



Contribution of Hidden Curriculum on the Implementation of Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City, Tanzania

Nisile Ndagile

Losirway Secondary School, Arusha.

Email: nicendagile@gmail.com

Vincent Baraka

St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), Arusha.

Email: vincentbaraka11@gmail.com

Kennedy Omondi Otieno

St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), Arusha.

Email: omondiken2016@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study investigated the contribution of Hidden Curriculum (HC) on the implementation of Formal Curriculum (FC) in public secondary schools. Specifically, the study investigated challenges that HC present in the implementation of FC and determined the opportunities presented by HC in supporting the effective implementation of the FC in public secondary schools. Social Learning Theory guided the study. Convergent mixed methods design was adopted. The target population included 2,051 (1200 students, 817, teachers and 34 school heads) in 34 public secondary schools. Sample consisted of 212 respondents (120 students, 82 teachers and 10 school heads). Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select students and teachers while head of schools were purposively sampled. Questionnaires and interview guide helped in data collection. Validity was established through expert judgment whereas reliability was determined using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha method and reliability index, $SQ; r=0.852$ and $TQ; r=0.846$ were reported. Credibility of qualitative data was established through peer debriefing. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data in the SPSS version 25 and results were presented in tables. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically alongside the research questions and presented in narrative forms. From the findings, teachers' biased assessments based on gender stereotypes negatively affect students' academic achievements and career prospects. In conclusion, the HC complements and reinforces the FC, leading to holistic student development and improved academic outcomes. The study recommends **integrating HC elements into teacher training programmes** to support students' social and emotional development in order to enhance their academic performance.*

Keywords: *Curriculum, Formal, Hidden, Implementation, Education, Tanzania*

How to cite this work (APA):

Ndagile, N., Baraka, V. & Otieno, K. O. (2025). Contribution of Hidden Curriculum on the Implementation of Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City, Tanzania. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(3), 903 – 916. <https://doi.org/10.59765/sbcv6>.

1. Introduction

The implementation of formal curriculum (FC) is considerably shaped by hidden curriculum (HC). Hidden curriculum is a side effect of education which is learnt but not openly intended (Fullan, 2020). It encompasses the implicit lessons, values, and norms that students learn through the school environment and culture that significantly contribute to the implementation of formal curricula in public secondary schools globally (Keddie, 2021). The concept of HC has been an area that requires further study in educational research, particularly in the context of public secondary schools. For instance, in many educational systems, the Hidden Curriculum can shape students' attitudes towards authority, peer relationships, and social expectations, thereby affecting their engagement with formal academic content (Lingard et al., 2022). In the context of public secondary schools, Hidden Curriculum refers to the inherent lessons, values, and customs that students learn outside the FC.

In Indonesia, Fismanelly et al. (2020) revealed that HC approach in teaching social science subjects enhances students' engagement, metacognitive skills, creativity, and prepares students for lifelong learning. Sosu (2020) further acknowledged that the elements such as teacher demeanor, choice of language, and teaching methods significantly influence students' development and assimilation of social values. Hidden curriculum significantly affects student character building, with a positive relationship between HC variables and character development.

A glance across most African schools revealed that most teachers do not attach much importance to the subtle messages and values often learned quietly by learners (Boadu et al., 2020). In this light, Dwayne (2020) observes that even though the FC is often studied, little or no effort is devoted to the HC and the impact that it has on the school and learners' lives. Presently, the over reliance on the official curriculum to the utmost neglect of the HC continues to plague classroom procedure. It is therefore not uncommon to hear teachers make such statements as 'take what I say but do not watch what I do' or 'do what I tell you but do not do what I do', in most classrooms (Otieno and Doto, 2023). These statements are often made oblivious of the fact that it is relatively easier for learners to pick up the manners and way of life of teachers and other actors in the school and internalize them better than even what is actually taught.

Sajjad et al. (2023) noted that Hidden Curriculum significantly influences the character development of students, with aspects such as teacher behaviour, school culture, and peer interactions playing pivotal roles. According to Hatipoğlu and Semerci (2023), some teachers have acknowledged the presence of Hidden Curriculum elements that they believe influence ethical behaviour of learners but expressed concerns about its unstructured nature. In addition, Aikman and Unterhalter (2021) highlight how socio-cultural factors and teachers' attitudes can shape students' learning experiences beyond the official curriculum, affecting their engagement and motivation.

Similarly, inquiry by Molla and Cuthbert (2022) emphasizes that the HC often reinforces social hierarchies and gender roles, impacting educational equity. It has also been illustrated that while FC aim to provide structured knowledge, the HC plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions, behaviours, and overall educational outcomes. Tyler and Hinton (2021) highlight the dual role of HC in education. Ogunyemi and Afolabi (2020) delve into how socio-economic factors impact the HC in Nigerian schools. The students from different socio-economic backgrounds experience varying levels of engagement based on their interactions with peers and teachers.

