A narrative study of the hidden curriculum
in a private higher education institution

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Supervisor: Prof. Liezel Frick

December 2021
DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: December 2021
Abstract

The hidden curriculum is embedded in all levels of education and has proven to be an integral part of the curriculum within higher education. However, the hidden curriculum remains a challenging concept to understand and define. Furthermore, empirical research on the hidden curriculum in higher education, specifically private higher education, and the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum, is limited. The hidden curriculum is demonstrated to be flexible, situational, and subjective. Different role players enacting the hidden curriculum, and different educational institutions are therefore relevant dimensions to explore to gain a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum. The aim of this study was to understand lecturers’ experiences of the hidden curriculum in their classrooms. This was accomplished by firstly adopting a review of existing literature and concept mapping to enable the development of a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum. Secondly, through conducting interviews with ten lecturers in a private higher education institution about their stories of teaching. For the conceptual framework, to contextualise the study, specific focus was given to the hidden curriculum in private higher education. The curriculum as the foundation of the hidden curriculum, the influence of the world of work as well as the lecturer on the hidden curriculum, were further dimensions that were considered. The analysed data from the interviews provided valuable information regarding the importance of lecturer reflection, the relevance of private higher education institutions, and the main areas that lecturers enact the hidden curriculum in their classrooms. This study contributes to an enhanced understanding and importance of the hidden curriculum. The conceptual framework outlines the interplay of different elements on the hidden curriculum, thereby demonstrating the relational and dynamic nature of the hidden curriculum. The study furthermore contributes to a more holistic understanding of the enactment of the hidden curriculum in private higher education, and what lecturers experience the hidden curriculum to be. Researching the hidden curriculum was necessary to enable an enhanced understanding of its power and potential so that it can be utilised more effectively and deliberately in higher education.
Opsomming

Die verskuilde kurrikulum vorm deel van alle vlakke van onderwys en dit word as ‘n integrale deel van die kurrikulum binne hoër onderwys beskou. Die verskuilde kurrikulum bly egter ‘n uitdagende konsep om te definieer en te verstaan. Verder is empiriese navorsing oor die verskuilde kurrikulum beperk binne hoër onderwys, meer spesifiek binne privaat hoër onderwys; asook ten opsigte van die dosent perspektief van die verskuilde kurrikulum. Die verskuilde kurrikulum word verder uitgewys as ‘n buigsame, situasionele en subjektiewe konsep. Verskillende rolspelers wat die verskuilde kurrikulum bekratig, asook verskeie opvoedkundige instellings, is dus relevante perspektiewe om te verken, ten einde ‘n meer holistiese verstaan van die verskuilde kurrikulum te verkry. Die doel van hierdie studie was om dosente se ondervinding van die verskuilde kurrikulum in hulle klaskamers beter te verstaan. Dit is bereik deur eerstens ‘n oorsig van bestaande literatuur uit te voer en ‘n proses van begripsuiteensetting te gebruik wat die ontwikkeling van ‘n konseptuele raamwerk van die verskuilde kurrikulum moontlik gemaak het. Daar is tweedens onderhoude met tien dosente in ‘n privaat hoër onderwys instansie gevoer oor hulle klasgee stories. Om die studie binne konteks te plaas vir die konseptuele raamwerk is daar spesifiek op die verskuilde kurrikulum in privaat hoër onderwys klem gelê. Die kurrikulum as die fondasie van die verskuilde kurrikulum, die invloed van die werksomgewing asook die dosent se hantering van die verskuilde kurrikulum was verdere perspektiewe wat in oorweging gebring is. Die geanaliseerde data van die onderhoude het waardevolle inligting verskaf rakende die belangrikheid van dosent refleksie, die relevantheid van privaat hoër onderwys instansies, asook die hoofareas waarin dosente die verskuilde kurrikulum in hulle klaskamers uitoefen. Die studie dra by tot ‘n verbeterde verstaan, en beklemtroon die belangrikheid, van die verskuilde kurrikulum. Die konseptuele raamwerk wys op die wisselwerking van verskillende elemente op die verskuilde kurrikulum, wat verder die interafhanklikheid en dinamiese aard van die verskuilde kurrikulum uitwys. Die studie dra verder by tot ‘n meer holistiese verstaan van die uitvoering van die verskuilde kurrikulum in spesifiek privaat hoër onderwys, en wat dosente as die verskuilde kurrikulum ervaar. Navorsing oor die verskuilde kurrikulum was nodig om ‘n verbeterde begrip van die vermoë en potensiaal van die verskuilde kurrikulum te ontdek, ten einde dit meer effektiief en doelbewus in hoër onderwys te benut.
Acknowledgements

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you...it doesn’t happen all at once...you become. It takes a long time.”

– The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams –

This journey of pursuing my master’s degree and the uncovering of the hidden curriculum was one of becoming ‘real’. I am grateful to have reached the end of the road (for now), and to have experienced that I was never alone on the journey:

Prof Frick, thank you for instilling the belief in me that this is possible, and for all your help and guidance. I can truly say that I have grown so much. What a privilege to be able to learn from you.

Nardus, my neighbour and ultimate go-to friend. You were always there; you are always there. The many work-from-home (or coffee shop) sessions helped me more than you would ever know. Thank you for all your support, and for inspiring me with your can-do attitude. I appreciate you. Esti, my oldest friend, thank you for always being just a message away, for constantly checking in and asking about my ‘progress’, even though half the time I didn’t really know how to answer you!

My colleagues, who are all pursuing this ‘becoming real’ journey as well – Anri, Doulette, Karel, Thinus – knowing that we all understand each other’s experiences, is a level of support and community that I wish for anyone who studies. Thank you for all the discussions and encouragement. What a pleasure to have been part of the ‘study group’! Marizanne, I look up to you and have learnt so much from you, thank you for demonstrating that this journey is do-able.

My mom, my dad, and my sister Lecia, I appreciate all the check-ins and interest over the past three years. Thank you for all your love and support!

I truly experienced God’s grace in being able to demonstrate the dedication, resilience, and commitment to see this journey through. I dedicate this thesis to my two favourite little people, Lienke and Lian. It is an honour to be your aunt.
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Chapter 1
Overview of the study

1.1. Background to the study

Peters (1966) and Knowles (1973) state that the educator’s life cannot be separated from his/her teaching activity, the educator is a facilitator that enables self-directed personal growth. The process of educators demonstrating themselves through their teaching activities serves as a “life-textbook” (Li, 2019:264) for student development. Lecturers consciously or unconsciously integrate their own life and social experiences into the classroom, they act according to their knowledge and belief system and their ability to understand and comprehend the course they are teaching (Li, 2019). Bitzer and Botha (2011) discuss the entrenched knowledge-based approach in curriculum delivery. The assumption exists that content is not limited to knowledge only, but that it includes skills, attitudes, and values. However, it has proven a struggle for lecturers to refer to anything else as content beyond the knowledge aspects of what has to be taught (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Jansen, 2009). It is often easier for lecturers to explain the disciplinary knowledge of what they teach but they are less likely to refer to the accompanying skills and values that are modelled and transmitted by them (Apple, 1990; Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Jansen, 2009). Considering my own experience, I have often wondered what else my teaching brings to the classroom? From preliminary reading, I understood that this is where the hidden curriculum in teaching becomes a relevant area to explore. The hidden curriculum is the ‘other’ side of teaching that is always present in educational settings, even when lecturers are not necessarily aware of it.

The hidden curriculum is regarded as one of the elements of the curriculum and is seen as an indispensable dimension of teaching, learning, and the development of students (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Jansen, 2018). However, the concept of the hidden curriculum is hard to define

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1 Subject-content or disciplinary knowledge (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Shay, 2013).
2 Academic, digital and information literacy that include aspects like presentation skills, public speaking and writing skills. It also includes soft skills or what is referred to as ‘employability skills’ – critical thinking, problem solving, communication, interaction and group functioning (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Costandius & Bitzer, 2015; Matthews, Garratt & Macdonald, 2018; Shay, 2013).
3 The purpose of and approach to learning; motivation (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Matthews et al., 2018).
4 Living standards of judgement, a personalised living theory. Principles such as integrity, inclusion, people-centredness, democracy, social justice, compassion, respect. Developing the ability to participate as responsible and contributing citizens in society, the economy and personal life (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Costandius & Bitzer, 2015; Smyth, 2003).
and remains unknown to many lecturers within higher education (Thielsch, 2017). Various studies confirm the importance of the hidden curriculum and the presence thereof throughout different levels of education, in both formal and informal settings (Ahola, 2000; Bush, 2018; Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, et al., 2001; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). The hidden curriculum is furthermore contextual and situational (Li, 2019; Martin, 1976; Villanueva, Carothers, Di Stefano, et al., 2018). The hidden curriculum can also be utilised to develop various skills needed by students, skills that the formal curriculum often overlooks (Bitzer & Botha, 2011). Killick (2016) and Smith (2018) confirm the potential that awareness of the hidden curriculum can bring. Students cultivate their life skills through the hidden curriculum. It is generally expected that graduates have developed sufficient interpersonal skills, cultural and generational awareness, mastery of time management, the ability to take calculated risks, professional etiquette, breadth of communication skills, resiliency, authenticity, and more. Although higher education institutions value graduate attributes, the focus is often more on the formal (academic) curriculum. Smith (2018) further found that students who are aware of the hidden curriculum, recognise its value, and make time to learn its lessons, develop to graduate as ‘whole-people’. Students can learn valuable skills through the hidden curriculum that can be applied within their future employment contexts, professional environments, and lifeworld.

Hinchcliffe (2020) emphasises the far-reaching implications of the hidden curriculum in higher education. Earlier ideas surrounding the hidden curriculum were centred on the detrimental effects thereof, such as the tendency to reproduce inequalities of society, specific examples used in literature refer to race, class, and gender (Costandius & Bitzer, 2015; Jackson, 1968; Margolis, 2001). However, recent studies focused on the positive elements that the hidden curriculum can cultivate in students (Li, 2019; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). Hinchcliffe (2020) confirms that the hidden curriculum has great potential and approaching the hidden curriculum should be done pragmatically and holistically.

Li (2019) argues that lecturers’ educational background, attitude, teaching philosophy, and personal values constitute a hidden process that has a subtle influence on students. All these factors may influence student development. According to Bitzer and Botha (2011), the skills and values that lecturers demonstrate are critical in enabling students to effectively engage with the disciplinary knowledge presented to them and to enable the development of graduate
competencies. What is taught in the classroom does not simply convey knowledge of the past, present, and future, there are also informal unintended teaching (the hidden curriculum) that conveys, some argue, even more powerful knowledge than what is taught explicitly (Barnett, 2009; Jansen, 2009). Even if lecturers are not aware of their value-laden teaching, it does not make their teaching value-free. Jansen (2018) state some scholars argue that the hidden curriculum is more powerful in shaping the values of the youth than the official knowledge they are required to learn. If what lecturers do in the classroom is value-laden, and if lecturers are not necessarily fully aware of this, the notion of the hidden curriculum must be further interrogated within contextual settings to enable lecturers therein to better understand their value-laden teaching. Apple (1990) recommends that lecturers ask themselves what ideologies are reflected through the way they teach and give meaning to their activities. Lecturers can critically reflect on practices, procedures, relationships, structures, and the physical characteristics of the learning environment to enable an enhanced understanding of the implementation of the hidden curriculum in their classrooms (Martin, 1976; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018; Penna & Giroux, 1979).

According to London (2017), the hidden curriculum is the platform that enables shared teaching and learning experiences. The hidden curriculum allows for ideas to be exchanged, evaluated, critiqued, modified, accepted, or rejected. Lecturers ought to be aware that the most meaningful teaching and learning experiences happen through such engagement. Through studying and understanding the hidden curriculum, an avenue is opened to enable lecturers to use the hidden curriculum more effectively (and explicitly). On the topic of the #feesmustfall movement in South Africa, London (2017) refers to the hidden curriculum as what is taught and learned by students due to assumptions, norms, teaching practices, and experiences in and outside of the classroom. He argues that the hidden curriculum should be placed in greater focus within the South African higher education environment. If the hidden curriculum is made explicit through better understanding and implementation thereof, it would aid curriculum transformation that has been a continuous debate in South African higher education (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Jansen, 2009; London, 2017).

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5 The ability to build foundations for lifelong learning, including critical, analytical, problem-solving and communication skills, as well as the ability to deal with (and tolerate) change and diversity (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Jansen, 2009; Jones, 2013; van Schalkwyk, Hernan & Müller, 2012).
Li (2019) states that research on the hidden curriculum is mainly through the introduction of a Western research framework that might fall outside of contextual and paradigmatic curricular views. Therefore, given the understanding that the hidden curriculum is contextual (Martin, 1976), the current understanding of the hidden curriculum is based on research done outside of a particular context to which it applies. This lack of contextual viewpoints of the hidden curriculum is also prevalent in the South African context. A literature search on field research yielded one empirical study (Ssebunnya, 2013) on the hidden curriculum in the context of South African higher education, which was in the field of medical ethics education. Ssebunnya (2013) argues that the hidden curriculum needs to be optimised through an authentic and comprehensive enquiry. In the case of medical ethics education, this entails enquiry into the concept of human dignity, the nature of the human person, and what constitutes the good of the patient. Further to the lack of empirical research in the South African context, I could find only one international study on the hidden curriculum in specifically private higher education (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005). The situational and subjective nature of the hidden curriculum and the indication by researchers of the importance of the hidden curriculum illustrate the valuable contribution that empirical research on the hidden curriculum within the South African private higher education context could make. This study aims to address this identified gap in the literature, particularly in terms of a selected group of lecturers as key stakeholders in the enactment of the hidden curriculum within a private higher education context.

1.2. Contextualising the study

Martin (1976) presented the idea that there is no universal hidden curriculum, but that the hidden curriculum is subjective and situational. When the defining characteristics of the hidden curriculum (such as setting, learning activities, and the use of technology) change, so too will the hidden curriculum.

Kujawska-Lis and Lis-Kujawski (2005), in their study on the hidden curriculum in private higher education, states that the hidden curriculum should be referred to per institution, keeping in mind that institutions function in a given time and place, among given people. The hidden curriculum can be analysed through discovering and interpreting various aspects of educational practices within institutions. It is therefore relevant to consider the public or private (non-public) nature of the institution, as the institutional goals might differ. The aim of a private
higher education institution is financial gain through selling educational services, it participates in a market system and competes for ‘clients’ with public higher education institutions (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005). My context and the context of this study is that of a lecturer in a private higher education institution.

In addition to the nature of the institution, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all teaching is currently done via online platforms at the institution where I am employed. According to Samuel (2020), COVID-19 teaching enabled reflection to assess the value system underpinning our pedagogies. COVID-19 teaching allowed lecturers to question whether current pedagogies are still effective in terms of what we are trying to achieve. Samuel (2020) further states that the efficiency and output goals of higher education should be examined in light of the hidden curriculum that needs to be enacted to enable the holistic development of students. It is therefore relevant to note what research has been done on the hidden curriculum in online and distance teaching. Oztok (2013) confirms the existence of the hidden curriculum within online learning. The notion of the hidden curriculum has rarely been applied to distance education (Anderson, 2001). Anderson (2001) notes that the distinctive physical and interactive context within which distance learning operates may very well define a different conception and experience of the hidden curriculum. Distance education enables a key component of constructivist education, forcing students into unfamiliar circumstances, and re-contextualizing knowledge. Distance education also allows students and lecturers unusual opportunities to engage collaboratively (Anderson, 2001). The above-mentioned studies indicate the value of including the online teaching perspective when conducting research on the hidden curriculum.

