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Approaching the Invisible: Hidden Curriculum and Implicit Expectations in Higher Education

Abstract

In situations of colliding discursive practices, their respective qualities can emerge. Based on this assumption, a research project has been conducted at the University of Göttingen that aimed at better understanding the hidden curriculum experienced by former exchange students. Using critical discourse analysis and an inductive approach as foundation, statements of this group have been collected and analysed. Implications regarding the experienced hidden curriculum were used to develop a reflective guideline for academic teaching staff. This paper introduces the theoretical and methodological foundation of my research and offers insight in the findings on how to approach challenges caused by the implicit nature of the hidden curriculum.

Keywords

Hidden curriculum in higher education, individual learning (and) experience, exchange students, critical discourse analysis

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1 Introduction

In higher education, students and teachers alike sometimes struggle with the implicit expectations of each other. These expectations – whether how to interact in a lecture or how to prepare for an exam – may cause confusion and eventually obstacles for both. During the last decades, the idea of hidden aspects in university teaching is being discussed from different perspectives (COTTON, WINTER & BAILEY, 2013; SAMBELL & McDOWELL, 1998). After having realised that in each university curriculum one can find implicit levels which exist alongside the explicit ones, the focus has shifted to a more global perspective. Today, our understanding of diverse layer of the curriculum is being used to decolonise academia and hegemonic ideas of knowledge production (LE GRANGE, 2016) as well as to find reasonable ways to internationalise universities (LEASK, 2015; KILLICK, 2015). It is in this context of the internationalisation of curricula that my research is located.

LEASK (2015, p. 8) defines the hidden curriculum as “[...] the various unintended, implicit and hidden messages sent to students [...]” by numerous aspects in teaching and learning. Each curriculum consists of three interactive elements – the formal, the informal, and the hidden curriculum.² Students experience these different elements “[...] as a dynamic interplay of teaching and learning processes, content, and activities in and out of the classroom” (LEASK, 2015, p. 9). Within the mixture of the three, the hidden curriculum is the least visible, yet it is supposed to be lived and (re)produced within the formal as well as the informal curriculum. For example, “[...] the social rituals which govern where to sit within a classroom space, how to enact the student-master relationship, or where cooperation ends and

² LEASK (2015, p. 8) defines the formal curriculum as “[...] the syllabus as well as the orderly, planned schedule of experiences and activities that students must undertake as part of their degree program” and the informal curriculum as “[...] the various support services and additional activities and options organised by the university that are not assessed [...]”

collusion, actually, begins” (KILLICK, 2015, p. 84), are labelled as part of the hidden curriculum. These social rituals need to be experienced and understood from within, as socialised members of one specific higher education setting. The various elements of a hidden curriculum and its core is closely linked to the local context in which it is lived by academic and non-academic staff as well as by those students (already) familiar to it. In consequence, it most likely shows itself in situations of *contradictory expectations* regarding social behaviour and approaches in teaching and learning.

The motivation for my research derived from these fundamental thoughts. I wondered how the hidden curriculum of one local academic context might be exposed. Even though I did not assume that it could be clearly defined, I expected to detect broader areas in which it tends to emerge. Therefore, I chose to collect experiences of a group of students that most likely could yield insights: Exchange students. They might, due to their prior academic socialisation and their limited stay at the University of Göttingen, still be aware of contradictory expectations in terms of teaching and learning practices. In this paper, I present the theoretical and methodological fundament of my research conducted at the Georg-August-University of Göttingen in spring 2017. I offer insight into the data collected and demonstrate how – based on my findings – I developed a reflective guideline for academic teaching staff. A guideline, which aims at supporting teachers to become aware of their own involvement in (re)producing elements of the hidden curriculum in one local academic context. Educational staff development is said to be a key factor to successfully internationalise curricula in general and especially when it comes to applying the concept of Internationalisation at Home³ (BEELEN & JONES, 2015, p. 70). The outcome of this project fully aligns with this notion.

