

Hidden Curriculum: Lesson Learnt Through Schooling

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Abstract: *This paper discuss the nature of hidden curriculum in school culture and its significance in socialisation process. The paper further aims to find out how the learner's social background, classroom processes and hidden curriculum affects their identity and self-esteem. For this purpose the researcher used classroom observations of class IV and V in a MCD school in North Delhi. Data collection has been done using participant and non-participant observation of the students during their involvement in various activities. Role of teachers and significance of textbooks has also been discussed to arrive at conclusion.*

Methodology: *A sample size of 90 students in total, were taken .45 students each from classes IV and V.The sample was selected by using purposive sampling technique. The students were observed during teaching learning process in classes, in morning assembly while doing routine activities and in the playground too when they were playing with their classmates. A checklist was prepared to keep a record of their involvement in the activities assigned by the researcher. The class teachers of both the classes were interviewed to get their responses regarding understanding of hidden curriculum. The collected data was analysed by using thematic analysis.*

Key Words: *Hidden curriculum, School culture, Gender ,Role of text books , socialisation.*

I. Introduction

Curriculum is one of the most discussed term in today's educational discourse. It includes all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. It usually contains a statement of aims with some specific objectives and composed of organizational method, various teaching techniques for communicating content material to the learners. Curriculum may also refer to a defined and prescribed course of studies, which students must fulfil in order to pass a certain level of examination. In the early years of 20th century, the traditional concepts held of the curriculum is that "it is a body of subjects prepared by the teacher for the students to learn". It was synonymous to the "course of study" and "syllabus". In 'The Curriculum'(1918) the first text book published on the subject ,John Franklin Bobbitt said that curriculum, as an idea has its roots in the Latin word for race course,explaining the curriculum as the course of deeds and experiences through which children becomes the adults they should be to succeed later in life.

Caswell and Campbell (1935) viewed curricula as "all experiences children have under the guidance of teachers". John Dewey defines curriculum as a continues reconstruction ,moving from the learner's present experiences out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies...the various studies...are themselves experiences-they are that of the race.Ralph Taylor(1990) defines it as all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. A curriculum can be seen from different perspectives.

II. Hidden Curriculum

There is, however, more to a curriculum than the specific items listed in the curriculum framework. Often referred to as the hidden curriculum, latent curriculum, implicit curriculum or the by-product of schooling this curriculum legitimize some sort of behaviour which is not there in any planned schedule. Students learn the lessons of attitudes and values from all aspects of schooling. They received many unintended messages deeply rooted in classroom environment and in the culture of school. They not only learn from books but they learn from teacher's behaviour also. How to act attentive, when not to ask questions and being obedient by obeying the authority are some of the rules they learn while schooling. Various aspects of learning contributes to the

success of the hidden curriculum ,including practices ,procedures ,rules ,relationships and structures.(Jane Martin ,1983)Learning of such messages are never a part of intended curriculum.

Philip Jackson in his book 'Life in classrooms '(1968) explains "Classrooms are special places. The things that make schools different from other places are not only the paraphernalia of learning and teaching and the educational contents of the dialogues that takes place there. There are other features, much less obvious though equally omnipresent, that help to make up "the facts of life" as it were, to which students must adapt. Most of the things that are done in schools are done with others or at least in the presence of others and this fact has profound implications for determining the quality of a student's life. "While the actual material that students absorb through the hidden curriculum is of utmost importance the one who convey it in school is much obvious.

Michael Apple(1979) describes that how schools do not only control people ,they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be 'legitimate knowledge'- the knowledge that 'we all must have school confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups. For the ability of a group to make its knowledge into 'knowledge for all' is related to that group's power in the larger political and economic arena. Schools exist through their relations to other more powerful institutions, institutions that are combined in such a way as to generate structural inequalities of power and access to resources. These inequalities are reinforced and reproduced by schools through their curricular, pedagogical and evaluative activities in day to day life in classrooms, schools play a significant role in preserving if not generating these inequalities.

