An Analysis of the Effect of Hidden Curriculum on English Teaching and Learning in the Universities of China

Yang Liping, Li Mingjun

Harbin Institute of Technology (China)

liping_young@163.com

Abstract

College English education has been undergoing a series of reforms in China, especially in the field of English teaching and learning for the undergraduate non-English majors. With a brief introduction to the three major stages of college English education in China over the past three decades, this paper will first point out the problems found in the official leading document of college English education, College English Curriculum Requirements, and then introduce a project concerned with the design of Hidden Curriculum in English teaching and learning in university context. As part of curriculum design, the importance and implications of hidden curriculum has long been noticed by numbers of educators. However, in China, most of the studies on hidden curriculum focus mainly on the theory "what it should be like" instead of the methodology of how to apply it in the teaching and learning activities. Based on empirical studies, this paper draws the conclusion that hidden curriculum in English teaching and learning can be conducted in three categories. One is to improve the physical environment on campus, eg. the teaching and learning facilities, the buildings, the natural environment and the cultural landscape. Another is the regulations the university adopts, which definitely have an implicit effect on the students' attitude towards English language learning. The third one belongs to the emotional category, ie. the atmosphere on campus, including the philosophy of teaching, the orientation of values, the patterns of behavior and even the relationship among teachers and students. Given enough attention, hidden curriculum can greatly improve the efficiency of English language teaching and learning, especially when the information technology represented by computer network has been integrated with college English learning curriculum.