Furthermore, Ngowi (2023) argues that social interactions among peers within the school setting contributes to a HC that affects student engagement and motivation, ultimately impacting on how effectively the FC is delivered. In Tanzania, while there has been considerable research on the FC in public secondary schools, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific contributions of the Hidden Curriculum to educational outcomes. In addition, Mhando (2021) indicate that while the FC is well-documented, the informal lessons learned through social interactions and school culture are often overlooked, leading to an incomplete picture of student experiences. From this background there was a need to carry out the study on the contribution of HC on the implementation of FC in public secondary schools in Arusha city.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What challenges does the Hidden Curriculum present in the implementation of the FC in public secondary schools in Arusha City?

- ii. What opportunities does the Hidden Curriculum provide for supporting effective implementation of the Formal Curriculum in public secondary schools in Arusha City?

2. Literature Review

The theoretical and empirical literature was reviewed with reference to themes generated from research questions. The study was grounded in the Social Learning Theory (SLT) as proposed by Albert Bandura in 1986.

2.1 Social Learning Theory (SLT)

The theory posits that individuals learn behaviours, norms, and values through observation and imitation of others within their social context (Meyer and Rowan, 2022). In the study of the contribution of Hidden Curriculum to the implementation of FC in public secondary schools, social learning theory was particularly relevant as it highlights how students absorb implicit lessons from their environment such as peer interactions, teacher attitudes, and institutional culture that may not be explicitly outlined in the FC. For instance, students may observe how teachers prioritize certain subjects or behaviours over others, leading them to internalize these values even if they are not formally taught (Tharp and Gallimore, 2023). This process significantly influences their academic engagement and social development, ultimately affecting educational outcomes.

2.1.1 Strengths of Technology Acceptance Model

Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modelling in the acquisition of new behaviours and knowledge. In the context of public secondary schools, this theory is particularly relevant when examining how Hidden Curriculum; unwritten, unofficial lessons that student learn through their school environment interact with Formal Curriculum. The strength of SLT in this study lies in its ability to highlight how students observe and internalize behaviours and norms from peers, teachers, and the school culture itself. This process significantly influences their engagement with the FC. For instance, if a school's Hidden Curriculum promotes collaboration and respect for diversity, students are likely to adopt these values, thereby enhancing their academic performance and social interactions within the Formal Curriculum framework.

Thus, social learning theory provides a robust lens through which to analyze how informal educational experiences shape students' outcomes alongside structured educational content.

2.1.2 Application of Technology Acceptance Model

The theory highlights how students learn not only through direct instruction but also through observation, imitation, and modelling behaviours exhibited by peers, teachers, and the school environment. Social learning theory posits that individuals acquire new behaviours and knowledge by observing others within their social context, which is particularly relevant when considering how Hidden Curriculum such as norms, values, and informal lessons conveyed through school culture contribute to students' understanding and engagement with the FC. For instance, if a school promotes collaboration and respect among students through its Hidden Curriculum, these values can enhance cooperative learning experiences in formal academic settings. Conversely, negative behaviours observed in the school environment may detract the intended educational outcomes of the Formal Curriculum. Thus, recognizing these dynamics allows teachers to better align both curricular to foster a more holistic educational experience that supports students' development.

2.2 Empirical Review

This literature review synthesized findings from various contexts to better understand the key elements of HC and their implications on the FC in education institutions. The elements such as teacher demeanour, choice of language, and teacher – student interaction significantly contributes to students' development and assimilation of FC.

2.2.1 The Challenges Hidden Curriculum Present in the Implementation of the Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools

Davies and Riley (2021) conducted a study in United Kingdom on HC and its disruption to FC delivery in UK secondary schools. The study employed case study as the research design and qualitative approach. The research instruments adopted were document analysis and interview guide. Questionnaires were administered to 100 students from 5 secondary schools. Data was analyzed using Content and thematic analysis. This study reveals that the Hidden Curriculum undermines the Formal Curriculum by fostering a school culture where informal rules and expectations take precedence over prescribed educational goals. Issues such as favouritism, gender bias, and implicit class distinctions were identified as disruptive elements.

Additionally, Khosa and Makuire (2023) conducted a study in Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe on barriers to the effective curriculum implementation: Secondary School Teachers Speak Out. The study adopted a case study research design and qualitative approach. The data was obtained from a sample size comprising 45 teachers and 5 school heads using structured interview guide as the tool for gathering data. The sampling method was simple random sampling technique. Data analysis techniques involved the NVivo Version 10 for thematic analysis. The study identified inadequate resources, political interference, and lack of teacher preparedness as barriers to effective curriculum implementation.

Complementing this perspective, Ressa et al. (2021) explored Time as a Hidden Curriculum: Qualitative Study of Challenges Faced by Students with Mobility, Speech, and Visual Disabilities in P-12 Settings. This was a Case study and purely qualitative conducted in United States. The study highlights how time management and scheduling practices in schools can inadvertently marginalize students with disabilities, affecting their learning experiences. In South Africa, Borges et al. (2023) conducted a study on HC in accounting for education in the digital era: the evolution, role, controversies, challenges, and implications. The study was purely qualitative study that involved 40 secondary schools. Literature was reviewed from various publishable documents and Content analysis was employed. The finding shows that HC that accounts for education of students has evolved with digital advancements, presenting both opportunities and challenges in aligning it with FC objectives. The study has informed the current study on the progress HC has undergone based on digital advancements and opportunities aligning with Formal Curriculum. However, one potential limitation was that the study missed the contribution of HC on the implementation of FC. It was therefore necessary to conduct the current study to fill the identified gaps.