³ BEELEN & JONES (2015, p. 69) define Internationalisation at Home as follows: “Internationalization at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.”

In my research, I do *not* seek to further depict aspects challenging for international students nor strengthen any discussion on which cultural background may or may not lead to specific expectations in international higher education contexts. Instead, I aim at finding a way to support faculty to better understand their own expectations, its individual origins and relevance, detecting implicit aspects in their teaching and thereby enabling them to henceforth make them explicit⁴. Especially for international students such transparency is crucial, as they are studying in an academic system which is unfamiliar to them (CARROLL, 2015, p. 21). Offering them support and guidance to better understand teaching and learning settings unfamiliar to them and their learning in a new context (compared to their home universities), can be seen as one responsibility of academic staff (ibid.). On a broader level I argue that being explicit in one's teaching is relevant in all such situations; when dealing with international students as much as when facilitating interdisciplinary courses or when teaching not-yet-academically-socialised first year students. Hence, the research presented in this paper aims at providing a tool for academic staff that helps them to better understand their own expectations in teaching, to make these explicit, and by doing so supports them in shouldering the responsibility mentioned above.

2 On Academic Learning (and) Discourses

Individual experiences constitute the core of the findings presented in this paper: Experiences made by exchange students during their stay at the University of Göttingen, collected by an online survey, as well as experiences reflected by teachers retrospectively, using the developed guideline to detect aspects of the hidden curriculum in their own teaching. In this section I will explore why focussing on indi-

⁴ My approach has been influenced by the work of Jude CARROLL (2015) and the emphasis she puts on being explicit when teaching in international higher education settings.

vidual experiences⁵ offers a suitable starting point to uncover something that is supposedly hidden, and briefly reflect my approach from the point of view of critical discourse analysis. To do so, I will start by stressing the relevance of experiences for processes of learning and competence development in general.

Learning, especially adult learning, can be defined as the process of building new knowledge based *on* and linked *to* existing knowledge (c.f. BLUMBERG, 2009). Each learning process depends on multiple components that can be narrowed down to three aspects: A person needs some kind of abstract information, some practical experience in relation to it, and some reflective awareness connecting both (FINK, 2013). In order to create new meaning, a person connects new ideas to knowledge s/he already has. Knowledge on the *content*-level, but also knowledge on the level of knowledge *production*. That means that within a person's prior knowledge one can find traces of learning biographies and a person's (learning) socialisation. This learning socialisation is – like all processes of socialisation – multi-layered and continually developing. A persons' learning experiences are shaped and influenced by formal learning as well as informal learning settings, all of which are located in specific contexts and filled with meaning by the people belonging to it. Assuming that “[p]eople do not make meaning just as individuals” (GEE & HANDFORD, 2014, p. 5), but as members of social groups, this means for academic contexts that each new learning experience increases a student's knowledge on teaching and learning in higher education as well as his or her socialisation as a member of one specific academic discourse.

A hidden curriculum is part of such a locally embedded academic discourse. People who are socialised within this particular context share the same ideas on how teaching and learning in higher education work. Whereas these ideas don't need to be named and made explicit to members of the same discourse, anyone unfamiliar

⁵ KOLB (1984, p. 38) emphasised the importance of experience early by stating that “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”

with its discursive practice is likely to be confused. This confusion is the basis I used in my research. Since it is a human need to make meaning (FINK, 2013, p. 117) a person will most likely seek to better understand why something did not work as expected, and in consequence remember situations in which s/he experienced (challenging) differences. Here, I used this assumption in combination with the above illustrated understanding of learning processes to collect and analyse social practices⁶ in academic teaching. I developed a survey for exchange students, in which I asked them to describe situations, practices, and ways of communication *expected* (and repeatedly experienced before), but not made during their stay as exchange students. Thereby I aspired to address two layers of social discursive practices: The ones expected as well as the ones experienced. Based on the findings of this survey, I designed a reflective guideline for academic teaching staff, in which they were asked to reflect on those aspects that seemed to be most challenging for the exchange students who were interviewed.

