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## **The hidden curriculum.**

In 1971 B.R. Snyder published *The Hidden Curriculum*, containing a chapter by the American sociologist of higher education, Martin Trow, on 'distraction and the expropriation of learning.' Snyder's book was the outcome of research in which, as a student of psychiatry, he investigated in the early 1960s 'the paths that students followed during four years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology'. His findings were also informed by his subsequent experience as a senior administrative officer in a university. This was a period in the history of American higher education in which the system seemed to be dominated by regulation and bureaucracy, associated with a technocratic model of **education** and with **credentialism**. In a context of precise regulatory control, Snyder argued that students adopt coping mechanisms which involve acting on the basis of their calculations of what actually is required to succeed and secure accreditation rather than what is officially required. These involve restricting study only to those elements of curricula which are assessed and also ensuring that extra-curricular behaviour is socially or politically acceptable to the institution. Trow's argument suggested that similar circumstances push staff towards equally 'instrumental' rather than 'expressive' behaviour. Snyder argued that acknowledging the operation of a hidden curriculum recognizes social and cultural factors in learning ignored by rational planners. Arguably, subsequent higher education reforms have sought to make the hidden curriculum more visible and have thus subjected the informal in teaching and learning to more insidious regulation.

244 words.

Derek Robbins.