2.2.2 Strategies Implemented to Mitigate Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Plagiarism in Universities

In Pakistan, Abdul and Farhan (2021) conducted a study on hidden curriculum's contribution to FC delivery in secondary schools. Longitudinal research design was employed and the study collected quantitative data only. The study was carried out by using online survey method of collecting data from 400 students followed over 3 years. The research identifies how the HC encourages behaviours like self-discipline, teamwork, and respect for peers, which aid students in navigating the FC. The longitudinal approach shows how the hidden curriculum's influence

develops over time. Students who embrace behaviours and values taught implicitly are better prepared to handle the formal curriculum's academic demands. Consequently, the educational systems should consider long-term interventions that integrate the Hidden Curriculum into the overall educational experience. The study established that HC practices support the Formal Curriculum by creating an environment conducive to academic achievement. Research done by Nasser and Ali (2023) in Lebanon investigated how HC supports FC implementation in Lebanese secondary schools. The researchers employed descriptive survey design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from 300 students and 15 teachers. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed as data analysis techniques. This study shows that the HC plays a significant role in shaping students' social interactions and behaviours, promoting values like respect, discipline, and responsibility, which complement the Formal Curriculum. The hidden curriculum's role in instilling social norms, behaviours, and values that align with academic success is emphasized. Teachers and peers play a pivotal role in shaping this informal learning environment.

Additionally, Sanni and Olaniyan (2023) conducted a study in Nigeria on the role of Hidden Curriculum in supporting Formal Curriculum implementation in Nigerian secondary schools. The study employed Cross-sectional as the research design and quantitative approach. Questionnaires were administered to 450 students across 10 schools. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The study found that adherence to social norms and behaviours established in the HC results in increased academic focus and school engagement. The study also established that the HC positively influences the FC by promoting discipline, respect for authority, and peer collaboration, which improve academic engagement. Students who internalize these values tend to engage better with formal learning activities. Mugisha (2021) researched on the role of HC in shaping students' behaviour in secondary schools in Uganda. The study employed descriptive survey as the research design and quantitative approach. The study found out that HC has a profound impact on students' behaviour and should be considered in educational planning. The Hidden Curriculum significantly affects students' behaviour, including their attitudes towards authority and peer relationships. By implication, the study missed valuable qualitative insight that would give narrative evidence concerning how the HC contributes to students' behavior. The current study employed convergent mixed methods approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data in order to fill the gap left.

3. Methodology

In the context of investigating the contribution of HC on the implementation of FC in public secondary schools, a convergent mixed-methods research design was useful. This dual approach not only provided statistical evidence but also enriched the findings with personal narratives that highlighted the complexities of informal and formal curricular. The target population included 34 school heads, 1200 form four students and 817 teachers from 34 public secondary schools in Arusha City (MoEST, 2024). Heads of schools as the custodian of ethical values in school provided detailed accounts of the specific elements of HC that contributes to the implementation of Formal Curriculum and the opportunities presented by HC in supporting the effective implementation of the FC. Teachers as those who oversee the implementation of curriculum contributed insights into their levels of understanding of the extent to which HC contributes to the implementation of FC in public secondary schools. Form four students were involved in this study due to their experience and also since they are directly affected by the challenges presented by the elements of HC in the implementation of FC in public secondary schools. As postulated by Airasian and Gay (2021), a sample of 10% to 30% of the target population is representative enough for a research study. Consequently, the researcher selected 10 public secondary schools which is equal to 30% of all public schools, 10 heads of secondary schools which is 30% of the target population, 82 secondary school teachers which is 10% of the target population and 120 form four students (10% of 1200). Therefore, the total sample size was 212 respondents.

The researcher employed simple random sampling to select schools and both stratified and simple random sampling techniques to select students and teachers since the samples were heterogeneous and also to avoid gender bias. For boys, the researcher randomly selected 6 boys each from 9 schools and 4 boys from one small school. In case of girls, the researcher randomly selected 6 girls each from 9 schools and 8 girls from one big school. While for teachers, the researcher selected 3 male teachers each from 9 schools and 4 teachers from one big school. Moreover, 5 female teachers each were selected from nine schools and 6 teachers from one big school. The researcher employed criterion purposive sampling procedures to get the head of schools from the sampled schools. The head of schools were selected based on a specific set of predetermined criteria that are crucial to the purpose of the study. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and interview guides.