Both instruments that evolved during my research can be grounded in the above-mentioned aspects of individual learning: abstract information, practical experience and reflective awareness. As illustrated in figure 1, the survey invited exchange students to reflect on experienced challenges in order to name (and eventually better understand) the abstract ideas underneath. Based on the same principle of individual learning the reflective guideline is designed. Here, academic teaching staff is invited to reflect on their ideas and understandings of teaching and learning in higher education, to remember experienced contradictory expectations and thus become (more) aware of them in future teaching contexts.

By adding the element of reflection, both instruments actively foster the connection between practical experience and abstract information, thereby initiate a better understanding of the various expectations inside a classroom and eventually allow people to observe and detect traces of the hidden curriculum more easily.

⁶ FAIRCLOUGH (2003, p. 205) defines social practice as “[...] relatively stabilized form of social activity.”

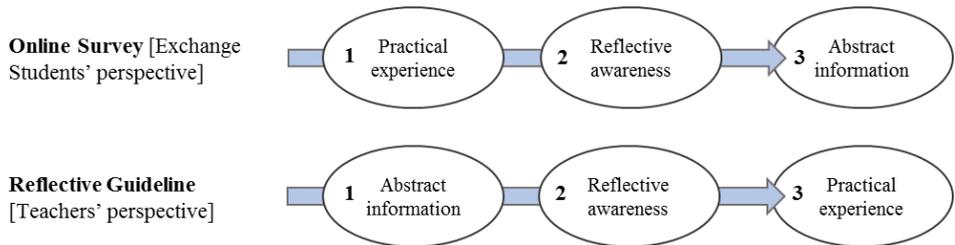


Figure 1: Developed Instruments and Their Value for Individual Learning Processes

Let me emphasise that in this project I did not purely aim at collecting data that could yield insights into discursive practices, but sought to enhance critical understanding and discourse awareness with the people involved: the participating exchange students and – first and foremost – the academic teaching staff working with the reflective guideline in the future. An endeavour that originates in the so-called critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA).

CDA belongs to the wider field of discourse analysis and can be classified as critical social research. It focusses on the dialectical relationship between discourse on the one hand and its elements of social practice on the other (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003, p. 202ff.). Such social practices are realised by linguistic expressions, which – by using them – reproduce the discourse they originate from. Critical discourse analysis focusses at this connection. It examines how social practice is being verbalised, how individuals describe their experiences, and how this influences the respective discourse. Based on the notion that discourses simultaneously *shape the world* and are *shaped by it*, CDA consciously locates itself within a discourse. It tries to affect it by making inherent (power) structures visible and in consequence easier to question. The intention to intervene and to have an impact on social practices of one discursive reality is inherent to CDA and needs to be made explicit (KELLER 2011, p. 29f.).

3 Tracking Down the Hidden Curriculum

3.1 The Survey

The online survey used in this project was sent to 480 individuals, all of which started their time as exchange students at the University of Göttingen in 2016. By selecting a fixed period of time, I ensured that experiences made were caused by a similar ‘version’ of a hidden curriculum, and therefore collected synchronic discourse information. Via email⁷ the closed target group was invited to share memorable experiences with teaching and learning settings as well as information on their individual background to support my research. By offering as much transparency as possible I intended to motivate sufficient people to participate, knowing that my approach and the questions in the survey itself could be challenging. Furthermore, and respecting the CDA approach, I explained my intentions (to detect traces of a hidden curriculum at the University of Göttingen and to support faculty to become aware of them).

The survey consists of two parts. Items in the first part asked the participating individuals to share information regarding their social and academic background⁸; items in the second – the main part – regarding their experiences in one specific discursive area: the teaching and learning settings they encountered during their stay. In an introductory text I asked the students to remember ways to communicate and interact with teachers and peers in lectures and seminars, as well as regulations

⁷ Acknowledgment: I would like to express my gratitude to the colleagues of Göttingen International who provided the list of exchange students and send the survey information to them, thereby ensuring privacy of the target group.