The literature reviewed above on the hidden curriculum illustrates the concept has not always been made explicit in educational settings, and that although an indispensable element within education, it is not a popular research topic in private higher education and/or online teaching contexts. Considering that the hidden curriculum is contextual, I realised it is relevant to consider the hidden curriculum in specifically South Africa and within my context of private higher education. It was illustrated earlier how important the lecturer element is in the hidden curriculum, yet there is a lack of research on the lecture experience of the hidden curriculum. Current empirical research focuses more on the student perspective (Blasco, 2012; Lempp & Seale, 2004; Pitts, 2003). Research on the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum adds value to the understanding and the importance of the hidden curriculum in higher education.
1.3. Research problem and objectives

The above discussion illustrated that the hidden curriculum is a difficult concept to define and that the lecturer plays an important role in the enactment of the hidden curriculum. It was furthermore illustrated that there is a lack of research done on the hidden curriculum within the South African higher education environment, and even more so in private higher education within this national context. The gap in research identified provided me with the platform of researching the hidden curriculum in the context where I work to gain a better understanding of the concept and obtain evidence of how it is manifested by lecturers within a particular teaching and learning environment. The literature reviewed below will provide a broad overview of the hidden curriculum and illustrate the importance of the hidden curriculum within higher education.

The main research question of the proposed study was:

*What are lecturers’ experiences of the hidden curriculum in their classroom?*

To answer the main research question, three sub-questions were posed. The study follows a thesis by publication format and the three sub-questions were answered over two articles. Given the understanding of the hidden curriculum, and the dimension of the hidden curriculum that is taught, the following research questions were developed and divided between the two articles as follows:

Article 1 (Chapter 2):

1. *What does the existing literature tell us about the hidden curriculum, specifically the teaching of the hidden curriculum?*

Article 2 (Chapter 3):

2. *How do lecturers’ stories of teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?*

3. *How do lecturers’ stories of online teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?*
1.4. Research design and Methodology

The purpose of my study was to gain a better understanding of the hidden curriculum, and how it is experienced by lecturers within a particular teaching environment. This determined my mode of enquiry (Kumar, 2019). Skelton (1997) makes the argument that research on the hidden curriculum goes beyond just one paradigm, but he does confirm interpretivism as an appropriate paradigm, substantiated by the approaches followed in literature (Gao, 2015; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018; Winter & Cotton, 2012). Empirical data provides perspective and understanding about the claims that are made about the hidden curriculum (Dickerson, 2007; Margolis, 2001; Skelton, 1997). Although Skelton (1997) confirms the need for empirical research on the hidden curriculum, he highlights the importance of also documenting the existing implicit features of the hidden curriculum (such as rules, routines, and relations of educational processes) to make it public and achieve a greater understanding regarding students’ experience of education. Skelton (1997) further confirms the different perspectives that the hidden curriculum includes, that these perspectives sometimes overlap, are distinct in some respects, and sometimes build on each other. This dynamic depiction (and difficulty in underpinning the concept – see Thielsch, 2017) of the hidden curriculum suggests the appropriateness of developing a conceptual framework as a useful tool when researching the hidden curriculum (Hafferty & Castellani, 2009). Interpretivism is an appropriate approach to follow when developing a conceptual framework since it has been illustrated earlier that the hidden curriculum is subjective and situational (Li, 2019; Martin, 1976; Villanueva et al., 2018). The relevance of the various elements of the hidden curriculum is furthermore influenced by my contextual background being that of a lecturer in a private higher education institution.

The first research question was answered through the development of a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum (also refer to Chapter 2 section 2.4.)6. A conceptual framework supports and informs the research design through making concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories about the study explicit (Maxwell, 2005). The conceptual framework informs the rest of the research, it stands as a tentative theory of the topic that is being studied (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). A concept mapping methodology (Maxwell, 2005; Rosas & Kane, 2018) was employed. Cross references are added where relevant for the sake of coherence of the thesis but will not feature once the chapters are submitted as manuscripts to be considered for publication.

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6 Cross references are added where relevant for the sake of coherence of the thesis but will not feature once the chapters are submitted as manuscripts to be considered for publication.
2012; Trochim, 1989) was used to create the conceptual framework. Concept mapping is a structured conceptualisation method that can be used to create a conceptual framework to guide evaluation or planning and serves as a tool for the development and presentation of a conceptual framework (Conceição, Samuel & Yelich Biniecki, 2017; DeBlieck, LaFlamme, Rivard, et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2005; Trochim, 1989). A concept map is a visual display of theory (Davis, 2011), a picture of what the theory says is going on with the phenomenon being studied (Maxwell, 2005) – the hidden curriculum in the case of this study. Visual approaches to organising ideas have become an increasingly important methodological tool in research and assist researchers to represent interrelationships between ideas (Conceição et al., 2017; Davis, 2011; Vaughn, Jones, Booth, et al., 2017; Watson, 1989; Wilson, Mandich & Magalhães, 2016). Concept maps are usually represented by making use of labelled circles or boxes and arrows or lines connecting these (Davis, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). Literature reviewed enabled the identification of the hidden curriculum concepts that were relevant to consider. Due to my contextual background and the focus of this study, specific focus was further given to private higher education and the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum.

The second and third research questions were answered by means of a narrative inquiry (also refer to Chapter 3 section 3.3.). An interpretivist approach encourages interpretation, understanding, rigorous observation, and the practice of life stories (Platt, 1985). A narrative inquiry refers to a qualitative research design in which stories are used to describe human action and experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995). One central idea of a narrative inquiry is that stories are collected as a means of understanding how people construct their experiences as lived and told (Clandinin, Caine, Murphy, Steeves, 2015; Neuman, 2014; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). A narrative inquiry is therefore understood to be the study of the experience of stories and is essentially an approach of thinking about and understanding experience. It is through the narration of those events that theories are developed to guide people in terms of understanding (Hyde-Clarke, 2016). Narrative inquiry studies life in motion, and lecturing experience is inextricably linked to lecturers’ lives (Clandinin, 2006; Craig, 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021; Kumar, 2019; O’ Grady, Clandinin & O’ Toole, 2018). Purposive sampling is appropriate for narrative inquiries, as it allows the researcher to choose participants who will be able to provide rich stories (Kumar, 2019). Narrative inquiries furthermore require a small sample size, because of the commitment to an in-depth analysis of participants’ stories rather than producing generalisations (Clandinin, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Considering time constraints and approaches followed in other
narrative studies (Bonzet, 2017; Frick, 2011), the data collection process followed was to select ten lecturers who were willing to share their stories and experiences about the hidden curriculum in their classroom. I provided them with context through a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum. Interviews were used to collect information about the beliefs, views, ideas, and opinions of the participants (Maree, Creswell, Ebersohn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, Plano Clark, van der Westhuizen, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviews for this research were open-ended, to allow participants to freely share their experiences (Clandinin et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019; Maree et al., 2016; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). The unit of analysis in this study was the stories from the lecturers who I interviewed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The stories were analysed and ‘re-storied’ into a framework that makes sense (Creswell, 2007). During the process of re-storying, I was able to connect the important concepts that participants discussed into a bigger interpretative framework (Wagner et al., 2012). Making meaning of the data led to the development of a narrative about the stories of the participants’ life experiences (Creswell, 2007; Fouché et al., 2021). These narratives provided insight into understanding how the lecturers view and experience the hidden curriculum. The narrative outcome is therefore used to enable a more holistic understanding of the theories and existing literature on the hidden curriculum (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1.5. Overview table

An overview table adapted from Maxwell and Smyth (2011) is inserted below as a visual representation of the study:
Table 1-1 Overview table adapted from Maxwell and Smyth (2011)

**Research aim/question:** What are lecturers’ experiences of the hidden curriculum in their classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarifying the ‘what’</th>
<th>An approach to the ‘how’, keeping track of ‘why’ with benefits for ‘how well’</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article/Chapter</strong></td>
<td><strong>Objectives/sub-questions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Article 1 – Chapter 2</strong></td>
<td>What does the existing literature tell us about the hidden curriculum, specifically the teaching of the hidden curriculum?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do lecturers’ stories of teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 2 – Chapter 3</td>
<td>How do lecturers’ stories of online teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do lecturers’ stories of online teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative inquiry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6. Chaptering

The study was designed to produce a thesis by publication. A suitable structure to adopt for a thesis by publication is an introduction and conclusion chapter that encase the articles which are positioned within the centre of the thesis (Mason & Merga, 2018). Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are therefore both written in article format. Chapters 2 and 3 each contain a relevant literature review, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion (Mason & Merga, 2018). Neither Chapter 2 or Chapter 3 have been submitted or published elsewhere and form part of a coherent whole in this instance, which is the thesis. As the articles in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are unpublished, and to allow for a more seamless flow between chapters, they do not contain individual reference lists. An overall, integrated reference list for all chapters is presented at the end of the thesis to avoid unnecessary duplication of references.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Overview of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 [Article 1]</td>
<td>The hidden curriculum: A conceptual framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 [Article 2]</td>
<td>Lecturer stories of the hidden curriculum at a private higher education institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Conclusions and possible implications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum will be presented in Chapter 2. The curriculum and the curriculum in South Africa were relevant concepts to consider in creating an appropriate framework for the hidden curriculum. The development of the hidden curriculum, the recognition of the hidden curriculum within higher education, and different perspectives of the hidden curriculum were considered. Focus was further given to private higher education institutions and the influence of the world of work and the lecturer on the hidden curriculum.

A narrative study of the hidden curriculum is presented in Chapter 3. Lecturers were interviewed to share their stories of the hidden curriculum in their classrooms. The conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum developed in Chapter 2 provided me with a theoretical perspective for lecturers.

The conclusions and possible implications of the study are discussed in Chapter 4.
1.7. Ethical clearance

The ethical clearance (Appendix A) was obtained from Stellenbosch University (reference number 17374). I also obtained institutional permission from the institution within which the study was situated. All the relevant documentation (application forms, informed consent forms, interview schedules) were submitted for approval for ethical clearance and institutional permission. Thereafter the participants were approached to request their participation in the study. I obtained signed written informed consent forms (Appendix B) from each of the participants before commencing with the interviews. A pilot interview was conducted, to enable me to ascertain if the proposed questions created formed an appropriate platform for lecturers to share their stories, and to ensure that the interview had the required ‘conversational tone’. My supervisor formed part of the pilot interview as an observer and gave feedback to refine my interviewing skills.

Further ethical considerations when conducting social science research were considered for this study. Tracy’s (2010) criteria for ensuring excellent qualitative research was also upheld. The ethical considerations considered include ensuring voluntary participation, doing no harm to participants, ensuring confidentiality, avoiding deception, applying care and diligence to data analysis, and a commitment to be honest and truthful when reporting data. Voluntary participation states that no person should be forced to participate, and all information about the study should be shared with the participants. Participants were assured they could take part or withdraw at any stage during the study without consequence. Specific to narrative studies, voluntary participation is key, as participants had to be willing to share their stories with me. I explained to the lecturers involved clearly what the aim of the research project was. I made it clear to them that they were respected and not judged, and that nothing that they said would be considered as ‘wrong’. I tried to portray clearly that I was merely interested in their stories of the hidden curriculum in their teaching. Context on the hidden curriculum was provided to lecturers to enable them to share their experiences of the hidden curriculum. No harm to participants concerns the revealing of information about the participants that could potentially harm or embarrass them. I did not share any information in the study that could harm or embarrass the participants. Deception in research would occur when the identity of the researcher is concealed. Deception does not apply to this study, as I provided all participants with an introduction to myself and the reasons for the study. Confidentiality is guaranteed when the researcher can identify the participants’ responses but promises not to do so publicly.
Anonymity could not be guaranteed, as the selected lecturers are all known to me, but I could guarantee confidentiality as I did not include narrative data that could identify the specific institution or any specific lecturer. Pseudonyms were given to the participants. Confidentiality was upheld by conducting interviews in private, and only my supervisor and I had access to the interview data. Interviews were scheduled in consultation with the participants, to ensure the interview was scheduled at a convenient time for the participants. All ten participants scheduled the interviews during working hours. The interviews all lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. Open-ended, broad questions (Annexure D) were used to allow participants to share their stories of their experience of the hidden curriculum. The interviews were conducted via electronic communication (Microsoft Teams), as there are current restrictions in place for face-to-face data collection due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These interviews were recorded digitally, transcribed personally, and saved on a cloud-based application that is password protected. Raw data collected was electronically backed up on my computer but not shared or forwarded to anyone. Only aggregated, analysed, and anonymised data was reported in this thesis. A careful approach to data analysis and reporting was given, and I upheld the commitment on my part, to be honest, and truthful.

The conceptual framework (presented in Chapter 2) was used to interpret and understand the participants’ narratives. Babbie and Mouton (2001) recommend collecting rich data, transcribing interviews verbatim, giving participants a ‘voice’ and analysing data with rigour, and leaving an audit trail. For narrative studies specifically, it is ethical to allow the participants to have a look at their data and the interpretations derived from it and offer their views regarding it before finalising the study (Loh, 2013). Credibility and transferability (Tracy, 2010) of the study was assured through adopting a process of member checking by taking the final report or themes back to the participants (Creswell, 2014; Fouché et al., 2021) to offer them an opportunity to provide context and an alternative interpretation (Patton, 2002). The final research report, as requested, was also provided to the institution that granted institutional permission.

Further considerations by Tracy (2010) were to ensure worthiness of the topic of study. Literature reviewed (see Chapter 1 section 1.1. and 1.2) indicates the relevance and significance of this topic in higher education, as well as the contribution that research on the hidden curriculum can make to the existing body of literature. Rigour and attention to meaningful
coherence were furthermore applied throughout the theoretical component and data collection processes of this study. Lastly, my subjective and contextual position towards the research topic is relevant to note to ensure the sincerity of the research process.

1.8. Conclusion

The importance and relevance of the hidden curriculum in higher education were illustrated. However, the hidden curriculum has remained a challenging concept to understand and define for many role players in higher education. Due to the subjective and situational nature of the hidden curriculum, research should be approached pragmatically. An interpretivist paradigm is an appropriate approach to research such a dynamic, subjective concept. Three research questions were identified that will be addressed in two articles (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). A conceptual framework will guide towards an increased understanding of the hidden curriculum. Empirical research, following a narrative inquiry approach, will be used to gain insight into lecturers’ understanding and experience of the hidden curriculum in their classroom. This study contributes to a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum in higher education.
Chapter 2
The hidden curriculum: A conceptual framework [Article 1]

Abstract

The hidden curriculum has proven to be a challenging concept to understand and define. However, it remains an integral part of the curriculum within higher education. The literature reviewed below addresses the development and different perspectives of the hidden curriculum. Specific focus was given to the hidden curriculum in private higher education, as the hidden curriculum is subjective and situational. The curriculum as the foundation of the hidden curriculum, the influence of the world of work as well as the lecturer on the hidden curriculum were further dimensions that were considered, to enable a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum. The conceptual framework was developed by making use of concept mapping. The conceptual framework outlines the interplay of different elements on the hidden curriculum, thereby demonstrating the relational and dynamic nature of the hidden curriculum. The framework also identifies the need for further research to enable a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum.