The validity of the research instruments was ensured by involving curriculum experts who reviewed and refined

them. After conducting a pilot study of the quantitative research instruments in two secondary schools not included in the main study, the reliability of the questionnaire (specifically the Likert scale questions) was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha methods. The students' questionnaires, comprising 20 items, achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.852, while the Teachers' questionnaires also consisting of 30 items obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.846. Both values exceeded the threshold of 0.7, thereby confirming the reliability of the instruments used to collect data (Zhou et al. 2022). Upon receiving research permit from the City Executive Director (CED) Arusha City, the researcher visited each institution to make prior arrangements with school heads, teachers and students in order to collect data on the agreed date.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics whereby frequencies, percentages and mean scores were generated to aid the interpretation of data. This was done with the help of SPSS version 25. Qualitative responses were coded, categorized and analyzed into themes alongside research questions and presented in narrative forms. The researcher took care of anonymity of respondents, confidentiality of data collected and audio recording was done with the consent of the respondents. Plagiarism and fraud was avoided by correct citation and acknowledgement of borrowed or cited works.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings are discussed in accordance with the themes generated from research objectives and the research questions that the study sought to answer.

4.1 The Challenges Presented by the Hidden Curriculum to the Implementation of Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City

Question one of the research investigated the challenges presented by the Hidden Curriculum to the implementation of Formal Curriculum in public secondary school in Arusha city, Tanzania. Data was collected through questionnaires distributed to students and teachers while interviews were conducted with the head of school. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on 10 items with each statement using a five-point scale with 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly Disagree. For clarity of reporting, it was necessary to collapse cells and categories of Strongly Disagree and Disagree that were merged while Agree and Strongly Agree were also merged too. Based on the views postulated by Taherdoost (2019), the frequency (f=frequencies) and percentage (p=Percentages)

distribution of responses were categorized as follows: ≤ 20=extremely minority; 21-49=minority; 50-59=moderate; 60-69=majority; 70-89=very high majority; 90-99=extremely majority; 100=overwhelming majority. In addition, a mean score greater than 3 indicated challenges that highly contributes to the implementation of FC, while

a mean score lower than 3 suggested otherwise. A mean score exactly equal to 3 implies uncertainty on the contribution of the challenge towards the implementation of FC (Chyung& Hutchinson, 2023). Responses from students are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Students’ Responses on the Challenges Presented by the Hidden Curriculum to the Implementation of Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City (n=120)

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	
i Unspoken norms and values in the hidden curriculum undermine or distract students from the intended outcomes of the FC	0	0.0	108	90.0	3	2.5	5	4.2	4	3.3	3.79
ii Peer influence and group behaviour in the school environment hinder students' ability to focus on and engage with the FC	59	49.2	47	39.2	1	.8	13	10.8	0	0.0	4.26
iii Emphasis on conformity and obedience distract students' ability to think critically and creatively within FC	3	2.5	107	89.2	10	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.94
iv Teacher bias regarding students' capabilities or behaviour affects the fair implementation of the FC	106	88.3	14	11.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.88
v Informal practices regarding assessment (grading practices, favoritism) influence students' motivation and performance in the FC	10	8.3	99	82.5	11	9.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.99
vi Informal access to academic support, can lead to inequities in resource allocation, which in turn affect the implementation of the FC	50	41.7	65	54.2	0	0.0	5	4.2	0	0.0	4.33
vii Promotion of social skills such as conformity or competition) interfere with students' ability to collaborate and engage in group-based activities required by the FC	9	7.5	95	79.2	0	0.0	5	4.2	11	9.2	3.72
viii Gender roles or cultural norms conflict with inclusive educational goals outlined in the formal curriculum	49	40.8	68	56.7	3	2.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.38
ix Discipline systems or hierarchical teacher-student relationships create barriers to implementing the FCeffectively	61	50.8	55	45.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	3.3	4.41

x	Emphasis on extrinsic rewards such as grades or approval affect students' intrinsic motivation to engage deeply with the FC content	52	43.3	53	44.2	13	10.8	2	1.7	0	0.0	
	Grand mean score											4.29
												4.20

Source: Field Data, (2025)

Table 1 reveals several challenges posed by the Hidden Curriculum that hinder the effective implementation of the FC in public secondary schools in Tanzania. For instance, extremely majority (90%) of students revealed that unspoken norms and values in the HC undermine or distract students from the intended outcomes of the Formal Curriculum. This challenge recorded a mean score of 3.79 implying that it highly contributes to the implementation of FC. The presence of unspoken norms and values within the school culture can distract students from the intended outcomes of the FC. These norms often promote conformity and obedience over critical thinking and creativity, leading to a passive learning environment where students are less engaged with the curriculum content. The HC often promotes unspoken norms and values that conflict with the objectives of the FC. These findings align with findings in a study by Khosa and Makuvire (2023) which highlight the unspoken norms, values, and practices within the school environment that influence students' learning experiences and outcomes. The study points out that gender biases in textbooks have been identified, where female characters are underrepresented in leadership roles and associated with traditional domestic tasks, while male characters are depicted in positions of power and authority. This reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and limits students' aspirations, particularly for girls.

