

Bringing together insights from the literature and practitioner observations: AVID as one strategy to challenge the ‘hidden curriculum’ in schools.



A research-based system helping students succeed in education regardless of their postcodes or circumstances

What is the ‘hidden curriculum’?

“The students who succeed and do well in school have usually learnt to play the game well; they come to understand the discipline of school, the learning in all its manifestations, and the codes needed to succeed educationally. This knowledge is not specifically taught to students; it forms part of the hidden curriculum and students learn it through their education” (Rahman, 2013, p.670).

The hidden curriculum describes how schools -as social environments - incidentally teach students social and behavioural norms and values that are understood as schooling disciplines (Jackson, 1968). Students therefore learn how they should write, think and answer questions simply by virtue of being at school, without ever being explicitly trained (Rahman, 2013). Freire (1970) challenged these pre-existing social inequalities within educational institutions, emphasising that all students should be liberated from injustice and poverty (Freire, 1970). To do this, “teachers need to explicitly teach students the norms and codes of the ‘culture of power’, so that the students, who are not part of the dominant culture, are able to learn and acquire the necessary skills to negotiate the culture when they choose to do so” (Rahman, 2013, p.665).

AVID: How does it address the ‘hidden curriculum’?

“The primary goal of the AVID program is to motivate and prepare underachieving students from underrepresented linguistic and ethnic minority groups or low-income students of any ethnicity to perform well in high school and to seek a college education ” (Bernhardt, 2013, p.204).

AVID unpacks the hidden curriculum by providing professional development and support, allowing teachers to be reflexive and explicit with their pedagogical practices. This includes:

“explicit critical reading and writing strategies, including oral and visual literacies, are taught in turn to teachers of all disciplines so that each is equipped to teach the specific literacy requirements of their subject. Training materials for teachers are similarly scaffolded, ensuring recurrent reinforcement and modelling of AVID pedagogies. For both AVID students and AVID teachers, the purpose of any learning activity is made explicit to ensure that the deeper, metacognitive processes are being learned as well as the content” (Brown & Hughes, 2014, p.10).

Methodology

I have undertaken a review of the literature using a scoping study approach, and have used a reflective praxis approach to unpack my practitioner experience as a form of autoethnography. In doing this, I will be drawing on notions of reflexivity, locating the self in wider social relations, giving voice to my own epistemology, knowledge and observations (as a previous secondary high school teacher, and widening participation practitioner [within tertiary spaces] for over 9 years).

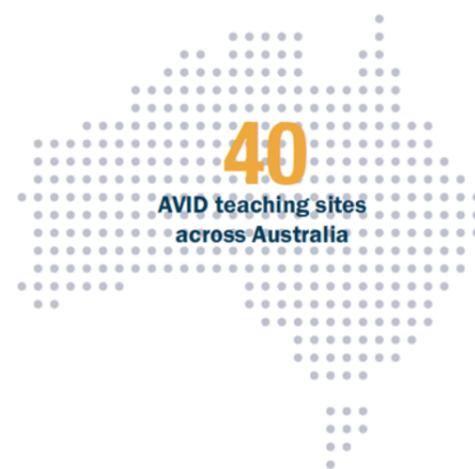
I have focused my study to review three core research questions.

1. What does the literature say about the hidden curriculum within Australia?
2. What specific strategies and/or interventions are referred to when discussing the hidden curriculum within Australia?
3. What is known about how effective AVID is in Australia?

Further research and conversations

There is very little research that demonstrates the success of AVID within the Australian context, despite it running successfully nationwide for five or more years.

Whilst this is an attempt to start a conversation about AVID’s role in challenging the hidden curriculum, I would like to delve further into the subject with a research project which looks at: “What are teacher’s perceptions of the way AVID unpacks the ‘hidden curriculum’?, and how does this impact on their pedagogical approaches?” This would involve a purposive, empirical component, systematic on experience. I would conduct semi-structured interviews with practitioners reflecting on their practice, and what changes they have made within their pedagogical practice.



16,500 students enrolled in AVID programs across Australia

3 universities across Australia support and contribute to AVID’s growth

2500 AVID trained teachers in Australia

AVID Australia has achieved its success in less than 5 years

References

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Lauren Hines, Project Coordinator
Centre for Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE)
University of Newcastle
Email: Lauren.Hines@newcastle.edu.au



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