2.1. Introduction

Students learn more from teaching (and the educational setting) than the subject-related knowledge that they are required to learn (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Li, 2019). As a lecturer, I have often reflected on what else students are taught, over and above subject knowledge. Discovering the concept of the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968), led to the realisation that the reflection (regarding what else students are ‘taught’) had a name. However, in researching the hidden curriculum, it was found that even though the hidden curriculum seems present throughout all levels of education (Ahola, 2000; Jones & Young, 1997; Margolis, 2001; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018; Pitts, 2003; Sambell & McDowell, 1998), it has been a concept that has remained challenging to define and understand (Thielsch, 2017). Preliminary reading and informal conversations with colleagues highlighted that many lecturers do not know that the hidden curriculum exists (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018; Pitts, 2003). More concerning is that these lecturers then also do not know what they potentially teach their students through the hidden curriculum.
A hidden curriculum is a tool that should be utilised in the development of skills and competencies in students – skills and competencies that they need to enter the workforce (Gray, 2016; James, 2018). The hidden curriculum, therefore, needs to be conceptualised properly to be understood and harnessed deliberately by lecturers in their teaching, which is not currently the case. The hidden curriculum can furthermore be used to help students develop over and above the formally taught curriculum so that they can develop into employable graduates and contributing citizens of society.

The first step to utilise the hidden curriculum effectively in higher education is to have a better understanding of what the concept entails. In this study, literature was reviewed to understand the origins of the concept of the hidden curriculum and how it has developed over time, as well as the different factors that influence the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is highly flexible and contextual, and the definition and enactment of the hidden curriculum often differ from the time and location that it was enacted (Margolis, 2001; Thielbach, 2017). Given the situational nature of the hidden curriculum, it was appropriate to adopt a process of concept mapping to enable the development of a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum (Maxwell, 2005). The visual representation of the conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum is useful to provide a simple, accessible overview; something that was found lacking in the current literature on the hidden curriculum. The framework forms a useful conceptual tool for future empirical research, to enable a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum (see Chapter 3 of this thesis for an example of such an application).

2.2. Identifying the key concepts in literature

Relevant concepts that were considered were the curriculum as the foundation of the hidden curriculum, the development of the hidden curriculum, the world of work as an influence on the hidden curriculum, as well as the lecturer influence on the hidden curriculum.

The curriculum

The notion of curriculum incorporates a wide variety of concepts (Mgqwashu, 2016) that is centred on the totality of the student experience that occurs within the educational context (Kelly, 2009; Pinar, 2004). The term ‘curriculum’ has its origins in Latin and can be translated as a ‘course to be run’ (Bitzer & Botha, 2011: 60) or more figuratively, a journey of learning (Ross, 2000). The term curriculum was first used by the University of Glasgow in 1633 to refer
to the intended ‘course of study’ and developed to describe the complete course of study and particular courses and their content (Kennedy, 2018). A curriculum is broadly regarded as what is worth experiencing, doing, and being (Parkay & Hass, 2000), therefore a curriculum is ‘what counts as valid knowledge’ (Bernstein 1975: 85). Tyler (1949) structured the notion of a curriculum as the mechanism that addresses the needs, concerns, and objectives of the educational leaders and communities within which they work. Taba (1962) and Schwab (1969) extended the notion of the curriculum to also incorporate philosophical and psychological perspectives; the curriculum being regarded as a social and political activity that requires judgement and action.

A curriculum exists to shape society and should serve the public good, it reflects the relations between education and society; and led to human nature being introduced as a focal point in curriculum planning (Costandius & Bitzer, 2015; Young, 1971). Bernstein (2000) summarises that a curriculum is determined by certain choices in a specific educational setting. A curriculum is therefore contextual and must always be interpreted within a specific ideological process (Smith, 2000). Ideology refers to a set of ideas, beliefs, and values that emerge from an identified interest group (Barthes, 2018; Bovill & Woolmer, 2019). White (1983) pointed out that there is no ideologically and politically innocent curriculum, and that any curriculum definition is inextricably linked to issues of social class, culture, gender, and power (Barthes, 2018; Bitzer & Botha, 2011).

Researching, understanding, and thinking critically about the curriculum is therefore crucial (Barnett, 2009; Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2016; Shay, 2015), as it is no different in thinking about the kind of world we want to bring about, and the kind of student development that would be fitting for such a world (Bitzer & Botha, 2011). A curriculum forms the bridge between education and the world of work and is understood to be an educational vehicle that promotes student development (Barnett, 2009). However, the curriculum remains a concept that is hard to define (Pitts, 2003; Smith, 2000).

Furthermore, the curriculum has been a contested topic within higher education in recent times, there have been continuous discussions regarding curriculum transformation (Barnett, 2009; Le Grange, 2016; Hall & Smyth, 2016; Mgqwashu, 2016; Mkabile-Masebe, 2017; Shay, 2015) and the need for a curriculum to remain relevant in terms of what it proposes to achieve. A curriculum in higher education needs to constantly develop, transform and address the existing
inequality in higher education as a curriculum is a channel that enables effective response to the ever-changing needs of students and society (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014; Shay, 2015). A curriculum should aim to be relevant, responsible, accessible, and appropriately scaffolded (Shay, 2015), as well as developing appropriate employability skills (Speight, Lackovic & Cooker, 2013). Certain other pressures also currently exist on the formal curriculum: social relevance, sustainable development, the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on learning, responsiveness to the world of work, and incorporating the need for entrepreneurship education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017; Lange, 2017). In a South African context, a curriculum should aim to contribute to the education and holistic development of students (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Mgqwashu, 2016). Studying consists of more than subject knowledge; students are instrumental in the process of knowledge building (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019), the obtaining of higher-order skills (Green, Hammer & Star, 2009), and the development of values (Mckimm & Barrow, 2009). Barnett (2009) argues that a curriculum should consist of a culmination between knowledge and skills. However, a third aspect in any curriculum is required, that of a student being and becoming. A curriculum should enable students to build their identity (Lange, 2017) to enable them to participate as responsible and contributing citizens in society, the economy, and political life (Hall & Smyth, 2016). It is evident that a curriculum is a complex system consisting of many elements. The curriculum should aim to create understandings and practices that initiate life-long learning. A curriculum, therefore, has far-reaching applications over and above that of subject-related knowledge, and it is noticeable that some aspects of curriculum development in students might go unnoticed or be hidden. A curriculum is not only what is written on paper, but also involves where and how it plays out on the ground (Bitzer & Botha, 2011). It is, therefore, crucial to distinguish between the curriculum as approved by an institution, and the curriculum as experienced by the student (Barnett, 2009; Bovill & Woolmer, 2019; Le Grange, 2016).

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7 The meaning and purpose of the higher education in the African context could also be relevant to address here. However, I purposefully did not widen the discussion on the curriculum as much as I would have liked to, or that literature provided me with, as not to lose focus on the hidden curriculum and purpose thereof within the curriculum.

8 The ‘ontological turn’ in higher education could be relevant to address here. However, it was not discussed in further detail as to not distract from the main focus of this Chapter i.e., to conceptualise the hidden curriculum, as an element of the curriculum. I believe that the hidden curriculum being uncovered and utilised more effectively (refer to conclusions in Chapter 4) can provide a good basis for the argument of higher education experiencing an ontological turn. The hidden curriculum can assist this ontological turn within higher education.
The hidden curriculum

In the late 20th century, global institutional transformation led to the uncovering (and increased importance) of the hidden curriculum, whereby the curriculum can sometimes unintentionally convey messages and specifically support inequalities such as race, class, and gender (Costandius & Bitzer, 2015). Bitzer and Botha (2011) refer to the hidden curriculum as the element of the curriculum that is the difference between what is formally included in curriculum documents and policies and what is happening during classroom interaction. The hidden curriculum has developed extensively in terms of the understanding of the concept. One feature that has become clear is that the hidden curriculum is an irreplaceable component of the curriculum, and a valuable resource in teaching and learning (Li, 2019). The curriculum is therefore an important starting point in the understanding of the hidden curriculum. The curriculum is a determining factor in the student learning experience and social relationships that exist within the learning environment. The student learning experience and social relationships within the classroom are regarded as the conceptual origin of the hidden curriculum (Dewey's (1938) principle of experience). The way the curriculum plays out in the classroom is what creates and develops the hidden curriculum. Yet the hidden curriculum continued to incorporate a broad range of ideas (Kentli, 2009), and there is no consensus on the exact definition of the term (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). It is, therefore, necessary to consider the origins and development of the concept, as well as the influence that various factors have on the experience and understanding of the hidden curriculum. Literature reviewed enabled the presentation of a framework of the hidden curriculum in private higher education, demonstrating the importance of the various factors influencing our understanding and enactment of the hidden curriculum.

Dewey (1916) explored the broad idea of a hidden curriculum in his book *Democracy and Education* where he noticed certain patterns evolving and trends developing in public schools. He put forward the view of ‘collateral learning’ and the ‘principle of experience’ (Dewey, 1934, 1938) holding that what students learn from the formal learning experience is only part of learning (Li, 2019). Learning experiences arise not only from the transmission of abstract ideas but also from social relationships (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). Freire (1970) and Vygotsky (1978) are key advocates of the importance of social relationships in learning. The result of collateral learning is knowledge acquired unconsciously, and the function thereof can sometimes even succeed that of formal learning (Jansen, 2018; Li, 2019). There are experiences
generated during formal learning, such as principles, emotions, attitudes, interests, values, and acquiring the will to learn. It is argued that these skills are timeless and can bring about lifelong learning (Li, 2019).

The hidden curriculum, as a concept, was formulated by Jackson (1968) in his book *Life in Classrooms*, in the secondary school environment, as a response to mass-schooling in the 1950s and onwards that proved to be ineffective in eliminating class, racial, and gender inequalities. Schools seemed to play a role in reinforcing these divides. He argued that education needs to be understood as a socialisation process and that institutional expectations (the hidden curriculum) are equally as important as academic expectations when assessing the demands of school life (Jackson, 1968). Jackson (1968) referred to the hidden curriculum as rules and regulations that regulate classroom life. It is evident that the hidden curriculum has its origins in the inequalities and social norms that existed in the school environment⁹. The hidden curriculum was referred to as the way that classroom experience unfolded in practice.

Snyder's (1971) book *The Hidden Curriculum* brought about the first inquiry of the hidden curriculum within higher education. Snyder addressed the question of why students turn away from education. He believed that the majority of campus conflict and students’ anxiety was caused by a mass of unstated academic and social norms, that prevented students to develop independently or think creatively. Snyder demonstrated the hidden curriculum to exist, and that it supplements (and often overshadows) the formal curriculum. Snyder’s research convinced him that the hidden curriculum provides the basis for student self-esteem and subsequent career performance, and lecturers play a crucial role. Lecturers’ attitudes towards the role of education (producing daring thinkers or merely producing competent technicians) can have a significant impact on the delivery and experience of the hidden curriculum (Makowski, 1971). Thereafter, the concept of the hidden curriculum was quickly taken up by educational scholars to address the issue of the ‘non-academic functions and effects’ of schooling (Martin, 1976; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018).

However, the concept of the hidden curriculum was still mainly researched at a primary and secondary school level (Margolis, 2001). It was generally assumed that the hidden curriculum

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⁹ Literature consulted demonstrated the wide-reaching negative connotation of the hidden curriculum. However, the position has since shifted. The focus of the study was to understand the value that enhanced hidden curriculum awareness can bring to teaching.
mainly existed at the school level since students are younger and when they reach higher education they are already formed in their thinking and behaviour (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). Bergenhenegouwen (1987) changed this viewpoint and positioned the hidden curriculum as a crucial element of higher education. He defined the hidden curriculum as ‘what is implied in the principles and organization of the education, and the patterns of communication and interaction in school’ (Bergenhenegouwen, 1987:535). He refers to the phenomenon of the hidden curriculum as ‘implicit education’, including everything that is learnt beyond what is considered the official learning result. In higher education, the hidden curriculum can be described as informal and implicit demands of study and study achievements that need to be met (Bergenhenegouwen, 1987). These informal and implicit demands relate to skills and qualities that will give students a proper study attitude, good mentality, and scientific outlook. Bergenhenegouwen (1987) explained these informal demands of study as follow:

1. **Intellectual reasoning and logical argumentation**: students learn to show a business-like and detached attitude concerning the subjects of study. Study subjects should be raised beyond the students’ worldview and position.

2. **Abstraction**: students learn to master theoretical constructions, professional jargon, and abstract concepts. This is the way the subject is taught and often assessed.

3. **Independent thinking**: students learn confidence and giving little or no evidence of anxiety, nervousness, or feelings of uncertainty.

4. **Motivation**: satisfaction is gained from achieving more and getting better results than others. Achievement fosters competitiveness and a sense of self-esteem.

Several studies since Bergenhenegouwen (1987) recognise the presence and importance of the hidden curriculum at a higher education level (Ahola, 2000; Jones & Young, 1997; Margolis, 2001; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018; Pitts, 2003; Sambell & McDowell, 1998). For example, in medical education, the hidden curriculum helps shape the moral component (Lempp & Seale, 2004; Ssebunnya, 2013; Yüksel, 2005), the development of humanism (Martimianakis, Michalec, Lam, *et al.*, 2015), and professionalism (Hafferty & Castellani, 2009); while in management education, ethical practices were introduced and promoted by using the hidden curriculum (Blasco, 2012; McCabe & Trevino, 1995). In a study on the hidden curriculum in a university music department, it was highlighted that the responsibility of the lecturer goes far beyond the ‘official’ curriculum (Pitts, 2003). It is evident that the academic, social, and personal development of students are closely intertwined. Pitts (2003) further states that the
development of students through the hidden curriculum should be approached consciously, as existing social norms within education can often prevent independent and creative thinking. It is also clear that the lessons learnt from the hidden curriculum can be a contributing factor to students’ future career performance.

The hidden curriculum enables valuable insights into the implicit aspects of educational settings and encourages insight into the interactional nature of education (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). The hidden curriculum has proven to be critical to the teaching and learning of values and ideologies (Margolis, 2001). Portelli (1993) identified four major meanings of the hidden curriculum concept, including the unofficial or implicit expectations, values, norms, and messages conveyed by school actors; the unintended learning outcomes; the implicit messages stemming from the structure of schooling; and/or the criteria that the students identify as important to meet to be rewarded. The central idea remains that the hidden curriculum is always concerned with expressing a relationship (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018).

The literature reviewed so far points to the hidden curriculum being a highly flexible system, taking on slightly different meanings, depending on the institution and the type of students that it refers to (Margolis, 2001; Thielsch, 2017). Sambell and McDowell (1998) hold the view that the hidden curriculum is what is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about the curriculum and the surface factors of educational interactions. At a micro-level, the hidden curriculum is expressed in terms of the distinction between what is meant to happen (what is officially stated in the curriculum), and what lecturers and students do and experience. The hidden curriculum can therefore be understood as the difference between what is explicitly taught in institutions, and the reality of what students learn. In higher education specifically, this can consist of the values and beliefs of the institution and beliefs of the lecturer that are transmitted to the student, thereby affecting what the student learns, over and above the formal curriculum (Winter & Cotton, 2012). A similar definition suggests that the hidden curriculum is a side-effect of education, lessons that are learned but not openly intended, such as the transmissions of norms, values, and beliefs conveyed in the classroom and social environment (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005). Through the hidden curriculum, students pick up an approach to living and an attitude to learning.
In one of the few empirical studies on the practice of the hidden curriculum, Gair and Mullins (2001) researched the hidden curriculum experience at a higher education institution in the United States of America. Their research confirmed the wide variety of notions that the hidden curriculum incorporates. Gair and Mullins (2001) identified certain themes regarding the understanding of the hidden curriculum: Firstly, the hidden curriculum is not hidden at all but is enacted effortlessly in the manner that the university functions on a daily basis. This hints at the notion that the hidden curriculum needs to be uncovered deliberately to think about the messages that the institution conveys through the hidden curriculum. Secondly, the physical environment of the university conveys a hidden curriculum, an example being certain architectural structures being regarded to honour certain histories and convey political agendas. Tor (2015) confirms the existence of the hidden curriculum within the physical environment of an institution, an aspect that was also prevalent during the #feesmustfall movement in South Africa (London, 2017). Thirdly, the hidden curriculum is mediated through human beings. Orón Semper and Blasco (2018) confirms this relational nature of the hidden curriculum and the notion that lecturers and students are important role players in the understanding and enactment of the hidden curriculum. Fourthly, certain practices, missions, cultures, perspectives, attitudes and ideologies that are regarded as acceptable in a specific institutional environment. This demonstrates that the hidden curriculum is subjective and should be researched within a specific institutional context. Gair and Mullins (2001) provided important literature to further the understanding of the hidden curriculum, however, there is a need for more current, contextual research on the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is subjective and dynamic, and more recent research can assist in a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum. Furthermore, given the hidden curriculum functions per institution, the public or private nature of higher education institutions are relevant to consider.