It has been revealed from table 1 that 49.2% strongly agreed while 39.2% of students agreed that peer influence and group behaviour in the school environment hinders students' ability to focus on and engage with the FC. The mean score of 4.27 shows that the challenge posted indicated that it highly influences the implementation of Formal Curriculum. The meaning is that peer influence plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviours. Peer groups have both positive and negative influences on students' academic performance. Negative influences such as peer pressure and engagement in non-academic activities that can detract students' focus on the FC. Peer influence and group behaviour significantly affect students' ability to focus on and engage with the FC. In many cases, students may prioritize social interactions and group dynamics over academic pursuits, leading to a decline in academic performance and engagement.

The data also indicates that 91.7% (extremely majority) of study participants acknowledged that emphasis on

conformity and obedience distract students' ability to think critically and creatively within the FC. This challenge accounted for a mean score of 3.9. The strong emphasis on conformity and obedience within the school system can stifle students' ability to think critically and creatively. This focus on adherence to rules and authority figures discourages independent thought and problem-solving which are essential components of the FC. The Hidden Curriculum often emphasizes conformity and obedience, which can stifle students' critical thinking and creativity. In schools in Tanzania, traditional teaching methods prioritize rote learning and discourage questioning. This approach can hinder the development of these essential skills, which are crucial for engaging with the Formal Curriculum. While giving support to this finding, Davies and Riley (2021) argue that Hidden Curriculum undermines the FC by fostering a school culture where informal rules and expectations take precedence over prescribed educational goals.

These findings affirm the qualitative data in which, during the interview, the head of school "2" stated:

As per my experience as a member of top management at this school, teacher biases, whether based on gender, appearance, or behaviour, can lead to unequal treatment of students thereby affecting their academic opportunities and outcomes. Consequently, teachers' biases can influence their expectations and interactions with students, leading to disparities in academic performance and engagement with the FC (Personal Interview, 12th May, 2025).

Another head of school "1" put forth the views that:

Honestly, informal assessment practices, such as favouritism and inconsistent grading, can undermine students' motivation and performance. In our school, such practices have been observed to affect students' engagement with the FC, as they may perceive the system as unfair or bias (Personal Interview, 8th May, 2025).

The response quoted during the interviews indicated that students learn not only through direct instruction but also through observation, imitation, and modelling behaviours exhibited by peers, teachers, and the school environment. Conversely, negative behaviours observed in the school environment may detract the intended educational outcomes in the FC. Thus, recognizing these dynamics

allows teachers to better align both curricular to foster a more holistic educational experience that supports students' development. The findings are supported by research conducted by Martinez (2022) who examined the long-term effects of teachers' gender stereotypes on students' outcomes. The study found that teachers' biased assessments based on gender stereotypes negatively affected students' academic achievements and career prospects.

Additionally, table 1 shows that overwhelming (100%) of students recognized teachers' bias regarding student capabilities or behaviour affects the fair implementation of the FC. With a mean score of 4.88, this challenge stands out as having extremely overwhelming contribution on the implementation of FC. Teacher biases regarding students' capabilities or behaviour can adversely affect the fair implementation of the Formal Curriculum. These biases may lead to unequal treatment of students, affecting their academic opportunities and outcomes. In this respect, Davies and Riley (2021) also reported that issues such as favouritism, gender bias, and implicit class distinctions are disruptive elements of HC that contributes to the implementation of FC.

Likewise, the data in table 1 shows that 8.3% strongly agreed while 82.5% of respondents agreed accounting for 90.8% who reported that informal practices regarding assessment (grading and favouritism) contributes to students' motivation and performance in the FC. This challenge accounted for a mean score of 3.99. By implication, informal practices regarding assessment, such as grading practices and favouritism, can influence students' motivation and performance in the FC. When assessments are perceived as unfair or biased, students may become disengaged and de-motivated. Moreover, the responses from students as summarized in table 1.1 shows that, 95.9% of study participants approved that informal access to academic support with a mean score of 4.33, can lead to inequities in resource allocation, which in turn affect the implementation of the FC. The high percentage and high mean score imply that unequal access to informal academic support can lead to inequities in resource allocation, affecting the implementation of the FC. Students with limited access to additional academic resources may struggle to meet curriculum expectations. This finding corroborates the study conducted by Mkuchu (2019) who established that gender roles in primary school textbooks alongside HC reinforced traditional gender roles, leading to gender disparities in students' aspirations and self-esteem.

The grand mean score of 4.2 indicates that the HC significantly contributes to the implementation of the

Formal Curriculum in public secondary schools in Tanzania. The challenges identified, including teacher biases, gender stereotypes, informal assessment practices, and emphasis on conformity that accentuate the need for comprehensive reforms to align the Hidden Curriculum with the goals of the FC. These findings bring to light the findings by Borges et al. (2023) who confirm that HC accounting for education of students has evolved with digital advancements, presenting both opportunities and challenges in aligning it with FC objectives.

