

# Theo-Anthropological Approach to the Secret Curriculum in Addressing Youth's Moral Breakdown



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## Abstract

Every young person can benefit from meaningful mentorship. The quality of mentorship social emotional environments is an essential mediating factor. The current research highlights the importance of a sound theo-anthropological view of the secret curriculum in youth holistic nurture to effectively address youths' moral breakdown.

**Keywords:** Youth; Youth holistic nurture/mentorship; Moral breakdown; Secret curriculum

## Opinion

The way we view humanity, and their experiences influences the way we engage in youth nurture. Anthropology and other social sciences are vital in understanding the multifaceted nature of human experiences and how to holistically nurture young people, but they rarely provide holistic answers to fundamental questions like who are young people? what is their moral responsibility as God's creation? How does the fact that we (mentors) are God's children shape our view of young people? How ought we engage in young people's nurture as a reflection of God's unconditional love (agape), especially in addressing the pervasive moral breakdown?

The questions who God is and what is man are asked in close connection with each other (Psalm 8:4; Micah 7:18), to suggest that anthropology and theology are not worlds apart from each other—they are closely related to each other, hence, the need for a sound theo-anthropological perspective of the secret curriculum in holistic youth nurture. Cameron [1] echoed the same sentiments when he argued that the anthropological question (about humanity and its experiences) leads to a theological question (can human experience be sufficiently understood without reference to its creator)-God? So, the moment mentors see young people in relation to their creator—God, they see everything about their nurture in a quite unique light—the light of God's unconditional love. This means an anthropology that adopts a uniquely theological point of view of humanity is mindful of the

kind of environments it creates because values and attitudes are more caught than taught. Jesus Christ's Lordship in every aspect of our lives (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31) demands we integrate our faith with learning and practice, in other words be salty—genuinely committed to walking the talk (Matthew 5:13) to nurture young people to consistently think Christianly in every aspect of their lives and live responsibly. Paul urged Titus to “show himself in all respects to be a model of good works” (Titus 1:7).”

The concept of a secret curriculum is founded on the recognition that young people consciously and unconsciously imbibe lessons from their social learning contexts, arising from how people around them behave and say what they say, that may or may not be part of the official course of study [2-4], but which significantly shape their beliefs, values, attitudes, and the ways they interact with people of different classes. Vallance [5] observed that...“a pervasive hidden curriculum has been discovered in operation whose functions have been variously identified as the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure functions that may be characterized generally as social control.” Kelly [6] claimed that children learn not only cognitive skills, but also non-cognitive ones as well, through the development of beliefs, preferences, and norms. The secret curriculum teaches young people beyond official subject contents. According to Dick [7], the secret curriculum comprises “all the

things that one is expected to know but are never formally taught or the hidden tricks that help you succeed in academia [4].” describes the secret “curriculum as an amorphous collection of implicit academic, social, and cultural messages, unwritten rules and unspoken expectations, and unofficial norms, behaviors and values of the cultural context within which teaching-learning processes take place.”

The secret curriculum lessons are usually constructed from observable social-cultural practices and when implicitly conveyed as unexamined ideological positions, unquestioned truths, or cultural biases; they can potentially undermine holistic youth nurture. In so far as the secret curriculum convey unconscious lessons, it is critical for both socio-anthropological and education issues, but most social learning contexts continue to give lopsided importance to the design and implementation of the official curriculum [4,8] at the expense of the veiled curriculum even though it plays a crucial role in the kind of people young people become as adults. According to Anita [9] “youth of today have been ensnared by youthful lusts, pride, arrogance, disrespect, disobedience and indiscipline; these are traits that can only grow out of habits for ‘thoughts bring forth acts, acts produce habits, while habits become character.’ The reasoning of many young people today seems to run like this: “each one’s life-style is an acceptable alternative”, so, ‘kua impole’—be tolerant of my lifestyle and I will be tolerant of yours—do your thing as do mine. The unplanned lessons arising from how people around young people interrelate, speak and act offer numerous cues for making sense of why young people behave the way they do—the reasons behind youth moral breakdown.