Contextualising the hidden curriculum within private higher education

Martin (1976) presented the idea that there is no universal hidden curriculum, but that the hidden curriculum is subjective and situational. When the defining characteristics of the hidden curriculum (such as setting, learning activities) change, so too will the hidden curriculum. Gair and Mullins (2001) confirm the notion that the hidden curriculum is enacted and experienced in a specific institutional environment and considering a different kind of educational institution provides necessary contextualisation to further the understanding of the hidden curriculum. My context and the context of this study is that of a lecturer in a private higher
education institution. It is practice for the private higher education institution that contextualises this study to appoint lecturers with industry experience in their field. Part of the vision of the private higher education institution is to develop employable graduates, and it is believed that lecturers with industry experience will assist with this. Wiranto and Slameto (2021) confirm the importance of lecturers with professional experience in private higher education.

Kujawska-Lis and Lis-Kujawski (2005), in their study on the hidden curriculum in private higher education, confirm that the hidden curriculum should be referred to per institution, keeping in mind that institutions function in a given time and place, among given people. The hidden curriculum can be analysed through discovering and interpreting various aspects of educational practices within institutions. It is therefore relevant to consider the public or private (non-public) nature of the institution, as the institutional goals might differ. The aim of a private higher education institution is financial gain through selling educational services, it participates in a market system and competes for ‘clients’ with public higher education institutions (Chan, 2016; Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005).

The world of work influencing the hidden curriculum

Orón Semper and Blasco (2018) illustrate the current relevance of the hidden curriculum in higher education: Higher education has been an area of focus recently due to the shift being made towards a system of efficiency, standardisation, productivity, and the reproducing of social and economic inequalities (Bennett & Brady, 2014; Zajda & Rust, 2016). Students are regarded as human capital and curriculum delivery is understood as value-neutral and has become a system of testable knowledge, performable skills, and competencies that are assessed through explicit learning objectives (Lundie, 2016; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Therefore, there has been an increasing aim to standardise the objectives and outcomes of learning, with the result that higher education is being tailored to meet the demands of the labour market (Karseth & Solbrekke, 2016; Zajda & Rust, 2016). Education then becomes a matter of purely technical transmission of knowledge, and the teacher-student relationship can easily be disregarded or ignored. It is impossible to eliminate the lecturer and the student from the learning equation (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). The lecturer’s features, experiences and relationships, differences in learning contexts, and the rich diversity of unexpected, ‘collateral learning’ can result from the encounter between lecturer and student (Dewey, 1938).
There is a ‘distance’ between education and life, and the hidden curriculum can be used to bridge that distance (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). A greater focus should be placed on the hidden curriculum: Lecturers should be made aware that their teaching is a personal issue that can assist in building the interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students. Being aware of the hidden curriculum within higher education will also help to achieve the learning outcomes that are relevant and needed (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). Many aspects of the curriculum are ‘hidden’, not just in their messages but in their effects; and the responsibility of ensuring that these are sustaining and enhancing students’ confidence, self-esteem, and development are worthy of greater attention (Pitts, 2003). To reveal the hidden curriculum is to research it through discovering, analysing, and interpreting various aspects of the educational practices within the institution (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005; Tor, 2015). To achieve this aim, researchers analyse the teaching processes and look at the policies of higher education institutions (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005).

The hidden curriculum is an irreplaceable and valuable resource in teaching and learning. The hidden curriculum is furthermore embedded in all educational experiences. Through the hidden curriculum, students pick up an approach to living and an attitude to learning, which in turns prepare them for the world of work and the development into contributing citizens of society – which can be summarised as the learning experiences being ‘relevant’ and enables students to be prepared for life. From the literature reviewed on the nature and purpose of the hidden curriculum (Ahola, 2000; Blasco, 2012; Gray, 2016; Hafferty & Castellani, 2009; James, 2018; Li, 2019; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018), I propose that there is a relationship between the ‘world of work’ and the ‘hidden curriculum’. These skills that students need to develop, can furthermore be used to inform the type of hidden curriculum that lecturers teach.

The lecturer influencing the hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum is transferred in various ways (Portelli, 1993). Lecturer conduct is one of the key factors that determine the hidden curriculum (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Knowles, 1973; Li, 2019; Peters, 1966). Material aspects that transmit the hidden curriculum include textbooks, buildings, classroom layout, and campus environment (Tor, 2015). The spiritual aspect of hidden curriculum transmission includes ideology, style of study, and lecturers’ educational philosophy, knowledge outlook, values, teaching guidance, and teaching style (Li, 2019). The spiritual aspect is determined by the interpersonal relationships between lecturers and students.
Lecturers convey social and moral messages through punishment and reward that they set up and by way of the influence that they have (Yüksel, 2005). Margolis (2001:106) describes this as lecturers being the ‘discourse of authority’, an authorised language in itself. Lecturers, therefore, bear pedagogic authority. An example from Tyson (2014) is lecturers that teach students how to speak to others in a polite and respectful tone. It is evident that lecturers play a crucial role in the manifestation of the hidden curriculum and were, therefore, an important dimension to research to enable a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum. It is valuable that lecturers should understand the important role they (and the transmission of the hidden curriculum) play in developing their students into daring thinkers.

James (2018), although writing from the school perspective, provides valuable insight into the teaching of the hidden curriculum and that it is essential in developing the necessary graduate competencies. Employers require soft skills such as grit, resilience, self-mastery, communication, and emotional intelligence. Teaching social, emotional, and behavioural skills can provide students with the competencies that they need to be professionally (and personally) fulfilled in the future (James, 2018). It is imperative to promote effective teaching (of the hidden curriculum) so that students can be provided with a holistic learning experience (Su & Wood, 2012). Making the hidden curriculum explicit through the mission and vision statement of the institution is not enough (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018), it is necessary to assess the lecturer enactment of the hidden curriculum through lecturer reflection (Smith-Han, 2013) and analysing teaching processes. Given the dynamic nature of the hidden curriculum, it is furthermore shaped by lecturers sharing their understanding and experience of the hidden curriculum in their classroom.

Student experiences illustrated that the hidden curriculum consist of attitudes, beliefs, and values that are picked up in class (Ahola, 2000). Examples such as enthusiasm, perseverance, time management, and critical thinking were mentioned in the research. The hidden curriculum, therefore, impacts the student learning experience and the social relationships that exist in the learning environment, and that in turn informs and extends our understanding of the hidden curriculum. Through the skills that were mentioned, the lecturer also has the potential to utilise the hidden curriculum to develop much-needed graduate competencies to prepare students for life and enabling them to become contributing citizens to society (Gray, 2016; James, 2018).
2.3. Methodology

Concept mapping is a structured conceptualisation methodology that can be used to develop a conceptual framework to guide evaluation or planning (Trochim, 1989). Concept mapping enables the development and clarification of theory (Maxwell, 2005) through organising and representing ideas stemming from a specific concept (the hidden curriculum) (Machado & Carvalho, 2020; Rosas & Kane, 2012). Concept mapping is a tool for the development and presentation of a conceptual framework (Conceição et al., 2017; DeBlieck et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a conceptual framework as a visual or written product, developed from theory, that explains the main concepts and the presumed relationships between them (Glatthorn, 1998; Leshem, 2007).

A concept map consists of two things: Concepts, and the relationships among the concepts (Maxwell, 2005; Watson, 1989; Wilson, Mandich & Magalhães, 2016). Concept maps can have several purposes: To pull together and make the implicit theory visible, or to clarify existing theory, its limitations, and relevance for the study. A conceptual framework can be presented using a concept map. The conceptual framework identifies the concepts identified within a complex topic and it shows the relationships between the concepts – these relationships can be visually represented in a flowchart or other type of graphic. Concept maps can also be used to develop theory – it can help the researcher to see unexpected connections, identify gaps in a theory and help figure out ways to resolve such gaps (Davis, 2011). The starting point in a concept map is a focus question that acts as a point of reference from which the concept map is generated (Franc, Haenni, Ybarra, et al., 2004). It can refer to some situation or event (in this study the hidden curriculum) that the researcher is trying to better understand and creates the context for the concept map (Franc et al., 2004; Watson, 1989; Wilson et al., 2016).

Maxwell (2005) outlines the process to follow when developing a concept map. Below is the approach that was adopted for this study.

1. Generate the main concepts relevant to the study (Wilson et al., 2016). Reference was made to the literature reviewed and the key concepts on the hidden curriculum (discussed above) to help identify the key ideas in the literature. The main concepts are developed by using the main ideas that would come to mind when discussing the topic with another person.
2. Once the main concepts are generated, it was questioned how these concepts are related. The overlapping circles represent the interplay between concepts or events. There was a constant reflection regarding what the overlaps between concepts stand for.

3. Brainstorm different ways of putting the concepts and arrows together. The diagram can be done by hand or through computer programs (Conceição et al., 2017). Draft versions of the concepts were drawn by hand, before building it manually on a computer programme (Microsoft Powerpoint).

4. A narrative or memo is used to clarify what the concept map says about the topic that is being studied.

The meaning created in the concept map is subjective, seeing as that concept maps are created in response to understanding a particular phenomenon (Wilson et al., 2016). Maxwell (2005) confirms that there is no one correct concept map for a topic that is being studied, different maps incorporate different understandings of what is going on. The concept map is not an end in itself, it is a tool for developing theory and making that theory more explicit (Wilson et al., 2016). Through making use of a concept map, it allows for the development of conceptual appreciations from the literature, considering the researcher’s professional experience and personal reflection (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). It is furthermore crucial to progress beyond descriptive accounts of theory to the conceptualisation of underlying theoretical perspectives (Leshem, 2007). Thinking and drawing on personal experience will generate theoretical perspectives on the topic from which a conceptual framework will emerge (Trafford & Leshem, 2009). A conceptual framework is a key part of the research design, it supports and informs the research design through making concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories about the study explicit (Maxwell, 2005; Trafford & Leshem, 2009). The conceptual framework informs the rest of the research, it stands as a tentative theory of the topic that is being studied (Leshem & Trafford, 2007).

There are possible limitations when developing a conceptual framework. Becker (2007) cautions that using existing literature to develop a conceptual framework can easily lead to misrepresentations in the way that the research is framed, as well as certain conceptualisations and implications being overlooked by the researcher. It can be a challenge to view a theory from a different perspective than those that are prevalent in literature. Furthermore, the researcher can experience challenges when trying to fit new insights into an existing framework.
– this can distort the argument and weaken the logic, making it harder to see possible contributions of new insights (Maxwell, 2005). According to Conceição et al. (2017), another possible limitation exists with the researcher being the main tool of analysis. Researcher subjectivity is present with the identification of key concepts and the establishment of relationships between the concepts as it is all dependent on the researcher’s perspective. According to Bal et al. (2010: 323) “different researchers may arrive at different understandings of the same map”. Maxwell (2005) further states that a common limitation for concept maps are the links between concepts that can represent several things, and the meaning thereof is not distinguishable by just looking at the map. A narrative or memo of the concept map is required to interpret the map properly (Maxwell, 2005).

Possible limitations were addressed in this study by providing a narrative to the developed conceptual framework and outlining what the overlaps between the concepts represent. I furthermore acknowledge that I was informed by my perspectives and current understanding of the hidden curriculum. My contextual framework meant that private higher education and the lecturer element of the hidden curriculum are the dimensions that were focused on when relevant literature was consulted. It should also be noted that notions of the hidden curriculum exist throughout educational literature, however, for this study, I focused on literature that specifically addressed the hidden curriculum in higher education. The conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum can be used as a framework for empirical research on the hidden curriculum, thereby potentially providing further conceptualisations and new insights.

The first step in the preparation of a concept map is to decide on an appropriate research question to ultimately enable the developed conceptual framework to answer the research question (Vaughn et al., 2017). The development of a conceptual framework is guided by a realistic and relevant research question (Maxwell, 2005). Given that the hidden curriculum has proven to be a challenging topic to define and understand (Thielsch, 2017), the research question for creating the conceptual framework was:

*What does the existing literature tell us about the hidden curriculum, specifically the teaching of the hidden curriculum?*
The key concepts that emerged for the concept mapping, were discussed in the literature review above. These key concepts were used to map the hidden curriculum in private higher education.

2.4. Mapping the hidden curriculum in private higher education

Adopting the concept mapping approach by taking the literature reviewed above and inferences drawn from the literature into consideration, a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum in private higher education was developed. The relational and reciprocal nature of the hidden curriculum is demonstrated as the hidden curriculum is dynamic, subjective, and often takes on slightly different meanings depending on the time and place it is enacted. The hidden curriculum (in the context of private higher education) is built on the overlap between the interplay between the formal curriculum, the world of work, and the lecturer as the catalyst between these core elements that influence the enactment and experience of the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is made visible through students’ learning experiences through the lecturer’s enactment of the formal curriculum. The hidden curriculum provides the teaching of relevant skills through the lecturer’s understanding and experience of the world of work (which is emphasised in private higher education as described in the contextualisation provided earlier in this article). The development of graduate competencies is a key component of the hidden curriculum, and the development of graduate competencies is supported when the formal curriculum and the world of work meet in a meaningful way (as enacted by the lecturer’s input). Figure 1 illustrates that if there is a balanced harmony between these different elements within a private higher education context, the hidden curriculum can make a meaningful contribution to student learning and development, the development of much-needed graduate competencies, and the lecturer’s teaching experience/professional development. This furthermore demonstrates the importance of uncovering and enacting the hidden curriculum within different educational settings. The conceptualising of the hidden curriculum (figure 1) is presented below:
The hidden curriculum is presented as a crucial component within education, connecting the formal curriculum, the world of work, and the lecturer. The framework (figure 1) illustrates the main elements identified in literature, that guide towards the relational and reciprocal nature of the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is an irreplaceable element in the enactment of the curriculum, and a valuable resource in teaching and learning. The lecturer forms an integral part of the enactment of the curriculum. Furthermore, the world of work requires students to learn relevant skills and competencies. These skills and competencies can be demonstrated and incorporated into the classroom through hidden curriculum teaching. This illustrates the need to place the hidden curriculum in greater focus in higher education and make the hidden curriculum more explicit within higher education so that the hidden curriculum can be used more deliberately and effectively.