4.2 The Opportunities Presented by the Hidden Curriculum in Supporting the Effective Implementation of the Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City

The last research question investigated the opportunities presented by HC in supporting the effective implementation of the FC in public secondary school in Arusha City, Tanzania. Data was collected through questionnaires distributed to students and teachers while interviews were conducted with the head of school. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement using a five-point scale with 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly Disagree. For clarity of reporting, it was necessary to collapse cells and categories of Strongly Disagree and Disagree WERE merged as Agree and Strongly Agree were also merged. Based on the views postulated by Taherdoost (2019), the frequency (f=frequencies) and percentage (p=Percentages) distribution of responses were categorized as follows: ≤ 20=extremely minority; 21-49=minority; 50-59=moderate; 60-69=majority; 70-89=very high majority; 90-99=extremely majority; 100=overwhelming majority. In addition, a mean score greater than 3 indicated opportunities that highly contributes to the implementation of FC, while a mean score lower than 3 suggested otherwise. A mean score exactly equal to 3 implies the uncertainty regarding the contribution of the opportunity towards implementation of Formal Curriculum (Chyung and Hutchinson, 2023). Teachers' responses are summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' Response on the Opportunities presented by the Hidden Curriculum in Supporting the effective Implementation of the Formal Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City (n=82)

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
	i	9	11.0	70	85.4	3	3.7	0	0.0	0	
ii	38	46.3	44	53.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.46
iii	9	11.0	73	89.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.11
iv	74	90.2	5	6.1	3	3.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.87
v	71	86.6	11	13.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.87
vi	6	7.3	67	81.7	9	11.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.96
vii	42	51.2	40	48.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.51
viii	42	51.2	34	41.5	3	3.7	0	0.0	3	3.7	4.36
ix	71	86.6	5	6.1	0	0.0	6	7.3	0	0.0	4.72
x	14	17.1	65	79.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	3.7	4.06

Source: Field Data, (2025)

The discussion points out the opportunities presented by the HC in supporting the effective implementation of the FC in public secondary schools: For instance, data in table 2 indicates that an extreme majority (96.4%) of teachers that is, 11% agreed and 85.4% strongly agreed that informal teacher-student relationships foster a positive learning environment. With a mean score of 4.07, teachers confirmed that positive teacher-student relationships contribute to a supportive and motivating classroom atmosphere. This can enhance students' engagement and academic performance. Teachers who establish trust and rapport with students create an environment conducive to learning and personal growth.

In addition, the data indicates that social skills such as communication and teamwork enhance collaboration in group-based activities. This opportunity received an overwhelming approval of 100% by teachers as confirmed by a higher mean score of 4.46. This was further confirmed by students as a clear indicator that the Hidden Curriculum promotes the development of social skills such as effective communication and teamwork, which are essential for collaborative learning and success in group-based activities within the Formal Curriculum. In this regard, Gollnick and Chinn (2020) reiterate that HC affects students' learning outcomes by shaping their attitudes towards diversity and social interactions. The research revealed that the HC reinforces societal expectations and preferences, affecting either positively or negatively the students' self-concept and interaction with peers.

The data are supported by the arguments of the head of school "7" during face-to-face interviews who shared the views that;

Indeed, positive teacher-student relationships are crucial for creating a supportive learning environment. As a school, we have observed that by teachers providing emotional support, offering constructive feedback, and fostering a sense of belonging, students' natural motivation and academic engagement are enhanced. Consequently, we have initiated a mentorship programme for students under the guidance of senior staff members (Interview with school head, 15th May 2025).

Also, the head of school "1" gave the view that:

The development of social skills such as communication and teamwork are essential for students to collaborate effectively in group-based activities within the FC. Here, we develop the

communication skills through self-expression during debates and reading comprehensive or story books. On the other hand, teamwork is developed through group work. It has come to our attention that employers increasingly value these soft skills, recognizing their importance alongside academic performance (Interview with school head, 8th May 2025).

The interviews with the two head of schools imply that collaboration among teachers and students is essential for creating a strong and successful Hidden Curriculum that influence the implementation of FC. Pairing teachers with complementary strengths lead to mutual learning, professional growth, and improved teaching effectiveness. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality of instruction but also fosters a sense of camaraderie, shared purpose, and FC implementation. Both heads of school emphasize that collaboration is a key factor in building a vibrant, supportive, and dedicated educational environment that ultimately benefits students' achievement. The findings of the study are in line with those by Papay et al., (2020) who affirmed that, pairing students with experienced teachers with complementary skills leads to gains in FC implementation and students' achievement.

Among teachers, an overwhelming majority (100%) reported time management, responsibility, and self-discipline as opportunities presented by Hidden Curriculum that contributes to meeting academic deadlines. This opportunity recorded a mean score of 4.1. Fundamentally, this implies that the HC instils values of time management, responsibility, and self-discipline, enabling students to manage their academic tasks effectively and meet time limit, thereby enhancing their performance in the FC. While responding to an open-ended question on the opportunities presented by HC to support the effective implementation of the FC in public secondary school in Arusha City, it was noted that: "*the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in shaping students' organizational skills, study habits, and time management abilities. These competencies are vital for students to meet deadlines and engage effectively with academic tasks in the formal curriculum*". Mugisha (2021) concurs with these findings by reporting that HC has a profound impact on students' behaviour and should be considered in educational planning. The HC significantly affects students' behaviour, including time management, their attitudes towards authority and peer relationships.