We know that children who come to the same school may differ in socio-cultural and economic terms. After joining the school, they realize these differences very quickly. Children at the age of five to six learn to understand the relative values and position of their socio- cultural and economic status in schools. During observations, a student of class 4 shared that how and why he tried to hide that his father is a rickshaw puller and his mother works as a maid in different homes. Many other such incidents were noted from the same class where students hide their caste from their classmates. Nobody is teaching them to do so but through classroom interactions, discussion with their peers, talking with the teachers, inclusion of certain things and exclusion of others that the children are able to understand this. The notion of discipline, festivals being celebrated, contents of the books being taught and assessment practices used by schools, all contributes in one way or the other towards consolidation of their self-identity and identity of their perceived community.

III. Learning to be Boys and Girls

In Primary schools, it is assumed that girls and boys learn the same subjects. But within the classrooms the teacher defines certain projects and activities which are prescribed to be appropriate for girls and boys. Classroom processes suggests that teacher's attitudes and pedagogic practices play a crucial role in reinforcing gender inequality in schools. The rituals, routines of school and the type of responsibilities assigned to boys and girls socialize them into learning gender roles. Similarly, children's scope for interaction within peer group and the liberty given to them for participation in co-curricular activities affects their proceedings to accept or reject that gender role expectation. The researcher observed the following tasks being assigned to boys and girls:

Boys:

- 1) Maintain discipline.
- 2) Clean fans as they are tall and physically strong to do this kind of tough work
- 3) Bring various things from outside the school building as they are capable of this

Girls:

- 1) Clean the classroom.
- 2) Make rangoli on various events.
- 3) Clean blackboard.
- 4) Teach students when the teacher is busy.
- 5) Put important things to teacher's locker and take responsibility of the keys.

6) Singing in bal sabha.

So, it can be seen that the tasks assigned to girls cast them as being dependable, responsible and pliable to adult authority. Boys were allowed the freedom to go out of school but girls were always under the supervision of teachers. Continuity can be seen between gender socialization within family and learning of associated roles in school. Children gradually learn to accept their roles, responsibilities and behaviours to such an extent that they are considered as “natural”. It could be clearly observed that gender socialization had affected the psychological set up of children in such a manner that they think it would not be acceptable to make group with opposite sex. Children criticize those who play games with the opposite sex.

Researcher observed a group of girls of class 4 who does not want to play with Jyoti anymore. When question was asked to know the reason, they simply said “Mam, hum ise apne sath nahi khilayenge kyonki ye to ladko ke sath khelti hai, isne hamari nak kata di”.

These strong identities of being boy and girls are further reinforced through family, classroom processes and school culture. Teacher’s cultural expectations guided the behaviour of their pupils. No doubt that the societal myths of stereotypes do influence teacher’s belief about what girls are like and what boys are like.

IV. Assessment practices and their effect on student’s personality

Education is concerned with preparing citizen for a meaningful and productive life and evaluation is a way of giving feedback to children about their progress towards the goal of education. But our current process of evaluation measures and assess a very limited range of faculties and do not provide a complete picture of an individual’s abilities or progress towards fulfilling the aims of education. Mostly we end up comparing children on the rote memorization of content and the marks obtained by them in examination and categorized them as “excellent”, “good”, “average”, and “poor”.