Figure 1: A conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum

*Terms in italics refer to concepts presented in the framework (figure 1)*
Outward of the *hidden curriculum*, the shape that is formed between *graduate competencies, relevance, and the student learning experience* make up the student or student development in higher education. The *formal curriculum* refers to skills and knowledge that students should attain. These skills and knowledge should aid in the holistic development of students, be relevant, and foster lifelong learning. *The world of work* is a valuable tool in ascertaining the skills and knowledge that are crucial graduate competencies that students need to successfully enter the workplace. The world of work influences the relevance and responsiveness of the curriculum. There is an identified gap between the world of work and the curriculum, and the hidden curriculum can be used to bridge that gap. *The lecturer* demonstrates the important role that the lecturer plays, over and above that of the formal curriculum. Lecturers with industry experience are able to identify, demonstrate and teach relevant skills to students through the hidden curriculum. The lecturer forms a central part of the social relationships in the classroom, the ‘the principle of experience’ and overall student development. Lecturers are valuable tools in the teaching of relevant competencies that students require to be professionally and personally fulfilled.

### 2.5. Conclusions

The literature reviewed provided a theoretical framework for the understanding of the hidden curriculum. The context of this study was the hidden curriculum in private higher education. Specific focus was given to the curriculum as the foundation of the hidden curriculum, the hidden curriculum in higher education, the world of work as an influence on the hidden curriculum, and the lecturer as an influence on the hidden curriculum. Reviewing literature on the key concepts of the hidden curriculum enabled me to adopt a process of concept mapping to create a conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum. The conceptual framework (figure 1) illustrates the importance and relevance of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education setting. I argued that the lecturer enactment of the hidden curriculum can develop much-needed graduate competencies to enable students to develop into contributing citizens of society. It is evident that the hidden curriculum can make a meaningful contribution to student learning and development, the development of graduate competencies, and the lecturer’s teaching experience/professional development. The hidden curriculum should therefore be uncovered and harnessed deliberately. Further empirical research on the enactment and
experience of the hidden curriculum is necessary to enable a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum.
Chapter 3

Lecturer stories of the hidden curriculum at a private higher education institution [Article 2]

Abstract

The hidden curriculum is embedded in all levels of education, and an integral part of higher education. However, the hidden curriculum remains a challenging concept to understand and define. Furthermore, the teaching of the hidden curriculum is regarded as one of the dimensions of the hidden curriculum. The focus of this study was the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum within a private higher education context, as research on the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum (particularly in this context) is limited. The nature of the hidden curriculum is situational and subjective, and therefore the nature of private higher education was a relevant dimension to consider. A narrative methodology was adopted for this study. The analysed data provided valuable information regarding the importance of lecturer reflection, the relevance of private higher education institutions, and the main areas that lecturers enact the hidden curriculum in their classrooms. This study contributes to a more holistic understanding of the enactment of the hidden curriculum in private higher education, and what lecturers experience the hidden curriculum to be.

3.1. Introduction

The hidden curriculum is that set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behaviour and attitudes that students experience in and through educational processes. These messages may be contradictory, non-linear, and punctual and each student mediates the message in her/his own way (Skelton, 1997:188).

The hidden curriculum has proven to be subjective and situational (Martin, 1976; Oztok, 2013). The hidden curriculum is thus a highly flexible system. The meaning of the hidden curriculum can differ, depending on the institution and the kind of students it serves (Margolis, 2001; Thielsch, 2017). The hidden curriculum is referred to per institution seeing as that institutions function in a specific place and time, and within a specific setting (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-
Kujawski, 2005). It follows that the structure and institutional goals of a private higher education institution might differ from that of public institutions (where the majority of published studies on the hidden curriculum are situated). There is currently limited literature on the hidden curriculum in specifically private higher education institutions (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005).

The aim of a private higher education institution is financial gain through selling educational services. Private higher education institutions participate in a free-market context and compete for students with public higher education institutions. Yet Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski (2005) found that lecturers in their study did not view knowledge and education as mere commodities that should be governed by market forces, thus creating an interesting context for studying their understanding and experience of the hidden curriculum. Lecturers play a crucial role in the manifestation of the hidden curriculum. Yet current literature focuses more on the student experience of the hidden curriculum, even though the teaching element represents a crucial dimension of the hidden curriculum. Lecturers’ storied experiences of teaching in a private higher education institution formed the unit of analysis in this study. Allowing lecturers to reflect on their teaching through storytelling enabled me to consider how the hidden curriculum manifested in their face-to-face and online teaching practice. The questions that guided the study were:

1. **How do lecturers’ stories of teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?**

2. **How do lecturers’ stories of online teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?**

**Conceptual background**

A conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum in private higher education was developed in Chapter 2 (refer to figure 1). The framework illustrates the dynamic, relational and reciprocal nature of the hidden curriculum. It was furthermore pointed out that the hidden curriculum is situational and subjective, confirming the need to conduct empirical research in a specific contextual setting (a private higher education institution in this study). The lecturer, the world of work, and the formal curriculum were identified as key components that influence the
enactment and experience of the hidden curriculum. Lecturer conduct is one of the key factors that determine the hidden curriculum (Bitzer & Botha, 2011; Knowles, 1973; Li, 2019; Peters, 1966). ‘It is the teacher who teaches, not the official documents’ (Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018:490). The hidden curriculum contributes to a holistic learning experience, and it is confirmed to be a concept that is taught by the lecturer. Making it explicit through the mission and vision statement of the institution is not enough (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). However, most of the current empirical research focuses more on the student perspective (Blasco, 2012; Lempp & Seale, 2004; Pitts, 2003). Margolis (2001) and Yüksel (2005) confirm the importance of lecturers as a factor of the hidden curriculum, and this supports the value that lecturer input on the hidden curriculum experience can make.

Furthermore, necessary preparation for the world of work is demonstrated as an outcome of the lecturer enactment of the hidden curriculum. James (2018), although writing from the school perspective, provides valuable insight into the teaching of the hidden curriculum and that it is essential in developing the necessary graduate competencies. Employers require soft skills such as grit, resilience, self-mastery, communication, and emotional intelligence. Teaching social, emotional, and behavioural skills can provide students with the competencies that they need to be professionally (and personally) fulfilled in the future (James, 2018).

Smith-Han (2013) illustrates how the hidden curriculum can be uncovered and be made more explicit to the lecturer. Reflection allows lecturers to think about what they are communicating to their students about their values and beliefs about their research, subject, students, and teaching (Smith-Han, 2013). Ahola (2000) provides some feedback from students on lessons learnt from their lecturers. Students mention skills such as curiosity, willingness to learn, critical thinking, self-control, perseverance, time management, and the ability to tolerate stress. These skills still form part of crucial graduate competencies in more recent times (Gray, 2016; James, 2018), and demonstrates the importance of the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all teaching within my institutional environment has taken place via online platforms. Considering that the hidden curriculum is proven to be contextual and situational (Li, 2019; Martin, 1976; Villanueva et al., 2018), it is relevant to consider the effect that online teaching had on the teaching of the hidden curriculum. The literature reviewed earlier illustrated that the hidden curriculum exists in all levels of education (Li, 2019; Martin, 1976; Villanueva et al., 2018), and it has been proven to exist in online (Oztok, 2013) and
distance education (Anderson, 2001). However, the notion of the hidden curriculum has rarely been applied to distance education specifically.

3.2. Methodology

Skelton’s (1997) definition of the hidden curriculum guides towards a personal research approach, acquiring insight into ‘messages’ that are conveyed in the classroom. One of the characteristics of a narrative inquiry is that the researcher is part of the world that is being studied (Clandinin, Caine, Murphy, Steeves, 2015; O’ Grady, Clandinin & O’ Toole, 2018). A narrative inquiry was therefore appropriate in creating an understanding of lecturers’ experiences of the hidden curriculum, as literature reviewed earlier illustrated that lecturer reflection can contribute to an increased understanding of the hidden curriculum (Smith-Han, 2013). Increased understanding of the hidden curriculum can assist in it being utilised more deliberately and effectively in higher education.

Dewey’s principle of experience (that underpins the concept of the hidden curriculum), is central to narrative inquiries as it allows for a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin et al., 2015) because it can use narratives to conceptualise experience. Clandinin and Huber (2010) describe ‘stories’ as a portal through which a person enters the world, and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made meaningful. O’ Grady, Clandinin, and O’ Toole (2018) confirm the appropriateness of narrative inquiry within educational research, as it provides an innovative approach to analyse the relationship between institutional storytelling and personal narratives. Narrative inquiry offers reflective, creative, and emancipatory possibilities within educational settings. Literature consulted (as illustrated above) on the narrative approach, guided me in my understanding that narrative studies are used to document human experience, and people tell stories of their experiences. Narrative studies therefore allowed for participants to freely share their understanding and experiences, without interruptions, and prompts from the researcher.

Ten lecturers were approached who were willing to reflect on and share their stories about their hidden curriculum teaching (often for the first time). The inclusion criteria for this study were that the lecturer had to have at least five years of teaching experience in private higher education and be willing to participate. In preparation for the interviews, I sent an overview to each participant of what I wanted them to share/reflect on. I briefly explained the hidden
I did not refer to the hidden curriculum during the interview specifically, as I did not want to test the participants’ understanding of the concept, but rather their enactment of it. The aim of these open-ended interviews were to give a voice to the participants and allow them to share their experience rather than just answering questions. The notion of a narrative study is that knowledge originates from the participants’ true life subjective experiences (as discussed above) and this what gives it authenticity, depth and value. The participants are all known to me, so they felt comfortable sharing their stories.

I found that participants would often speak for a long time, and easily refer to examples of what happened in their classroom. Probing was used in the interviews in cases where participants did not elaborate enough. During the interviews, I occasionally answered the participants with a summary of the key ideas and themes they shared with me, to confirm that I understood them correctly. The transcriptions and the recording of each interview were read together, to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. During interview transcriptions, I often came across lengthy paragraphs where participants shared experiences without any interruptions or prompts from me. They would often interrupt themselves and carry on to another story. There was also a great deal of reflection by the participants, and almost ‘thinking about things’ as they shared. All of the above confirmed that although interview questions were used as guidelines, the participants were afforded the opportunity to share their stories.

The interviews were analysed to make meaning of the stories through narrative analysis to look for themes that emerged (Creswell, 2007; Fouché et al., 2021). Transcriptions were read, re-read and then handwritten mind maps were drawn up to make sense of the data. Certain key ideas mentioned by participants were summarised, and I realised that there were distinct overlaps between participants’ narratives, from where other mind maps were drawn – one for significant quotes/ideas from participants that illustrated their experiences, and another where main themes emerging from the narratives were presented. This process was refined until I eventually identified four main themes (connected by certain key ideas/experiences from participants), that was later reduced to three themes, to make the findings more presentable and to align with literature. I went back to the transcripts throughout typing up the data analysis, to ensure I keep my focus on the participants’ views and experiences, and to never lose sight that their voices should be heard in the results of the study (Maree et al., 2016). Narrative studies are typically guided by a theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2007), I used the conceptual
framework above (see Chapter 2 figure 1) and the research questions to guide me during the process of re-storying and links amongst ideas mentioned by the participants.

3.3. Results and discussion

The ten participants’ experience of lecturing in private higher education ranged between six and twenty years, and four of these participants lectured at public higher education institutions as well. Nine of the participants had worked in a professional environment before becoming a lecturer in their area of expertise. The participant group was made up of five males and five females ranging between forty and seventy years of age. They taught in various modules in the fields of Education, English and Communication, Research Theory, and Economic and Management disciplines.

The process of data analysis by listening, re-listening, and mind mapping the participants’ stories indicated three main themes regarding the manifestation of the hidden curriculum. The three main themes that emerged from the data (that links to the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2) were:

- The development of graduate competencies to prepare students for the world of work;
- the hidden curriculum supplements the formal curriculum; and
- the student learning experience (academic skills and holistic development).

I will discuss the themes separately below, but during the analysis process, I realised the themes do not stand in isolation from one another. In addition to these three themes, a further three aspects that emerged from data analysis are worth discussing. Firstly, the value of the storytelling process became evident, in that it allowed lecturers to reflect on (and realise) what they have been doing in the classroom, and underlines the benefit of lecturer reflection (Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2004). Secondly, the private nature of the higher education institution also proved to be a relevant factor, aligning with earlier discussions on the differing institutional goals of private higher education (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005). Lastly, it is relevant to note that I never addressed any specific modules during the interview, however, all the participants referred to the modules that they lecture during the interview, to provide “necessary background” [David]. During storytelling, there were universally hidden curriculum elements that were discussed by the participants, however, all the participants’ related skills and examples back to the specific modules that they taught. Given that various modules proved relevant to consider, confirms earlier discussions regarding diverse skills that
the hidden curriculum enabled within different areas of study in higher education (Blasco, 2012; Hafferty & Castellani, 2009; Lempp & Seale, 2004; Martimianakis et al., 2015; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Ssebunnya, 2013; Yüksel, 2005).

Literature reviewed earlier illustrated that the hidden curriculum is situational and subjective (Martin, 1976; Oztok, 2013), and it is dependent on the time and place that it is being enacted (Kujawska-Lis & Lis-Kujawski, 2005; Thielsch, 2017). The participants’ stories confirmed this subjective nature of the hidden curriculum. Italics are used whenever direct quotations from the narrative data are woven into the discussion. Even though the data presented ten distinct stories, these stories were analysed and presented here as a coherent whole to help answer the research questions. I relied heavily on the narrative data itself to tell the story of the enactment of the hidden curriculum in the studied context. Although similarities existed between the participants’ stories, their narratives highlight the individual nature of their experiences, and their understanding and experience of the hidden curriculum in their classroom.

Theme 1: The development of graduate competencies to prepare students for the world of work

Theme 1’s discussion centred on lecturers preparing students to enter the world of work. The hidden curriculum is essential for the development of graduate competencies (Gray, 2016; James, 2018). The conceptual framework in Chapter 2 (see figure 1) also demonstrated the interplay between the hidden curriculum, the lecturer and the world of work. Nine participants referred to ‘the post-university world’ and preparing students for ‘the world out there’. The nine participants either had current or previous experience working in industry. Brandon specifically mentioned that he tries to develop students that will be disciplined, hardworking employees or business owners,

But I think the level of student that we try to cultivate, I would hope that they would leave university with a couple of life lessons that they have learnt. I think our role as lecturers to a point, is to navigate or help some students prepare themselves for the fact that it's hard out there...if you don't put the hard work into master your skills, just like we do with their modules, they're going to battle to develop any type of competitive edge in a very competitive world.

Hannah mentioned the importance of tact in the professional world, and through leading by example, she tries to instil a culture of accountability and responsibility in her classroom. These are skills that, according to Hannah, are important in the professional work environment. Penny
referred to her industry experience quite often during the interview to draw on skills that she teaches her students:

*You know I worked in (industry) for many years, and I worked for a real monster and the one thing she taught me... that no matter what's happening around you, you know the show must go on, so just that type of resilience. At the end of the day in a work environment, nobody actually cares. You need to get the job done. You need to pass the exam, whether you like it not.*

The essence of the hidden curriculum, according to David, is ‘*moving beyond the theory*’, into a state of ‘*thinking and being*’. Simon believes the hidden curriculum provides students with the tools to *remove blinkers, push boundaries and ask questions* – competencies that are needed in the real world, to enable students to contribute and make a difference to society. Aloha (2000) mention skills such as curiosity and a willingness to learn.

Thomas is responsible for a work-integrated learning (WIL) module that aims to prepare students for industry through real-life case studies.