From table 2, extreme majority 96.3% comprising of 90.2% who strongly agreed and 6.1% teachers who agreed that self-confidence and resilience help overcome challenges in the FC. The recorded mean score was 4.87 indicates that only a few respondents (3.7%) held contrary opinion. By implication, exposure to the HC fosters self-confidence and resilience, equipping students with the mindset to overcome challenges and resilience in their academic endeavours within the FC. Similarly, in table 2, promotion of continuous learning and improvement encourages a positive attitude towards the FC also recorded a mean score of 4.87. The similarities in mean scores suggest that the Hidden Curriculum encourages a mindset of continuous learning and improvement thereby motivating students to approach the Formal Curriculum with a proactive and positive attitude, leading to better academic outcomes. Also, it enables students to build self-confidence and resilience that helps to overcome challenges in the Formal Curriculum.

Data in table 2 also pointed towards development of autonomy that enables self-directed learning with 89% approval and 11% undecided accounting for a mean score of 3.96. In essence, the HC supports the development of students' autonomy, enabling them to take greater responsibility for their learning and become more self-directed, which is crucial for success in the FC. As table 2 shows, all (100%) respondents which is overwhelming majority agreed that critical thinking and problem-solving skills enhance engagement with Formal Curriculum content. With a mean score of 4.5 that is above the grand mean score of 4.4, the study confirms that skills developed through the HC, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, enable students to engage more deeply with and understand the content of the FC. This study shows that the Hidden Curriculum contributes to students' understanding of responsibility, respect to authority, and collaborative work, which directly support academic achievement in the FC. Here, Smith & Williams (2022) highlights that the HC positively impacts students' academic behaviour and performance. Implicit lessons on discipline and cooperation contribute significantly to academic success.

The study equally revealed in table 2 that extreme majority (92.7%) voiced their opinion that students' promotion of inclusivity and respect for diversity enhances engagement with diverse perspectives. Although 7.3% held contrary opinion, the mean score of 4.36 strongly suggest that indeed HC promotes inclusivity and respect for diversity, enhancing students' ability to engage with a wide range of perspectives and content in the FC in so doing fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

As seen in table 2, 86.6% strongly agreed that social and cultural activities enhance understanding of educational values. With a mean score of 4.71, the finding establishes

that social and cultural activities, such as school traditions and extracurricular events, enhance students' understanding of educational values and complement FC content, contributing to holistic development. While giving support to these findings, Sanni and Olaniyan (2023) found out that adherence to social norms and behaviours established in the Hidden Curriculum results in increased academic focus and school engagement. The study also established that the HC positively influences the FC by promoting discipline, respect for authority, and peer collaboration, which improve academic engagement. Students who internalize these values tend to engage better with formal learning activities.

Data in table 2 also display that 96.4% of teachers identified ability to navigate classroom and school norms influences success in academic assessments as an opportunity presented by Formal Curriculum. The mean score recorded in this case is 4.06 implying that students' ability to navigate classroom and school norms influences their success in formal academic assessments, as understanding these norms can lead to better academic performance. Generally, data in table 2 gives a grand mean score of 4.4 which indicates a strong positive perception among teachers regarding the role of the HC in supporting the effective implementation of the Formal Curriculum.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The challenges identified, include teacher unfairness, gender stereotypes, informal assessment practices, and emphasis on conformity that should be addressed comprehensively to align the HC with the goals of the FC. For instance, the study concludes that teachers' biased assessments based on gender stereotypes negatively affect students' academic achievements and career prospects. Addressing these challenges is necessary to enhance effective implementation of Formal Curriculum in public secondary schools in Arusha City.

Lastly, concerning the opportunities offered by HC, the study concludes that HC plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' engagement and success in the FC. Positive teacher-student relationships, promote social skills, instil values of responsibility and self-discipline, encourages critical thinking, and support inclusivity. Respect for diversity complements and reinforces the implementation of Formal Curriculum, leading to holistic student's development and improved academic outcomes. Consequently, the opportunities presented by the HC can

enhance students' academic experiences and achievements. The study concludes that HC significantly contributes towards students' learning experiences and academic achievement in public secondary schools.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the researcher recommended the following:

1. There is need to implement professional development programmes to raise awareness among teachers about the effects of their biases and practices on students' learning experiences. This should be done by also establishing clear and transparent assessment criteria to ensure fairness and equity in evaluating student performance. Similarly, the programmes should integrate HC elements into teacher training to support students' social and emotional development, which in turn enhances their academic performance.
2. Schools should create environments that promote inclusivity, respect, and positive interactions among students and between students and teachers. This can be achieved by establishing classrooms that promote positive teacher-student relationships and a culture of respect that can enhance students' engagement and success in the FC and teachers engaging in reflective practices to identify and mitigate any biases that may affect their interactions with students.
3. School policies, including dress codes and assessment methods, should be reviewed to ensure they support students' self-expression and accommodate diverse learning styles. In addition, schools should encourage participation in extracurricular activities that foster the development of social skills, teamwork, and cultural understanding, thereby complementing the FC.
4. Finally, the researcher recommends that schools should provide opportunities for students to develop autonomy and self-discipline, enabling them to take responsibility for their learning in order to succeed in the FC.