As in the case of Rehana, student of class 5, who seldom attend the school, the class teacher categorized her as nikammi ladki. Rehana comes to school in dirty clothes, messy hair and sometimes bring her younger brother to school. Class teacher generally scolds her of not being regular and attentive in the class and why she brings her brother along. Teacher shouts at her “Ek to itni gandi ban kar aati hai, uper se ise bhi sath le aati hai” and on another occasion she told researcher also that Rehana’s mother works as maid in nearby locality, so she send her younger son with Rehana to school. When the researcher got an opportunity to talk to Rehana’s mother she got to know that her husband is bed ridden for a long time and she is the sole earner in the family. Rehana is the eldest child so she helps her mother in household work and take care of her brother as well. Rehana’s mother couldn’t take the little boy to her working place, as he does not let her work properly there. So she has no choice but to leave the boy either with Rehana or at home. After knowing and analysing their circumstances, one can say that labelling children as “Poor” or “Nikamma” confers an inferior status and degrades those labelled and on the other hand it hides the basic conditions under which children may not perform well. By placing students in these categories, we assign them a social value in school and society which illustrates to them their worth and position Vis a Vis other. “Children also start identifying themselves and each other in terms of “Good” and “bad”. This labelling process inside the institution of schooling effect the identity of these children in wider context also.

There is another example of an ten year old boy Summit, whose father is a fruit seller. He often accompanies his father to Azad Pur sabzi mandi. For this he sometimes skips classes also. His peers call him “Phal wale ka Ladka”. They often tease him by saying “Tere papa to rehdi par phal bechte hain. Tu bhi bada hokar yahi karega”. Sumit is good in mathematical calculation which he has learnt through dealing with the customers. His communication skills are also appreciable. But the teacher does not count this when she assess his overall performance. Marks alone matter then. On the other hand, there are children like Sucheta who is regular in attending classes, dresses up neatly, secure good marks in medhavi exams and is in good books of teachers. School rewards them by appreciating their efforts. To Durkheim(1961), school did more than teach information .It taught us how to behave as members of society and taught us our place in society. Here in this particular case, children got the message that competition is valued and appreciated in schools and society at large. But children like Sumit may not be given much importance by the schools as their performance is not up to the expectations of the school and society in wider context.

In another narrative, a class 4 student reflects on classroom situation and why she has no best friend in the class, “Mujhe maths samajh nahi aatta. Isliye mam ek hoshiyar bacche ko mujhe math samjhane ke liye kahti hain. Class mai sab mujhe nalayak samajhte hai, isliye koi mera dost nahi banna chahta kyonki main padhai mai nalayak hoon”.

Reading the reflection one can find that the teacher wanted to help Sarita in her studies. Many teachers in the school used this strategy and termed it as ‘Buddy Learning’. But on the other side, this process makes the child feel inferior and she develops a low self-esteem. At the same time, the feeling of loneliness also haunts her.

It can be seen in schools that the children who are intelligent in academics and outshines others, they are valued and appreciated by the school teachers and staff alike. They are termed as favourite students. They have greater sense of self over those who could not fare well in schools. Somebody who is good in drawing and colouring but cannot score good marks also fell in the category of average or under achiever as class teacher of IV declared “Drawing banane se kya hota hai, padhai mai intelligent hona chahiye, tabhi hoshiyar mana jayega”. On further analysing these situation, we can say that the student’s love for colouring and appreciating nature was not nurtured by the school. The school communicate all these values to the learner in tacit ways.

V. Organisational structure of school and its effects in value inculcation among students

The organization of the school also influence the learning of the child. Jackson (1968) observed classrooms and argued that there were things that were being taught although not included in the books. He observed these behaviours constantly being reinforced within the classrooms:

- (a) Manners such as being courteous;
- (b) Making an efforts;
- (c) Keeping busy;
- (D) Waiting quietly for your turn;
- (e) Turning up on time.

Like in the class IV cleanliness issue, the researcher found the classroom very untidy. On asking students why they don’t ask the sweeper to clean their room, one student promptly replied “Mamji wo to hamari madam ki bhi nahi sunti ,hamare bulane se kya aayegi”. This conveys very strong messages about power, authority, dignity of work and self-worth. Teachers, students, parents, principal and other members of the staff assumes different roles in school life. If the functioning of the school is not in a democratic set up and the teacher’s issues are not being taken care of, then surely they will lose their confidence to take decision. In this situation, students may learn not to question the authority.