*So often in (WIL) modules, I will actually refer to the hidden curriculum, I will say to students: ... ‘there are lots of things that you're going to learn inadvertently, and you may not even realise it, but when you look back...you would realise you have learned other skills like communication in a group, negotiation, leadership skills and so on.’ So, I would specifically mention that WIL is a nice module to put on their CV for those specific reasons... (and when they are) in an interview with someone...they will be able to talk about it (and)...be able to reflect on the skills that they’ve learned.*

Referring to the conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum (Chapter 2), I proposed there is a relationship between the ‘world of work’ and the ‘hidden curriculum’. It was stated that the hidden curriculum is crucial in developing graduate competencies, to adequately prepare students for the ‘world of work’. Three participants specifically addressed the knowledge and skills they acquired from industry as relevant when teaching the hidden curriculum. The ‘world of work’ and skills needed in industry, can, therefore, as I proposed, inform the teaching (and understanding) of the hidden curriculum. Furthermore, it is evident that lecturers with industry experience are valuable tools in developing and teaching students the skills required to enter the workplace. The hidden curriculum, therefore, is an important element in developing
graduate competencies (Gray, 2016; James, 2018; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). Participants’ stories illustrated the importance of the teaching (lecturer element) of the hidden curriculum in preparing students for the world after higher education. Literature illustrated (Li, 2019; Margolis, 2001; Smith-Han, 2013; Yüksel, 2005) and the interviews confirmed that the lecturer has the potential to utilise the hidden curriculum to equip students with relevant knowledge and to develop much-needed graduate competencies to prepare students for life and enabling them to become contributing citizens to society.

**Theme 2: The hidden curriculum supplements the formal curriculum**

Four participants specifically mentioned certain aspects they teach their students to supplement the formal curriculum. Incorporating these aspects that are lacking from the formal curriculum, forms part of what the participants understand to be the teaching of a hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum enables a more wholesome curriculum and has been illustrated as an important dimension of a curriculum (Bitzer & Botha, 2011). The main areas that were identified regarding ‘supplementing’ the formal curriculum were reading, writing and computer literacy skills, referencing skills, engagement, and practically implementing the theoretical concepts that were taught.

Ursula, teaching an English literature module, told me that her most important aim was to teach students how to write properly.

*So, my focus has always been on teaching students writing skills. I believe it is very important and lacking in the curriculum. Writing skills are very important, not just reading skills...students tend to think doing a BA and doing English as a module is about liking to read, and enjoying books, but it also about writing and how to work with the literature. Students really battle with this.*

Lucas, who has 26 years of teaching experience in private higher education, specifically addressed ‘how to be a student’ skills as missing from the formal curriculum.

*This idea of: ‘How to be a good student’, it deals with all the quoting stuff, all of the ‘how to read’, ‘how to write’, ‘how to take notes’. It’s all practical: Go and do this. Go find a quote, paraphrase, reference correctly, write up a reference list...all of these things that at 3rd-year level, we are still fighting students about because some of them do not understand. It says: ‘You know, this isn't about sitting in a*
Chair and chatting to your friends, and (complaining) about the lecturer’. This is about how to engage. And what I find is that a lot of students get to third year and they actually don’t know how to be a student. Yeah, and if they just made this overt to them at a first-year level.

Nicole lectures education students, and for her, the practical element of how to teach and how to transfer knowledge, is missing from the curriculum. They (the students) have the theory, but they don’t have the practical way of transferring that information over in a class. They haven’t had the opportunity to practice that in a class...the first year I taught it, they (the students) said to me that there is a lack, they feel there’s a huge gap in their knowledge, on didactically how to teach, and so I changed the way (I teach)...I teach them skills on how to interact with their students...I give them advice and I show them different ways of engaging and teaching, (also) class discipline, ideas on how to engage with their students, how to win over their students so that they have good discipline within their classroom.

It was alluded to earlier that the hidden curriculum incorporates elements into the classroom that the formal curriculum often overlooks (Bitzer & Botha, 2011). The conceptual framework in Chapter 2 (see figure 1) also demonstrated the hidden curriculum manifests where the curriculum and the lecturer meet. This meeting furthermore gives rise to the student learning experience being cultivated (see theme 3 below). Participants’ stories demonstrated that the hidden curriculum can be utilised to supplement the formal curriculum, in areas where lecturers feel their formal curriculum is lacking. It furthermore emphasizes the hidden curriculum as an irreplaceable and valuable resource in how the curriculum plays out in the classroom.

Theme 3: The student learning experience (academic skills and holistic development)

All ten participants discussed the importance of the student learning experience – developing students both academically and holistically. The conceptual framework in Chapter 2 (see figure 1) placed the student learning experience where the lecturer and the formal curriculum meet. The hidden curriculum contributes to a holistic learning experience (Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). In discussing student development, a few participants mentioned the phrases growing as a person [Zara], wholesome education [Penny], and holistic development [Nicole]. Some participants discussed academic development while addressing shortcomings in the formal
curriculum, and some participants connected the academic and holistic development as part of preparing students for the world of work. However, not all participants integrated the abovementioned themes, and during analysis, it emerged as a separate theme, so I chose to discuss the student learning experience separately. Specific skills regarding academic development mentioned were knowledge contextualisation, reading and writing abilities, comprehension, work etiquette, and the ability to think critically, analyse, evaluate and problem solve. The main areas that participants addressed when discussing the holistic development of students are confidence, respect, worldviews, punctuality, time management, resilience, a culture of joy, and being an ethical person and good citizen. Participants also provided valuable examples of how they try to instil and develop it in their students. These skills overlap with skills mentioned by students when asked what they learnt from their lecturers through the hidden curriculum (Aloha, 2000).

Contextualisation was a concept that four participants regarded as important when teaching their modules. Ursula contextualises the curriculum, by educating students regarding the surrounding political background and history and reminding students that books do not exist in isolation. Lucas and Penny hoped that students would be able to view work done in class in a broader context. I hope that they can see work-related things in a broader context. So not just ‘oh this is marketing, oh this is finance’ ... to look at the bigger picture, and be more adaptable and flexible because sometimes, and this year (with online teaching) we saw it, you can’t go with the script. [Penny]

Simon spoke more broadly about contextualising knowledge:

By making concepts come alive to the students, they bridge the conceptual gap between theory and the real world. I think the problem with a lot of educational processes is the inability for us as educational institutions in general, to be able to say this is the theory, and it doesn’t always work like that in practice ... there’s only X number of examples you can have in a textbook ... the world is alive with different scenarios, consistent different scenarios.

David realises that reading and writing skills are crucial for students to master in the module that he teaches:
The problem is that students need those skills of reading and writing...so that aspect of the hidden curriculum, is therefore something I'm very aware of, this idea that it's about reading and writing. These are skills that students don’t necessarily enjoy...so, with that in mind, when I was designing a course... it's always a matter of getting the students to do something...and that doing aspect is, of course, the reading aspect and the writing aspect.

Reading and approaching questions correctly was mentioned by Penny and Thomas.

There are lots of discussions around what a good answer looks like. Never mind what the question is. What does a good answer look like? What do you need to bring into that answer? So, for me, that is the hidden curriculum, the approach or way of going about trying to solve the problem and to get to a good answer. [Thomas]

True understanding and comprehension are aspects that were specifically addressed by Brandon and Lucas. They both stressed the fact they do not just want students to “parrot study” [Brandon] or rote learn the work, they emphasise truly grasping the relevance of the work that students are busy with.

For Penny and Brandon, work etiquette and commitment are important skills for students to be successful in their studies.

Look...things don't fall in your lap, and there is no such thing as a free lunch. So, you need to put the work in. I must be honest ... in academics, trying to study, there is not much room for laziness. You are not going to get away forever. So, I try to motivate them to do more than just sort of the bare minimum. [Penny]

I always start my very first lecture of the semester and I'll say to the students: ‘If you're not willing to put in 200 hours of practice into the examples and the questions we’re going to do, then consider yourself under pressure to pass this module, not to get 80%, but even to pass it’...the amount of work you put in will determine your final mark and it's as simple as that. I always say there are no shortcuts. You either do the work, and there's no excuse for you not to do it. Or you can look at your marks at the end of the semester and say, ‘I should have... ’. [Brandon]
Critical thinking skills of problem-solving, analysis, and evaluation were competencies that five participants aim to teach their students. Lucas and David addressed the ‘problem solving’ element by referring to the importance of students using feedback effectively to enable them to find their own solutions. Simon, Brandon, and Thomas emphasised the ability to evaluate and critically analyse information.

*I think what we're doing in teaching and linking to real-life problems allows them to expand their own critical thinking analysis. Because we're here to teach students to critically think and analyse. These theories are good, and you can always learn a theory in a rote learn fashion, but if you can't apply it, you can't critically analyse things. Then I think we haven't done our job and I think an implied component of this hidden curriculum is the ability to give those students critical analysis or analytical framework.* [Simon]

Brandon and Simon furthermore explained their goal at the end of the semester are that students have the ability to ask ‘why questions’. Brandon, teaching quantitative modules, explains:

*I think we are very quick to throw the textbook at a student. We are very quick to justify why the answer in the textbook is A, B, and C. But the essence that we want the student to walk away with at the end of the semester (and with a degree), is why?...(using a tax module as an example) Why do we calculate income tax? etc. Instead of just teaching them a calculation...And the same goes for (other modules). So, every number, I will say, tells a story of a particular important relevance in relation to business.*

Zara and Hannah highlighted the importance of cultivating a ‘safe space’ environment in their classroom to enable the holistic development of their students.

*I make it clear to them that I'm here to help and everything that I do is to support them. And that we need to create a safe space. And yeah, I'm not sure everyone will do that, but I assume I think that's my personality. But I want my students to know it is OK to talk to me.* [Zara]

David promotes a culture of *trial and error*, and *it is ok to be wrong.*

*... This is something I also tell the students when they’re doing research ... it's OK to make a mistake. That is why I am here. The book cannot tell you if you're making a mistake, but as a lecturer, I can tell you what you are doing, and point you to*
where you are wrong. They (the students) are terrified of being wrong. And ... education is not about being right, it is about learning what you don't know...that ability to understand that being wrong is not bad, and making a mistake is not a failure.

Five participants discussed the importance of developing confidence in students and the importance of students’ ability to articulate their ideas. Lucas mentioned the learning and growth path in re-doing something and the confidence gained in learning from your mistakes. Hannah and Zara promote confidence through public speaking in their classrooms.

*I make sure to tell them that the educational space is a space for them to try things out. This is where they can showcase what they know without being reprimanded. You know, this is where you do your trial and error, and we need to give each other the space for that trial and error.* [Hannah]

*I make them go and stand in the front (of the class)...they have to start feeling confident about getting their message out there, having a voice. To me, probably the most important thing is public speaking in their class... I want them to go out in the world and really contribute to society and feel confident with who they are as a person.* [Zara]

Nicole shared a moving story about one of her students and the confidence skills that he gained from her teaching:

*I had a student from Angola that could barely speak English, and he had to do an oral in the classroom and he said to me: ‘I can’t do this oral in front of the classroom’...and he really struggled, but he did well, and he managed to stumble through it. (This was quite a couple of years ago), and this year he contacted me ... he said: ‘You remember that time you made me speak in front of the class? So, you know I was so scared, but I just want to tell you part of my job now is I have to do public speaking ... and the way that you dealt with me that time and explained to me how important it is to be able to do public speaking ... ’ So that was the biggest reward, this student came back out of nowhere and came and told me that I had helped him. That is something that I am passionate about, is to develop each student’s confidence in themselves.*
Respect is an aspect that Hannah, Simon, and Zara regard as important in their classroom. Zara discussed respect together with cultivating a culture of inclusivity, equality, and dignity in her classroom:

*I want them to show respect. First of all, to themselves, to their peers, to the environment...so respect, diversity. Having respect for other people, gender issues, cultural differences...I don't just want to teach them book knowledge. I want them to be good citizens of the world and caring people.*

Simon extended the notion of respect in the classroom by referring to perspectives. Bergenhenegouwen (1987) referred to worldview as one aspect of the hidden curriculum. Simon emphasized that we have limited perspectives, and we have our perceptions, background, and experiences that should be kept in mind when communicating to students:

*...respect for your students in the way you deal with them in terms of questions...students come from a variety of heterogeneous backgrounds. And one thing I have learned (that I try to show students) is that one's own background is only a very narrow stratum or sliver of the world out there.*

Ursula and Thomas referred to perspectives to illustrate to students that there are different viewpoints, and multiple perspectives to consider when they are developing an argument.

*If I'm approaching any kind of situation (in life), I need to maybe just take a step back and look at it and go OK, well, how should I try and solve this problem? Should I only rely on maybe one viewpoint for example? [Thomas]*

Time management, planning, and accountability are aspects that were focused on by Simon, Brandon, Thomas, and Penny. Hannah illustrated the importance of time management and accountability by sharing a story about illustrating responsibility and accountability to a student who missed an appointment and failed to inform her. Thomas shared Hannah’s views:

*I always tell students... if you want to be successful, I don't think you essentially have to be incredibly smart or intelligent, but you definitely have to work hard and be diligent in terms of what you're doing, and...(then) your chance of being successful and passing and even getting a very high mark is very, very high in my opinion.*

Penny referred to grit and resilience as necessary attributes.
You have to have resilience, motivation...because you can’t give in to your despair...whether you are having a (bad) day or a good day, it actually doesn’t matter. You still put on your PR face and you get on with it. That’s what it’s about.

Hannah and Penny attempt to cultivate a culture of joy, fun, and embracing life in their classrooms. Nicole places a focus on ethics with her education students:

…it’s also about being an ethical person. I find it sometimes a little bit of a challenge for them to understand. The ethics around dealing with other people. I keep on trying to get them to understand that you are not only just working with the academics of a child, but you are working with the whole child.

Participants’ stories regarding the student learning experience provided depth to the understanding of the lecturer enactment of the hidden curriculum. Lecturers demonstrate the hidden curriculum through messages conveyed to students. Literature furthermore illustrated that attributes such as confidence, intellectual reasoning, ethics, motivation, and commitment are developed through the hidden curriculum (Ahola, 2000; Li, 2019). The participants’ stories confirmed the importance of the hidden curriculum in the student learning experience to enable academic and holistic development and provided valuable insight into how lecturers cultivate it in their classrooms.

Online teaching’s influence on the hidden curriculum

All ten participants were required, due to COVID-19 restrictions, to teach online. During the relevant academic year, they all had about one and half months of face-to-face teaching before moving teaching over onto the online platform11. During storytelling, the participants compared their online teaching with their face-to-face teaching, it was clear that there were certain similarities between the two modes, as well as certain positives and negatives of online teaching’s hidden curriculum that emerged during data analysis. Discussions were mostly focused on topics of self-discipline, diligence, engagement, the development of reading and writing skills, the increased possibilities of online learning, and the lack of holistic development of students, as Thomas explained,

11 It is relevant to note that although the majority of the ten participants have experience using online platforms for lecturing, none of them were predominantly online or distance lecturers, so none of them are native to the online teaching space.
With online learning, I would argue that those same sorts of (skills and competencies) that I mentioned earlier, that they were arguably even more important than they were before.

David, Brandon, and Ursula experienced online teaching as being ‘not so different’ from face-to-face teaching. Simon and Hannah viewed attributes such as punctuality and respect as equally applicable in the online environment. Although there was no difference with regards to their experience of respect, Hannah found the punctuality principle difficult to enforce, given the structure of the online classroom:

If they come in 5 minutes late into a session, sometimes I don’t even recognise that because it’s on the side in the participant list...you know things like that. I find that very sad because I put so much emphasis on punctuality.

