits instilled through the hidden curriculum.

Jackson's (1990) emphasizes that "crowds, praise, and power" are the essence of the hidden curriculum through the unwritten norms, routines, and structures in the classroom that students must master to succeed in learning. For example, the practice of assigning additional reading by lecturers in this study can be considered a manifestation of these demands. In the classroom environment, "crowds" are reflected in the demand for students to adjust to the busy pace of lecture activities, "praise" appears through lecturers' appreciation for students who demonstrate discipline in reading, while "power" is present through lecturers' authority in determining literacy standards that must be met. As stated by Hasan (2022), the habituation carried out through the hidden curriculum should have its own provisions, such as the implementation of structured and systematic educational activities, which can provide character education that can be instilled in the classroom environment. The variety of student responses, ranging from those who feel benefited to those who feel burdened, shows that not all students are in the same position when facing the demands of this hidden curriculum. Therefore, this variation in readiness illustrates how the hidden curriculum functions unevenly in shaping students' learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

The hidden curriculum plays a significant role in shaping the discipline and character of Indonesian Language and Literature Education students through the exemplary behavior of lecturers, habituation, and daily interaction patterns that indirectly instill the values of responsibility, honesty, literacy, academic ethics, and courtesy. However, its implementation faces obstacles such as diverse learning motivations, low reading interest, lack of active participation, and resistance to collaboration because collaborative values are often implied and not always explicitly explained. This suggests that some values within the hidden curriculum need to be more clearly expressed for student understanding. With consistent lecturer role models and continued implementation

according to Lickona's character education framework, moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, the hidden curriculum remains an important element that complements the formal curriculum in strengthening character and moral formation in higher education.

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