⁸ I gathered information on the duration of the stay at the University of Göttingen, a person’s prior academic socialisation context, which degree s/he aspired, information regarding a person’s non-academic learning biography, age, and gender.

and scientific values they encountered. Thereafter, the following three open questions invited them to share their experiences:

- What was similar and what was different *compared* to the way you are (or were) used to studying at your home university?
- What was *challenging* for you (and/or your fellow exchange students) and why?
- If you were asked to give future exchange students any *advice* regarding the teaching and learning at the University of Göttingen: Which advice would you give... and why?

Each question used a different trigger to support reflective processes. *Comparing* the situation in Göttingen to so far known modes of teaching and learning in Higher education offered an impulse to describe individual experiences without labelling one as being more adequate than the other. Addressing specific *challenges* allowed to include divers perspective while recognised different needs. Asking for *advice* for future students prompted a person's insight knowledge of studying in Göttingen and thereby valued individual experience. Combined, all three were designed to foster meaningful responses.

Though reluctantly at first, nearly 10% of the 480 exchange students participated within the two weeks the survey was open. Experiences of 42 individuals⁹ with 27 national academic socialisation backgrounds and at least¹⁰ ten different disciplinary affiliations constitute the data set my findings derived of.

⁹ Statistics: female: 28, male: 14, no one refused to be labelled a fixed gender; aspiring a Bachelor's degree: 25, a Master's degree: 10, a PhD: 5, two people didn't offer any specification; 20 people started their learning biography in Europe, 13 in Asia, five on the American continents (north & south), two in Africa, two didn't specify; 44 individuals responded to the survey, two of which I excluded because of incomplete data sets.

¹⁰ Seven people did not specify their disciplinary affiliation.

3.2 Analysing the Data

Using content analysis according to MAYRING (2014, p. 79-81) and his proposed steps to inductively¹¹ develop analytic categories, I approached the data. Based on the above given understanding of learning and teaching I structured the content of each statement and extracted codes out of the material. During this process of analysing and structuring the material, I formatively as well as summatively checked the identified categories to secure their reliability.¹² By doing so, I developed a set of categories that covers all statements and can be grouped in three broader areas with differing significance for this research project:

- Statements focusing on the importance of language skills
- Statements focusing on individual needs beyond academic contexts
- Statements expressing a person's academic socialisation

Whereas the first two category areas address side effects of *staying* abroad in general and therefore might be meaningful for everybody, the latter explicitly contains statements regarding experiences of *studying* abroad and thus most likely address elements of a perceived hidden curriculum as well. Within this category, I found two sub-categories and various codes shaping them, either focusing on perceived habits and customs in academia or the norms and values, which create concepts of knowledge production underlying the former. Table 1 offers an overview of all categories and codes used to analyse the data, respective anchor examples, and the number of their appearance within the data.

¹¹ To work inductively here means that the content of the data has been used as starting point to develop analytic categories. Hence, the categories derive in close connection to the material itself and are not fixed from the beginning (as is the case in deductive content analysis).

¹² MAYRING (ibid.) proposes to include the first (formative) reliability check after structuring about 10-50% of the data and to use a final (summative) reliability check after coding everything.

Table 1: Analytic Categories, Anchor Examples, and Appearances

Classification Experiences of <i>Staying Abroad</i>	
Category	Language Skills (overall appearance = 46)
	<i>Focus</i> <i>Anchor example</i>
Importance of language skills	Train your foreign language skills as much as possible before your exchange study to avoid wasting time for adaptation (data set 5, reflective trigger advice)
Category	Needs beyond Academic Contexts (overall appearance = 29)
	<i>Focus</i> <i>Anchor example</i>
Individual needs beyond academic contexts	It is hard to manage time well. Because it is lonely for exchange student to study in Germany. When I feel lonely, I cannot focus on my study and I may feel a little bit sad (data set 30, reflective trigger challenge)