According to Ursula,

a lot of what is done face to face is possible in online, it just takes reflection, development, and adaptability.

According to Anderson (2001), the online teaching space enables the re-contextualisation of knowledge. Simon, in sharing his positive experience in online teaching, discussed ‘unbounding knowledge’, which he believes (as discussed earlier) is the goal of the hidden curriculum.

I think one of the better parts of a virtual environment is the ability to use imagination more efficiently and effectively. Because when you’re sitting in a bounded physical area, such as a lecture room, you are by very nature in a bounded environment of teaching. You have a whiteboard...you have an almost two-dimensional area. Whereas a virtual room in space is an unbounded environment, it has more dimensions...and it allows (students) to use their imagination in a much more efficient manner. It is almost like the possibilities are endless.

Penny and Thomas believe a greater sense of adaptability, mental toughness, and perseverance were cultivated during online learning. Thomas also highlighted another positive aspect of online learning – that it fosters a greater sense of self-discipline:

I think some of them (the students) thrived and others struggled, I do think some students will have learned more out of this year in terms of the hidden curriculum
than they would maybe even learn in the whole three years (at university) if they've really taken it on board and tried to work well in terms of getting everything done.

Lucas’ experience was that online learning had increased engagement from students (a sentiment shared by Nicole), because of the self-directed learning sections. Online classes could therefore be utilised more effectively to ensure engagement and feedback. Nicole’s experience regarding her feedback element was positive,

I enjoyed doing the online work in the sense that I could give them more individual feedback, and then they had to comment on each other’s feedback.

Ursula however, found the feedback aspect of online learning challenging, because she experienced that individual feedback on writing skills occurs more naturally in a physical class environment. Hannah experienced challenges in online learning regarding effective engagement. Brandon felt that online learning supported true understanding and comprehension more, as he could better break up concepts and students could revisit learning materials repeatedly. Although Lucas experienced increased engagement with the learning materials, he experienced challenges in assessing comprehension, one of the most important hidden curriculum aspects that Lucas tries to enforce in his class.

Thomas and Brandon emphasised that online teaching allows lecturers to focus on skills such as planning and organization more, and David extended their notion by stating that online learning forces students to become more independent in their learning (also demonstrated by (Anderson, 2001)), ‘not using the lecturer as emotional support’ as they would do in a face-to-face environment. Brandon reflected on students using their time effectively:

Online is a much more methodical way of teaching and they (students) have the time because they are at home so there's nothing else to do...what you do with your time, is, therefore, critically important to your success. I think a lot of students have realised that, and I'm hoping that if we ever go back to normal (face-to-face teaching), that it'll teach them a life skill for themselves.

The most notable negative aspect of online learning seemed to be centered on cultivating a wholesome, holistic approach to education. Zara and Penny experienced the online classroom to be more academically orientated. According to Zara:

When you teach face to face, things just happen, a student might ask something in
class and then you have a (non-academic) discussion...that didn't really happen, so it was more: The curriculum. What are we covering right now? And sometimes (I could) take it to the real world, but it was not the ‘forming and the helping students to become world citizens’.

Penny also stated that there would be fewer ‘natural discussions’ in the online classroom, discussions that would sometimes, in a face-to-face classroom, have led to important lessons and skills for students. Hannah however, found her online learning sessions to be less academic, students found it challenging to ‘downshift’, to focus on the academic dimension, rather than the fun class discussions.

Participants’ stories confirmed the situational and subjective nature of the hidden curriculum and illustrated an altered experience of the hidden curriculum in online teaching. Although some participants stated that online teaching was ‘not so different’ from face-to-face teaching, most of the participants reflected on skills and attributes that were either emphasised or challenging to develop because of online teaching. These skills and competencies that participants mentioned, align with skills and competencies discussed earlier (Anderson, 2001; Oztok, 2013) regarding distance and online teaching.

The relevance of private higher education
It is practice for the private higher education institution within which this study was situated, to employ lecturers with industry experience. Four participants mentioned their industry experience as an important dimension when discussing and reflecting on their teaching of the hidden curriculum. Simon has taught in both private and public higher education institutions (for the last fourteen years), as well as working in the corporate sector for more than twenty years. He believes private higher education institutions are ahead of public institutions in the sense that lecturers bring skills into the classroom from their formal job (industry). His experience is that we can link theory to practice better, and that we can make the theory come alive by connecting the work to real-world examples that the lecturer has experienced.

But also, as a part of the hidden curriculum, I suspect will be the way that you can flesh out a theoretical concept or framework with real-life problems that become so real and tangible to them that they can start linking and hanging concepts in
terms of what you're telling them. And that is where I think that a private tertiary institution often is ahead of the curve from the publics. [Simon]

Penny and Brandon shared Simon’s views regarding the experience that lecturers bring into the classroom that bridges the gap between higher education and the world of work. Penny, with fifteen years of teaching experience in private higher education, mentioned an important dimension that she brings to the classroom: *What I bring is work experience ... I can kind of convert (the theory) into real-life experiences.* It is evident that the hidden curriculum in the private higher education institution is influenced by industry experienced lecturers who have the ability to bring industry skills to the classroom and use examples to make the theory ‘real’.

I did not refer to the public or private nature of institutions during the interview\(^\text{12}\), yet it became clear that the nature of the institution is relevant to consider. For Hannah, the nature of private higher education institutions was relevant to consider,

> ...also, who are we kidding here? This is a private institution, so it's not cheap to study. So, to milk it for what it's worth. To have my students get in there and really get something out of it besides the actual content that they have to go through.

The nature of private higher education institutions, and that students pay significantly more seemed to be relevant during online learning for David, as he experienced a sense of students feeling that *I still want to get my money's worth, and this is not what I paid for kind of thing.* This is similar to Kujawska-Lis and Lis-Kujawski (2005:28) regarding the ‘I pay, so I demand’ approach of students in private higher education institutions. Nicole, having taught in both public and private higher education institutions, believes that the smaller class sizes in private higher education institutions aid the transferral of her hidden curriculum teaching because she can provide her students with more individual attention and feedback.

\(^{12}\) I did not want to influence the participants’ narratives by referring to the nature of the institution because I guided them in that direction (that might have caused them to draw a comparison between public and private higher education institutions). Instead, I wanted the participants’ experiences and narratives to come across freely. Furthermore, private higher education form part of the participants’ status quo. It was interesting to see however, that the nature of private higher education was still a dimension worthy of discussing when the participants reflected on the hidden curriculum.
The reflection and storytelling experience

Four lecturers mentioned that the reflection and storytelling process was valuable to them. Simon mentioned how reflecting on his teaching made him realise:

*My own pushing of the boundaries was now initially instituted by you asking me to reflect on an implied curriculum. I've never thought about it, so I've never realised how what I've done was implied...As a lecturer, who enjoys what they're doing, you do try your best, but you don't realise that there's actually a framework of implied action behind those things, so this had allowed me to reflect on it. And to think that 'yes, there is some important stuff that I haven't got right' and now I can try at least be more aware of it and use it more efficiently.*

David realised how much ‘confidence students gained in being wrong and then learning from their mistakes’, which is something I've actually never thought about (until now). Ursula stated that the reflection on her experience of the hidden curriculum in online learning has helped her to realise, *I definitely think it’s possible, maybe next year, or when I get more experienced with online ... I think that I will be able to teach the same skills over online (as face-to-face) and identify areas of development.* Hannah and Simon came to a similar realisation, that reflection on the hidden curriculum of their online teaching will assist them to adapt, develop and improve their teaching of the hidden curriculum.

The participants' stories confirmed the notion in literature (Pitts, 2003; Smith-Han, 2013) that the hidden curriculum is shaped and informed by lecturer reflection, and lecturer reflection on the hidden curriculum influences our understanding of the hidden curriculum. The participants’ stories made it evident that reflection is a valuable experience (Kane et al., 2004). Lecturers do not necessarily think and reflect on their teaching. Telling their stories allowed participants the opportunity to reflect on their practice, and identify the areas that they can adapt, develop, and improve their hidden curriculum teaching.

#### 3.4. Conclusions

The process of reflection and storytelling by lecturers addressed the research question regarding the lecturers’ experience of the hidden curriculum in their classroom. Through telling their stories, lecturers were able to provide valuable insight into their understanding of the hidden curriculum and the skills that it can develop in students, as well as their experience in
teaching these skills and competencies to students. Storytelling proved to be a valuable experience to enable reflection by lecturers to increase awareness and understanding of the hidden curriculum. Data collected enabled a more holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum as the lecturer's view of the hidden curriculum has been a dimension that is lacking in current research. Through storytelling, lecturers identified three areas in which they believe the hidden curriculum manifests in their classroom.

The areas identified by lecturers provide valuable information regarding the enactment of the hidden curriculum and highlight the potential of utilising the hidden curriculum in higher education. Data collected furthermore illustrated a more in-depth understanding of the notion of the hidden curriculum within specifically private higher education. Increased awareness and understanding of the hidden curriculum can aid in increased efficiency of the teaching of skills and competencies that lecturers aim to develop through the hidden curriculum. It was discussed in the results that earlier literature pointed to the hidden curriculum being highly flexible, subjective, and situational, and this was confirmed to be the case, as it was clear that the nature of the institution, the module taught, the individual lecturer’s belief and experiences all played a role in how they understood the hidden curriculum.

Understanding how the hidden curriculum is enacted within online teaching was also enhanced, as it became clear that the elements of the hidden curriculum are altered when teaching occurs using online platforms. Online teaching does not provide a ‘diminished’ hidden curriculum teaching, it rather emphasizes the situational and subjective nature of the hidden curriculum. More studies with empirical research on the hidden curriculum within specifically private higher education institutions are necessary to understand the enactment of the hidden curriculum in a different type of institution with different institutional goals.
Chapter 4
Conclusions and possible implications

4.1. Introduction

The study aimed to gain a better understanding of the hidden curriculum through researching the lecturer dimension thereof. Although embedded in all levels of education, the hidden curriculum is a concept that remains hard to define. The hidden curriculum consists of various dimensions. Lecturer enactment of the hidden curriculum through teaching is an important dimension to consider. There is a lack of research on the hidden curriculum within the South African higher education environment, and even more so in private higher education. It is also notable that there is a gap in research regarding the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum. This study, therefore, aimed to answer the following questions:

The main research question of the study (as set out in Chapter 1) was:

What are lecturers’ experiences of the hidden curriculum in their classroom?

The main research question was answered using three sub-questions. The study was designed to produce a thesis by publication and the three sub-questions were divided between the two articles as follows:

Article 1 (Chapter 2):

1. What does the existing literature tell us about the hidden curriculum, specifically the teaching of the hidden curriculum?

Article 2 (Chapter 3):

2. How do lecturers’ stories of teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?

3. How do lecturers’ stories of online teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?
The first sub-question was answered in Chapter 2 (Article 1) through reviewing literature and adopting a process of concept mapping. A conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum was developed. The remaining two sub-questions were answered in Chapter 3 (Article 2) through a narrative study. An analysis of the narratives was performed on data that was gathered through open-ended interviews. Lecturers shared their understanding and experience of the hidden curriculum through their stories of teaching.

4.2. Conclusions of the study

Each sub-question contributed to answering the main research question: What are lecturers’ experiences of the hidden curriculum in their classroom? The conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum in Chapter 2 (Article 1) demonstrated the interplay between various factors in understanding the hidden curriculum. Focus was given to the nature of private higher education institutions, as the hidden curriculum is subjective and situational. The influence of the world of work and the lecturer on the understanding of the hidden curriculum was also relevant to consider in developing the framework. Chapter 3 (Article 2) provided valuable information regarding the manifestation of the hidden curriculum in the classroom, as experienced by lecturers in a private higher education institution.

The conclusions of the study are outlined below by providing an answer to each sub-question.

1. What does the existing literature tell us about the hidden curriculum, specifically the teaching of the hidden curriculum?

The existing literature on the hidden curriculum identified that the hidden curriculum is an indispensable component of higher education, confirming that the hidden curriculum is embedded in all levels of education. Although the hidden curriculum is a concept that is applied more to school environments, this study illustrated that it is an important component of a particular private higher education institution as well. The hidden curriculum consists of various dimensions and is proven to be subjective and situational. Considering the importance of the hidden curriculum, and the relevance of the hidden curriculum in developing skills and competencies in students to prepare students for the world of work, it is notable that there is a gap in empirical research on the hidden curriculum. More specifically, there is a lack of
research in South Africa on the hidden curriculum, and within private higher education institutions. There is also a lack of research on the teaching of the hidden curriculum and the experience of the hidden curriculum by lecturers, even though literature pointed out the importance of the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum.

A concept mapping methodology was used to identify the main concepts of the hidden curriculum, and to enable the development of a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework illustrates the relational and reciprocal nature of the hidden curriculum (refer to Chapter 2) by demonstrating the interplay between the world of work, the lecturer, and the curriculum in creating a hidden curriculum experience for the student. The hidden curriculum is confirmed as an important component of student development and the student learning experience. The conceptual framework pointed out that the hidden curriculum could be utilised in preparing students for the world of work and enabling them to become contributing citizens of society. I proposed that the skills and competencies required in the world of work can furthermore be used to shape the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum can furthermore be used to develop very necessary graduate competencies in students. The hidden curriculum is highly flexible and is demonstrated by the lecturer and the institution. For the focus of this study, it was illustrated that the lecturer forms a valuable bridge between the world of work, relevant skills that students need to develop, and the enactment of the formal curriculum. This overlap between the formal curriculum, the world of work, and the lecturer brings about a learning experience for the student that is relevant, and aids in the development of necessary graduate competencies. The conceptual framework points to the importance of the hidden curriculum being placed in greater focus in higher education. Literature further illustrated that lecturer reflection is needed to assess the hidden curriculum, yet this is lacking in the existing literature. The hidden curriculum is shaped by lecturer reflection, and lecturer reflection, in turn, enables a deeper understanding of the hidden curriculum.

2. How do lecturers’ stories of teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?

Lecturers’ stories provided valuable insight into how the hidden curriculum is enacted by lecturers in their classrooms. Some of the lecturers shared that the storytelling experience enabled them to reflect on their teaching and this would assist them to develop and improve
their practice. The feedback from lecturers on their reflection, therefore, confirms the notion of the hidden curriculum being shaped by lecturer reflection.

Lecturers’ stories also confirmed the necessity of researching within private higher education institutions. It was pointed out earlier that private higher education institutions have different goals and structures, and research indicated that they might have a different relationship with their students. Lecturers’ experiences demonstrated that private higher education institutions were relevant to consider because of the industry-experienced lecturers that it employs. These industry-experienced lecturers could connect the real world to the classroom in a more efficient manner, and this, in turn, can assist in bridging the gap that exists between theory and practice. According to one lecturer, this dimension of bringing the ‘real world’ into the classroom, puts a private higher education institution ahead of public institutions. Industry-experienced lecturers can be valuable in preparing students for the world of work (one of the areas of the hidden curriculum that were identified through the lecturers’ stories). Lecturers’ stories enabled me to identify three main areas (themes) that lecturers understand as hidden curriculum teaching. These three themes overlapped at times, but for clarity, they were dealt with separately when discussing the results of the study (Chapter 3).