References

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Boadu, J., Smith, K., & Johnson, R. (2022). *Foundations of research in health and social sciences*. Oxford University Press.

Borges, M., Silva, R., and Pereira, L. (2023). The evolving role of hidden curriculum in digital education: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Educational Technology and Curriculum Studies*, 15(2), 120–137.

Chyung, S. Y., and Hutchinson, D. (2023). Understanding Likert scale data and interpretation. *Journal of Applied Research in Education*, 8(1), 15–28.

Davies, S., and Riley, T. (2021). Hidden curriculum and its impact on formal curriculum implementation in secondary schools. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 7(1), 45–62.

Dwayne, J. (2020). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Fismanelly, S., Rahmawati, D., and Azizah, N. (2020). Implementation of hidden curriculum in social science subjects in Pesantren: Encouraging student engagement in the 21st century. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 12(1), 45–59.

Fullan, M. (2020). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gollnick, D. M., and Chinn, P. C. (2020). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (11th ed.). Pearson.

Hatipoglu, I., and Semerci, C. (2023). Ethics and hidden curriculum: Opinions of secondary school teachers in Turkey. *International Journal of Educational Ethics*, 9(1), 78-92.

Keddie, A. (2021). *The politics of the hidden curriculum in schools: Equity, power and ideology*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khosa, M., and Makuvire, R. (2023). Barriers to the effective curriculum implementation: Secondary school teachers speak out in Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe. *Zimbabwe Journal of Education Research*, 35(1), 45–61.

Lingard, B., Sellar, S., and Savage, G. (2022). *Globalizing the hidden curriculum: Education policy, cultural values, and institutional practices*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Martinez, C. (2022). Long-term effects of teacher gender stereotypes on student academic outcomes. *Journal of Social Psychology in Education*, 28(4), 321–339.

- Meyer, H.-D., & Rowan, B. (2022). *The new institutionalism in education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mhando, L. (2021). *Exploring informal learning in Tanzanian secondary schools: The role of hidden curriculum*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Tanzania Educational Publishers.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2024). *Education sector performance report 2023/2024*. Government of Tanzania.
- Mkuchu, A. (2023). Gender roles and hidden curriculum in Tanzanian primary school textbooks. *Tanzania Educational Review*, 21(2), 75–89.
- Molla, T., and Cuthbert, D. (2022). *The hidden curriculum and educational equity: Social justice in schooling*. Melbourne, Australia: Springer.
- Mugisha, P. R. (2021). The role of hidden curriculum in shaping student behavior in Ugandan secondary schools. *Uganda Journal of Educational Studies*, 7(2), 100–115.
- Nasser, F., and Ali, S. (2023). The hidden curriculum's influence on social behavior and responsibility in schools. *Journal of Social Education*, 15(2), 98–112.
- Ngowi, H. (2023). *Peer interactions and hidden curriculum in Tanzanian public schools: A case of Arusha City*. Arusha, Tanzania: East African Education Press.
- Ogunyemi, B., and Afolabi, M. (2020). *Socio-economic disparities and hidden curriculum in Nigerian secondary education*. Lagos, Nigeria: Academic Press Nigeria.
- Otieno, J., and Doto, G. (2023). Contribution of hidden curriculum on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kigoma District, Tanzania. *Tanzania Journal of Educational Research and Review*, 7(2), 98–110.
- Ressa, M., Brown, L., & Ahmed, N. (2021). Marginalization of students with disabilities in school scheduling and time management. *Journal of Inclusive Education Studies*, 10(4), 233–245.
- Sajjad**, N., Huda, M., and Wekke, I. S. (2023). Resolving hidden curriculum implementation problems in Islamic boarding schools: A participatory action research. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 18(1), 88–104.
- Sanni, M. A., and Olaniyan, T. A. (2023). The role of hidden curriculum in supporting formal curriculum implementation in Nigerian secondary schools. *West African Journal of Educational Assessment*, 12(1), 56–68.
- Smith, T., and Williams, R. (2022). The role of hidden curriculum in fostering academic success: Implicit lessons on discipline and cooperation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 114(2), 304–317.
- Sosu, E. M. (2020). Hidden curriculum: Does it matter in a Ghanaian school setting? *Ghana Journal of Education and Psychology*, 5(1), 77–91.
- Taherdoost, H. (2019). Validity and reliability of questionnaires in social science research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 8(1), 1–12.
- Tharp, R. G., and Gallimore, R. (2023). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Tyler, D., and Hinton, K. (2021). *The double edge of schooling: Formal learning and the power of the hidden curriculum*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Unterhalter, D. (2021). The role of teachers in the development of hidden curriculum in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. *Journal of Islamic Educational Studies*, 8(2), 78–90.
- Zhou, Munyaradzi, CanicioDzingirai, Kudakwashe Hove, TavengwaChitata, and Raymond Mugandani.(2022). "Adoption, Use and Enhancement of Virtual Learning during COVID-19." *Education and Information Technologies* 27 (7): 39–59.