Classification	Experiences of <i>Studying Abroad</i>	
Category	Individual Academic Socialisation (overall appearance = 197)	
Subcategory	Habits & Customs in Teaching and Learning (appearance = 123)	
Codes	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Anchor example</i>
	Study program organisation and infrastructure (appearance = 44)	the academic structu[r]e is different from the way it is built at my university with this system of credit points, I can say it is a way mor[e] flexible here !! (data set 2, reflective trigger comparison)
	Modes and regulations of assessments (appearance = 25)	We have min 2-3 exams per semester per subject and here only 1 big exam at the end (data set 21, reflective trigger comparison)
	Teacher-student-interaction (appearance = 54)	The professors ask a lot of questions in class which make you to prepare ahead (data set 11, reflective trigger comparison)
Subcategory	Norms, Values and Concepts of Knowledge Production (appearance = 74)	
Codes	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Anchor example</i>
	Lived epistemologies (appearance = 21)	difference: at the University of Goettingen we have more discussion in classes, teachers make more effort [t]o guide the students to get the answers themselves, not just tell them the answers directly and more alternatives instead of one single 'correct answer' are accepted (data set 9, reflective trigger comparison)
	Importance of individual learning (appearance = 53)	Teachers have more homeworks [sic] for us (data set 20, reflective trigger comparison)

Furthermore, all types of reflective triggers (comparison, challenge, advice) proved to be successful. Even though the item that invited comparisons between expected and experienced social discursive practices offered most specific information.

3.3 Glimpsing at the Findings

In this section, I will offer a comprehensive summary of my findings. Therefore, single statements¹³ will be used to illustrate the essence of each (sub)category. The statements will be referred to by naming the context of the person's *prior academic socialisation* (pas), the number of the corresponding *data set* (ds) as well as the *reflective trigger* (rt). Since statements regarding the challenges of staying abroad in general as well as on the importance of language skills to adapt well in unfamiliar learning settings offer no new insights on how a hidden curriculum evolves, further detail on these categories will be left out here. Rather, I focus on giving a summary of the statements that have been analysed as expressing a person's academic socialisation.

A person's local academic socialisation has a traceable influence on her or his expectations regarding teaching and learning. I will elucidate this by offering some examples. First regarding the experienced *concepts of teaching and learning* at the University of Göttingen (its organisation and forms of assessment as well as the lived interaction in a course), second illustrating perceived *concepts of knowledge production* (the underlying epistemologies as well as the importance of individual learning).

Since *assessment* is a core element in educational systems, differences regarding its structure are crucial for students. Hence, any unexpected experiences with their examination were noteworthy for the exchange students. Whether focusing on the complexity of an exam, its format or timing, various differences between assessments at the University of Göttingen and the respective home universities can be found in the data:

13 Here, I chose *not* to indicate each mistake in the statements, because they demonstrate that for some exchange students, answering the questions in this survey in English was challenging as well. I merely added obviously missing letters to improve the reading experience and offered translations of German expressions.

“To have 5 courses at the same time and all tests at the same week”
(ds 22, pas Sweden, rt challenge).

“There is no ‘Hausarbeit’ [term paper] in France, but more ‘Klausur’ [written exam], all in the same time. Exams seems to be better spread in time in Göttingen” (ds 33, pas France, rt comparison).

However challenging, the explicit regulation of assessments make them comprehensible (although not easier) for exchange students. They are not essentially classified as hidden curriculum, but usually being labelled as part of the formal curriculum (CARROLL, 2015; LEASK, 2015). Still, the number of statements referring to challenging experiences with assessments indicate that they offer a sensible gateway to discuss underlying aspects of higher education teaching in one specific context. Especially, since the modes and designs of assessments implicitly originate from those concepts of knowledge production, which are discourse-specific and thus tend to differ, as we will see below.

Further traces of learning behaviour expected but hidden can be found in statements regarding the various course settings, hence *organisational* aspects of the formal curriculum. Statements especially mention challenges, which derived because of unfamiliar teaching formats or unexpected ways of interacting in a course.