The discussions in Theme 1 centred on developing graduate competencies to prepare students for the world of work. It was clear from the data that most of the lecturers believe their classroom, and their teaching, should prepare students for ‘life after university’. Various lecturers made use of their industry experience to demonstrate these skills to students. Lecturers shared that they aim to teach and develop students with certain skills in the classroom, so that it can be taken into the real world. Theme 1 illustrates the potential that the effective enactment of the hidden curriculum can have on developing the necessary (and much needed) graduate competencies in students. The hidden curriculum can be a valuable tool to utilise in advancing graduate employability.

Theme 2 revealed that lecturers use the hidden curriculum to supplement their formal curriculum. Some lecturers’ stories revealed that they experienced their formal curriculum to be lacking in certain areas, and they use the hidden curriculum in their teaching to compensate for this. The conceptual framework (Chapter 2) demonstrated the curriculum as the starting point in understanding the hidden curriculum and also illustrated the importance of the hidden curriculum in the enactment of the curriculum. Lecturers’ stories confirmed the hidden
curriculum as a valuable resource to the curriculum, and a tool that lecturers can use to enable the teaching of aspects they experience to be missing from the formal curriculum. It is also evident that if lecturers only followed their formal curriculum, there would be certain aspects that would not be taught to students. The hidden curriculum, therefore, proved to be necessary for the effective enactment of the curriculum.

Theme 3 demonstrated the importance of the student learning experience as part of hidden curriculum teaching. The hidden curriculum can be used to enable the academic and holistic development of students. Lecturers shared their experiences regarding ways that students need to develop academically to be successful in their studies. Lecturers indicated there are certain academic skills they aim to impart to their students, skills that are necessary to enable students to pass their modules, and ultimately obtain their qualification. Lecturers’ experiences furthermore indicated that they believe students should develop over and above just subject knowledge. Various lecturers emphasized ‘whole person’ development and teaching students skills that are not just academic by nature, but that would enable them to develop into contributing citizens of society. The conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum (Chapter 2) indicated that the hidden curriculum can be utilised for academic development in that the hidden curriculum forms part of the student learning experience. The hidden curriculum is furthermore used to teach beliefs, values, and enables students to become contributing citizens. The hidden curriculum can therefore contribute to students being academically successful and cultivates the holistic development of students. The lecturers’ stories confirmed the role that the hidden curriculum plays in cultivating student success as well as the importance of the hidden curriculum in the holistic development of students.

It is clear from the abovementioned themes and discussions on the hidden curriculum that lecturers’ stories of teaching assisted in a deeper understanding of the hidden curriculum. Clear themes and ideas regarding the hidden curriculum emerged, and the value that the hidden curriculum brings to the learning experience is undeniable. The hidden curriculum is a valuable tool that lecturers have at their disposal to enhance their teaching, as well as their students’ learning and development.

3. How do lecturers’ stories of online teaching deepen our understanding of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution?
The earlier review of literature illustrated that the hidden curriculum is highly flexible, contextual, and situational. The environment of teaching and learning changed, so too, did the enactment of the hidden curriculum.

Lecturers confirmed that they had a different experience of the hidden curriculum in their virtual classrooms. When comparing it to their face-to-face classroom experience, there were some similarities and certain positive and negative aspects of the lecturers’ hidden curriculum experience. It is relevant to note that telling stories about their teaching assisted lecturers to reflect on their online teaching and identify areas of improvement and development. A few of the lecturers stated that their online and face-to-face teaching experiences were quite similar.

Some skills and competencies that lecturers regard as important for students, were equally enforceable in both the virtual and the physical classroom. Values such as respect and punctuality could just as effectively be taught by lecturers, irrespective of the classroom set-up. It was alluded to that online learning can even contribute to a richer experience of the hidden curriculum. The teaching of certain skills were accelerated, as students were forced to adopt a greater level of self-discipline and time management. Self-discipline and time management were skills that lecturers regarded as important to enforce in face-to-face teaching, but online learning made these skills crucial. Another notable characteristic of a virtual classroom is what one lecturer referred to as being ‘unbounded’. The virtual classroom has endless possibilities and has the potential to increase student imagination and allows students to think ‘outside the box’ because their classroom has no physical walls. A negative aspect of the online teaching experience is that lecturers struggled with the holistic development of students. The virtual classroom does not allow for ‘real human connection’ which may pose a challenge with the development of non-academic attributes. Lecturers experienced differences regarding student engagement, comprehension, and feedback. Some lecturers reported that engagement, comprehension, and feedback were challenging, and others found it to be more effective in the online teaching space.

Online teaching brought about a different dimension to the hidden curriculum. Lecturers are aware that their hidden curriculum changed during online teaching. There are some definite similarities between face-to-face teaching and online teaching. There are some positive aspects as well as some negative experiences of the hidden curriculum in online teaching. Lecturer
reflection enabled the lecturers to become aware of the areas they need to develop online to better their hidden curriculum teaching in the online environment.

4.3. Possible implications

Implications for practice
The results of this study can be of value to both private higher education institutions and the lecturers within these institutions. Private higher education institutions have a valuable tool in terms of their industry-experienced lecturers. Industry-experienced lecturers can bridge the gap between the real world and the classroom. Industry-experienced lecturers add value in the teaching of the hidden curriculum and can be utilised effectively to develop/instil graduate competencies in students. Other higher education institutions should consider the value that industry-experienced lecturers can add to a teaching environment. Institutions should also consider areas of the formal curriculum that are lacking that are being substituted by the hidden curriculum. Institutions can consider whether these parts that are lacking from the formal curriculum should remain part of the hidden curriculum, or be incorporated into the formal curriculum, to ensure an equal value add for all students. Institutions should furthermore be cognisant of the contributions that lecturers make since they bring far more to the classroom than just teaching subject knowledge. Lecturers play an important role in the holistic development of students, and both lecturers and institutions should be mindful of this. Lecturers can use reflection on their teaching to assess their hidden curriculum. Lecturer reflection enables a greater understanding of their practice, as well as a deeper understanding of the hidden curriculum. As indicated by lecturers, reflection can assist them to develop, and improve their hidden curriculum teaching. Reflection can also assist lecturers to adapt to the online teaching environment’s hidden curriculum more effectively.

Implications for future research
During the interviews, all the lecturers related their hidden curriculum experience to the respective modules that they lecture. Possible further research on the hidden curriculum could be to explore module (or qualification) specific hidden curriculum teachings. The literature reviewed earlier pointed out that the hidden curriculum has been used to enable the teaching of specific skills, unique to different areas of study.
Researching the hidden curriculum in public higher education institutions can increase understanding of how the hidden curriculum might be experienced differently. It was explained earlier that the hidden curriculum is situational and contextual, so researching institutions with a different structure and institutional goals are relevant to enable a holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum. Literature reviewed (Chapter 2) also illustrated that the institution itself transmits a hidden curriculum. There is a lack of research on the material hidden curriculum, and research on this would also contribute to a holistic understanding of the hidden curriculum.

This study did not ask lecturers if they understood what the term ‘hidden curriculum’ means, but merely how they teach the hidden curriculum. I believe it will be relevant to conduct research to gain an understanding of how many lecturers understand the hidden curriculum and the importance thereof. It was pointed out earlier that the hidden curriculum is embedded in all educational experiences, so it can be valuable to ascertain how many lecturers understand what they might be teaching without realising it.

It is also necessary to consider conducting future research with the students. The hidden curriculum is transmitted (taught) to them, and it will be relevant to ascertain if they understand and embrace what the lecturers are trying to teach. Conducting research on the connection between the hidden curriculum, and graduate competencies can be a necessary value add. It was illustrated that the hidden curriculum is utilised by lecturers to develop graduate skills. Further research will indicate exactly what skills are developed, and the importance of the hidden curriculum (amongst other factors) in preparing students for work.

4.4. Limitations

The findings of this study are subject to certain limitations. This study formed part of a 50% thesis, so it had a limited timeframe and scope.

Due to time constraints, this study was conducted with only ten lecturers in one private higher education institution. Conducting more interviews could have provided different viewpoints and experiences of the hidden curriculum. Interviewing more lecturers could also have emphasised the areas and themes of the hidden curriculum that emerged from interviewing ten lecturers. It was illustrated the hidden curriculum is situational, so conducting research in more
than one institution, could also have yielded different viewpoints and experiences on the hidden curriculum.

The literature reviewed on the hidden curriculum did not take all the existing literature into account, only relevant literature was consulted to enable a conceptual framework. Identifying relevant literature is subjective by nature, so another researcher at another time might have created a different conceptual framework. Furthermore, the focus was given to the hidden curriculum in higher education, and the lecturer dimension of the hidden curriculum, therefore, literature for this study was chosen accordingly.

As mentioned above, as this was a narrative study, that was conducted in one private higher education institution, the results of this study apply to that institution only and the results cannot be generalised.

4.5. Conclusions

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the thesis was designed in the format of two articles. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are both separate articles that contributed to answering the main research question. The conceptual framework in Chapter 2 and the narrative analysis of lecturers’ stories in Chapter 3 both contributed to an increased understanding of the hidden curriculum at a private higher education. The literature reviewed and data collected allowed for important conclusions to be drawn about the hidden curriculum. This study also identified gaps in literature, and possible future research to be conducted on the hidden curriculum.

The value of this study is that it contributes to a greater understanding of the hidden curriculum, a concept that literature has pointed out that has remained hard to define. Although the hidden curriculum is embedded in all educational experiences, it has not been a popular research topic in South Africa, and specifically within private higher education institutions. The teaching dimension of the hidden curriculum has also not been widely researched. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the body of literature about the hidden curriculum, especially the hidden curriculum in private higher education and the teaching of the hidden curriculum.
References


Bonzet, R. 2017. Exploring the experiences of women in leadership positions in Western
Cape technical and vocational education and training colleges through a narrative approach. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.


Gao, Y. 2015. Hidden Curriculum and Students’ Development of Professionalism in Medical Education. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan.


Green, W., Hammer, S. & Star, C. 2009. Facing up to the challenge: Why is it so hard to


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Sambell, K. & McDowell, L. 1998. The construction of the hidden curriculum: Messages and


Wilson, J., Mandich, A. & Magalhães, L. 2016. Concept Mapping: A Dynamic,


Appendix A: Ethical clearance

NOTICE OF APPROVAL
REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

24 September 2020

Project number: 17374

Project Title: A narrative study of the hidden curriculum in a private higher education institution

Dear Miss Nina Rouxouw

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 21 August 2020 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE). Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Protocol approval date (Humanities)</th>
<th>Protocol expiration date (Humanities)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>23 September 2023</td>
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GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

1) The reviewer would like to highlight one aspect for consideration as the study progresses. The candidate is an insider to the context. In the methodological section and in the analysis, the candidate should keep that fact in mind and reflect on this has shaped the research process and the kind of narratives produced.

2) The researcher is reminded to upload proof of permission obtained from the institution as soon as this is approved. [ACTION REQUIRED]

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (17374) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

Included Documents:

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
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<td>Ansures EHE research request letter</td>
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Appendix B: Participants consent form

Dear

I am currently busy with my master’s degree (MPhil) in higher education at Stellenbosch University. As part of my degree, I am busy with a mini dissertation titled ‘A narrative study of the hidden curriculum at a private higher education institution’. This study has been approved by Stellenbosch University’s ethical committee and I received institutional permission from the institution.

For data collection purposes, I am planning to do open-ended interviews with lecturers about their stories of teaching the hidden curriculum. I would like to request your participation in the study - to reflect and share your story of the hidden curriculum with me. To give you context of the ‘hidden curriculum’:

I will ask you to reflect on the skills and competencies that you teach in your classroom over and above that of the formal curriculum. I am also interested to find out how you experienced this to have changed (or not) during teaching in the online environment. I also want to find out about the ways you believe students should develop above and beyond the content of the curriculum that you teach. There might also be examples that come to mind when you think of the above, I am interested to hear your story on your experience.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and your identity will be kept confidential, meaning that only I will know what you said, and I will not refer to you or the institution anywhere in the study (pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants). You can also, at any stage, withdraw from the study.

The interview should take between 30 to 40 minutes to complete. The interview will be done electronically and I will record the interview to assist me to have the data collected accurately and to assist me with data analysis. I will also provide you with a summary of your story after
I have transcribed the data to enable you to confirm the accuracy of my summary of your story.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate by signing and returning Stellenbosch University's participant consent form (attached).

I will then arrange a suitable time and date with you.

You are welcome to ask me any questions if you need further clarification on anything.

Thank you!

Nina
You are invited to take part in a study conducted by Nina Rossouw from the Curriculum Studies Department at Stellenbosch University. You were approached as a possible participant because you are a lecturer at a private higher education institution with more than 5 years’ experience. I would sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to gain a better understanding of the hidden curriculum in private higher education, specifically the lecturer/teaching element of the hidden curriculum. It is a concept that remains hard to define and understand and research on how lecturers experience the hidden curriculum will aid in understanding the concept.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you agree to take part in this study, I will provide you with a short conceptualisation of the hidden curriculum, and I will conduct an open-ended interview with you where I will be asking you to tell me your story on how you understand and experience the hidden curriculum in your classroom. The interview will take place via skype/teams/google meets. The interview should take no longer than 30 to 40 minutes.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks involved for taking part in this study.

If you feel any discomfort taking part in this study, you can withdraw from the study at any time. If there is any discomfort during the interview, you can choose to not answer a question that might lead you to experience negative consequences or you can withdraw from the study.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY

The possible benefits to society from this study is better understanding of the lecturer dynamic of the hidden curriculum, and empirical data to see how it manifests in practice. There is a lack of research on the hidden curriculum in South Africa, in private higher education and on the lecturer perspective thereof, so this research study contributes to the body of knowledge on the hidden curriculum.

There are no real benefits to participants beyond reflecting on their own understanding and experiences of the hidden curriculum.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not be compensated for taking part in this study.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected. This will be done by not referring to you in any way that could identify you and using
codes such as ‘lecturer A’. I will also not refer to any modules/subjects specifically that might identify you. Data will be stored electronically, and no-one apart from my supervisor (if necessary) will be given access to it. No participants or organisations will be identified in the final research report.

I will ask for your written consent to be recorded, where upon I will record the interview to ensure that I do not miss any information that you share with me. Only me and my supervisor will have access to the recordings.

As a participant, you can review/edit the information that I have collected once it has been analysed. This will confirm that I represent your account truthfully.

If the study is published, I will guarantee confidentiality through still only referring to the institution where you are based as a ‘private higher education institution’ and to you as ‘lecturer A’. No reference will be made to a specific person or a specific institution.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you agree to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequence, and I will remove all data and any reference to you from the study completely. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain part of the study.

8. RESEARCHERS’ CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Nina Rossouw at ninarossouw@gmail.com and/or the supervisor Prof Liezel Frick at blf@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I _______________________ agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Nina Rossouw

______________________________  __________________________
Signature of Participant                Date
As the principal investigator, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

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<td>The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this &quot;Consent Form&quot; is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.</td>
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________________________________________ ______________________
Signature of Principal Investigator Date
Appendix C: Open-ended interview questions

a. What skills and competencies do you teach over and above the official curriculum?
b. How is this different in the online environment compared to the face to face environment?
c. In what ways do you believe students should develop above and beyond the content of the curriculum taught?
d. Can you think of any examples of the above mentioned that occurred in your classroom?

I will ask you to reflect on the skills and competencies that you teach in your classroom over and above that of the formal curriculum. I am also interested to find out how you experienced this to have changed (or not) during teaching in the online environment. I also want to find out about the ways you believe students should develop above and beyond the content of the curriculum that you teach. There might also be examples that come to mind when you think of the above, I am interested to hear your story on your experience.