The social media continue to bring shocking stories to our attention on daily basis about social ills such as promiscuity, alcohol abuse, general lack of discipline and self-discipline, gender-based violence, high crime rates, and the ever-decreasing average age of pregnancies among youths and complaints about the spate of moral breakdown are pervasive [10]. The suddenness of moral values deprivation varies from society to society, but tentacles seem to have spread into the crannies and nooks of not only our country, Kenya but the whole world, and is affecting everybody and if not urgently addressed, it will soon affect our future. The sad tradition among humanity is to point an accusing finger and play the blame game instead of brainstorming on how best to tackle the problem, whenever a disturbing issue arises.

Some point accusing fingers at social media, others accuse parents or guardians, others believe it is the consequence of our past while others blame factors like social, cognitive, economic, and technological factors. Some of the social factors include unpredictable or insecure home environments and peer influence, technological factors include bad mass media that expose young people to potentially undesirable information, economic factors include poverty while cognitive factors are related to ones need for belonging which is mostly driven by psychological needs. Mass media is considered as one of the major

culprits causing moral decline among young people. This is because young people are currently deeply immersed in diverse forms of social media. Mass media in this book is described as any of the various technologies by which information reaches large numbers of people. A survey recently conducted in USA reported that about 83% of American youth use their phones for email, mobile internet, and texting. The research further reported that the young people who participated in the research receive and send text messages 144 times every day and when they are not reading a sms or texting, they ae on social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook where they share photos, chat, participate in gaming or video. The survey also revealed that lying was pervasive. 92% of those who participated in the research lied to their parents in the past 12 months, 78% lied to a teacher, and more than one in four admitted that they would lie to get a job. 71% of those who participated in the research admitted they had cheated on an exam at least once in the past 12 months, about 45% indicated that they cheated two or more or times within the same period. 66% of those who participated in the research indicated that they could get drugs if they wanted to. 70% of those who participated indicated that they had hit someone in the past year. Anita [9] echoes similar sentiments when she claimed that “changes in the family structure, advent of westernization, the media revolution, dirty policies are speculated to have directly played a determining role bringing both moral degradation of youth and social deterioration.”

Each of the blamed causes of moral breakdown among youth, including the fact that young people are responsible for their misbehavior or behavior, may be right, but there is one key aspect, research after research suggests significantly contributes to the worsening moral situation—lessons arising from the secret curriculum. Even youth mentorship programs that ignore lessons that arise from social-cultural interactions may be considered fraud, the tendency has always been to take a knee-jerk or reactive response instead of a holistic proactive approach to dealing with the moral situation.

The realization that young people are a major determinant of the level of progression of any society and decrease in moral values among youth, who make 70% of most Africa populations, means there can be no “sustenance of society as no society can be self-sustaining without its human components of which the major workforce is the youths” [11], augments the need for a Theo-anthropological approach to the secret curriculum to ensure young people are imbibing upright moral values and cherishing them. Only upright moral values can positively shape young people’s ways of think, their speech, and their behavior. while uncondusive social environments increase the risk of young people to engage in risk behaviors such as drug abuse and illicit sex, condusive social learning environments can restore sound moral behaviors into our learning systems because lessons arising from a positive secret curriculum pays a good tribute on the holistic development of the future generation and ensures

a better future of our world. Wamekwakye [10] echo the same sentiments when he suggested that moral breakdown arises when proper values are not instilled into young people. George & Uyaga [11] asserted “youths are faced with peculiar problems in their societies that tend to challenge their moral stance—they are surrounded with people who have thrown morality aside” (p. 43). Some societies even tend to favor people who are willing to do anything to attain power and money which in many ways tell young people that corruption is appreciated so long as it prospers you. However, M.K. Gandhi asserted that “If wealth is lost nothing is lost” “If health is lost something is lost” “If character is lost everything is lost,” which means every adult who care about our future must be concerned about the moral situation among our present and future leaders (youth).

## Conclusion

A Theo-anthropological perspective on influences of the secret curriculum has largely limited studies but possibly would be influential in holistic youth mentorship. This researcher recommends an empirical study to characterize the role of the secret curriculum on the moral decadence among youth from a Theo-anthropological perspective.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

This researcher has no relationships with any entity who might have a financial interest in this research topic.

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