“[...] in Germany there is a difference between ‘Seminar’ [seminar | discursive teaching format] and ‘Vorlesung’ [lecture]; I only had Vorlesungen in m[y] life and that was quite strange at the beginning, because in ‘Seminar’ students are supposed to participate and express their opinions and I was not used to that kind of approach” (ds 31, pas Italy, rt comparison).

“[...] the seminars are different. The communication with teachers in Los Andes is closer that the one with the teachers in Gö. Lectures are kind of the same” (ds 37, pas Colombia, rt comparison).

Even if the teaching formats and the ways of *interacting* with teachers and peers are familiar, smaller customs may differ, as the following quote shows:

“The form of lectures and seminars was similar to my home university. There were some small differences. We don’t knock on the table after the lecture :)” (ds 6, pas Estonia, rt comparison).

All collected statements on how teaching and learning is organised, structured and conducted, offer valuable information on which aspects academic teaching staff might make more explicit. However, those statements which seek to elaborate on these experiences offer deeper insights; especially regarding values and norms perceived by discourse outsiders.

As mentioned in table 1, during the analysis various statements that either focus on *individual learning* or on the perceived *epistemologies* in general could be detected. Regarding the latter, I found statements that put an emphasis on the value of critical thinking and multiple perspectives, as the following examples show:

“[...] teachers make more effort [t]o guide the students to get the answers themselves, not just tell them the answers directly and more alternatives instead of one single ‘correct answer’ are accepted”
(ds 9, pas China, rt comparison).

In France we write much more than in Germany. Here we speak a lot all together and debate” (ds 38, pas France, rt comparison).

How different such an understanding might be compared to a person’s former academic socialisation, illustrates the next statement:

“Prepare to [...] more independence and less co-dependency when it comes to learning and a wonderful opportunity to speak your mind without any inhibitions. It's going to be a marvellous experience :)”
(ds 12, pas India, rt advice).

Intertwined with the concept of knowledge production experienced at the University of Göttingen is the importance of *individual learning*. Sometimes this was underlined by the opportunity to choose modules independently, sometimes by stressing the amount and quality of self-study:

“The main difference between university of Goettingen and my home university is opportunity to choose courses on your own. In my university we have fixed study schedule and strict control over the attendance”
(ds 5, pas Russia, rt comparison).

“I found the self-guided nature of courses challenging, but a good skill to learn” (ds 26, pas Canada, rt challenge).

Based on these revealing, at times contradictory statements and the categories deriving from such data, significant aspects shaping the hidden curriculum become visible. Even though each single information shared by the participating students is valuable and will be analysed further, let me again emphasise the main purpose of this project: to develop an instrument to help academic teaching staff to uncover traces of this experienced hidden curriculum in their teaching. To do so, the (sub)categories illustrated above regarding a person’s academic socialisation constitute a valid starting point.

4 Making Expectations Explicit

The reflective guideline¹⁴ designed within this project contains nine leading questions. Starting with two questions addressing a person’s (disciplinary and locally influenced) understanding of *knowledge production*, it then offers four questions regarding its relevance in *teaching and learning settings*. The subsequent two questions address *experienced situations*, in which one’s expectations collided with those of one’s students. Finally, with the last question, the person is asked to choose selected aspects of her or his reflection to be applied to future teaching.

As depicted above, this guideline aims at connecting practical experience and abstract information on the *process level*, whereas on the *content level* it seeks to

¹⁴ The reflective guideline can be downloaded as Open Educational Resource via <http://teachingcolours.com/download.html>.

address aspects experienced as challenging and/or implicit to exchange students. Besides referring to the same discursive practice – teaching and learning settings in higher education – the items of the guideline are complementary to those in the online survey for exchange students, while addressing the various (sub)categories regarding a person’s academic socialisation.