VI. Role of Text books

Textbooks are core part of the curriculum for any of the given subject, as crucial to the teacher as a blueprint is to a carpenter, so one might assume they are conceived ,researched, written and published as unique contribution to advancing knowledge. One of the issues that is important while discussing hidden curriculum is the kind of content that is present in textbooks. Textbooks used during schooling can also have implicit effects in shaping learner’s view of the world. At times the paucity of symbolic representation of certain groups in school curriculum and culture may represent the status of those groups in the larger society and vice-versa. The culture of linguistic and religious minorities and other marginalized group may not find adequate depiction in textbooks. This may lead to children looking at marginalized culture as strange. This will impact their interaction with people from those groups. This contributes to their further marginalization and may affect their sense of identity vis a vis the dominant groups. Michael Apple (1983) suggests “The curriculum in schools responds to and represent ideological and cultural resources that comes from somewhere. Not all group’s visions are represented and not all group’s meanings are responded to”.

In class 5 textbook of Hindi (Rimjhim) chapter 17 ‘Chhoti Si Hamari Nadi’(Rabindranath Thakur) describes the beauty of a river and happiness of the people who enjoys its natural beauty. In the poem women are associated with the work of filling water and busy in other household chores. Gender roles are heavily influenced with the process of socialisation. The domestic work like getting water are generally associated with females of the

family. This depiction reinforces notion of gender specific roles as men are supposed to do work outside home and women have the responsibilities related to household chores. The content of textbook should be gender inclusive and shall not depict any kind of disparity related to gender. Portrayal of gender relation and their contribution are important in the thematic selection pertaining to all disciplines and their portrayal in the visual depiction

VII. Conclusion and Suggestions

Any learning experience may include unneeded lessons (Martin, J.1983). Hidden curriculum reinforces existing social inequalities by educating students according to their class and social status. This unequal distribution of cultural capital in a society mirrors a corresponding distribution of knowledge among its students. (Apple, M. &King,N.,1983).The unintended learning experiences may result from interactions with not only with teachers but also with peers. Students internalize the rules of the school because they learn that if they follow the rule they will be rewarded for being ‘good pupils’. As there is no explicit discussion and critique of school practices in lessons, students are never taught to questions the norms they find unreasonable.Thornberg (2009) argues that the function of the hidden curriculum is social control. Gender roles are reinforced in schools. Some teachers treat girls and boys differently .This hidden pattern of behaviour further reinforce gender disparities between boys and girls. Gender discrimination within the educational system through various mechanisms such as hidden curriculum, teacher’s differential attitude for both boys and girls, facilitating the students for academic and extra-curricular activities strengthen and re-establish the existing cultural practices through socialisation process.

No doubt hidden curriculum is an important component of diverse schooling process operating across schools , still we cannot deny that it gives wide scope for stimulating pupil thinking regarding values and attitudes .Here the role of school, education system and its units like teachers, textbooks etc. can play important role for inculcating right kind of values and attitudes in students. Role of teacher becomes more important in providing scope for children’s reasoning or thinking about a particular value. Teacher should adopt such classroom practices that create a culture of integrity and build high trust level with learners .While using textbooks as a source, the teacher should choose experiences that are appropriately related to the content and with which learner can easily identified with.

Teacher should demonstrate compassion by setting up variety of ways for students to reflect and they should devise an assessment process that feels fair to each student and it should be transparent and honest.Hidden curriculum can be a positive force when a teacher’s behaviour and interactions with students are aligned with gender friendly principles. Gender is an important element of hidden curriculum. Teacher need to be sensitive enough that they do not exhibit any gender discrimination whether in overt or hidden form, otherwise it will leave lasting effect on children. Even the evaluation work done by teacher should consider learning achievement but together it must be judged whether the required aim of inculcating specific values and attitudes are well attained by children or not. Finally, we need to understand the process of education as a socializing process. Children learn to conform not just to the formal rules of school but also to the informal things, attitudes, beliefs perpetuated through this process. This is the essence of hidden curriculum and its role in the construction of identities.

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