The guideline has been tested by academic teaching staff of the University of Göttingen¹⁵ to evaluate the comprehensibility and anticipated direction of each question. Part of this quality assessment was to analyse the reflective statements deductively, trying to detect whether the anticipated (sub)categories had been successfully addressed. This evaluation clarified that two questions needed minor adjustment to improve their comprehensibility (e.g. clarifying that by assessment I mean different forms of examination instead ways to evaluate one’s teaching). The guideline now can be used to initiate reflective processes on the values and expectation influencing a person’s teaching and to become more aware of one’s own involvement in (re)producing elements of an experienced hidden curriculum. All the same, it may foster understanding of the obstacles caused by such a hidden curriculum and enable faculty to address these more easily if not prevent them at all.

To better understand the character of the reflective guideline and how it may initiate reflective processes of academic teaching staff, the following table illustrates responses used as anchor examples for three of the nine guiding questions; data I collected during the quality assessment.

¹⁵ The guideline has been tested anonymously by nine people (five female, four male) from different disciplines, all actively teaching in 2016/2017 at the University of Göttingen. Amongst the group I invited two people without experiences with international classrooms to evaluate whether the reflective guideline works as well in other settings (e.g. awareness regarding interdisciplinary teaching).

Table 2: Extract of the Reflective Guideline and How it Works

Reflective question	Anchor example (data set number)	Detected subcategories
<p>(3) What kind of learning activities do you expect from your students in the various teaching formats (e.g. lecture, seminar, lab course, field trips)?</p>	<p>[A]ctive participation in discussion. Willingness to listen beyond what their ears are used to. To do research for themselves based on the questions we develop in class. Present that research in a presentation. Represent the results in a paper. (teacher data set 8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived epistemologies • Importance of individual learning, • Modes and regulations of assessments • Teacher-student-interaction
<p>(5) Which communicative principles constitute - in your opinion - reasonable and constructive interactions in higher education teaching contexts?</p>	<p>Reflecting and thinking about a problem with students, i.e. temporarily putting oneself also into the role of someone that does not yet understand a topic. This helps to take away a certain amount of fear and improves communication with students (for example during classical lectures) (teacher data set 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived epistemologies • Importance of individual learning, • Study program organisation and infrastructure • Teacher-student-interaction
<p>(9) Critically rethink your reflection process: Which aspects would you like to keep in mind in your future teaching activities... and why these in particular?</p>	<p>In future I will try to communicate procedures in scientific knowledge production in our field. It is something, you expect students to know, but in fact such things are hardly impleme[n]ted in the (rather practical) curriculum. For scientific works it is essential to step back a little and understand things on meta level. (teacher data set 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived epistemologies • Importance of individual learning • Study program organisation and infrastructure

5 Conclusion

The first step in approaching the invisible in this project was to examine the importance of reflective processes and individual experiences when seeking to better understand elements of a hidden curriculum in general. Based on this, a survey to collect experiences by former exchange students of the University of Göttingen has

been designed, the collected data analysed, and information on colliding expectations in higher education teaching and learning settings gathered. This information provided meaningful insights on how to sketch a reflective guideline to uncover values and implicit expectations shaping a person's teaching practice.

Since the notion of a hidden curriculum constitutes the centre of this paper, let me end with some remarks on that. I assume that there is never *one* hidden curriculum at *one* University, which could be uncovered, but always various versions of intertwined, locally and individually lived realities of what is expected. Therefore, the hidden curriculum is a highly flexible system, influenced by institutional and individual aspects alike. To determine, where a hidden curriculum ends and where a person's individual values and expectations begin, seems to be impossible. Yet, academic teaching staff can lessen the power of such implicit expectations in becoming more transparent in their own teaching. Within this flexible system of a hidden curriculum, they are located at the core of discursive practices, why addressing them and their teaching beliefs constitute a sensible starting point to approach the invisible

Moreover, such a reflective process might foster awareness for those elements of a study program's curriculum that need revision with regard to the process of internationalising the curricula. Because, after all, including a global perspective in higher education teaching and learning implies that both students and academic teaching staff are capable to understand and value the 'otherness' in a classroom. And more often than not this means to deal with contradictory expectations.

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