Hidden Curriculum and the Need for Critical Pedagogy

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This paper argues that schools serve as agents in the reproduction of dominant social structures and in this process it is the hidden curriculum, which plays a more significant role than the formal curriculum. The paper also illustrates that learners do have an agency and carve out their own means of dealing with the different kinds of oppression that they come across in classrooms and schools. Given the impact of the hidden curriculum, the paper argues that there is a need for adopting a critical pedagogic approach and using discursive practices in the classroom to equip the learners with the knowledge to understand the various forms in which domination happens and the necessary skills to effectively face the challenges of the hidden curriculum.

A survey conducted in Georgia in 2013 on 754 parents of low and middle-income groups revealed that parents' decisions for selection of a school are related to 'better student discipline' (50.9 per cent), 'better learning environment' (50.8 per cent), 'student safety' (46.8 per cent) and 'individual attention for the child' (39.3 per cent) (Bedrick, 2013). These parameters are also those which school managements project as their USP in building their image. The findings of the survey mentioned above direct our attention to some important aspects that seem to play a critical role in the day-to-day functioning of schools. More than the formal curriculum i.e., courses, syllabus, lessons, learning activities that students participate in, or the knowledge and skills educators are meant to teach to students, what dominates is other aspects such as appropriate ways of behaviour, discipline, obedience, morals, values and most importantly ideas, opinions and perspectives that educational institutions try to develop in the students. Such messages, norms and values, usually not talked about in statements of objectives or goals, are implicitly and effectively taught in classrooms and are referred to collectively as the 'hidden curriculum' (Giroux, 1978). It is these unwritten, unspoken or implicit social and cultural messages that largely determine the development of the child.

Hidden curriculum plays a significant role in shaping students' lives and ways of thinking. For instance, it could be the reason why learners from certain backgrounds and communities prefer to be rather silent in classroom interactions while certain others are very communicative; why students belonging to certain sections are submissive while others are dominating, etc. In order to find the solutions for these issues, it is essential to bring to the forefront agendas underlying knowledge selection and knowledge building in the formal curriculum. The way to do this is to adopt a critical attitude towards the teaching/learning practices and understand how the hidden curriculum operates and impacts students. Taking the lid off the hidden curriculum thus can be done by practicing Critical

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Pedagogy, a philosophy of explicitly stated and discussed by Paulo Freire (1968). It is an approach to teaching that is based on examination and analysis of structures of domination, empowerment of the marginalized and helps one to see through the hidden agendas that determine the academia.

Through this paper it is suggested that teachers need to uncover the interface between the formal curriculum and the hidden agenda underlying the teaching-learning practices in the classroom, the material used, the methods of assessment, within the framework of critical thinking and critical pedagogy. The basis for this suggestion is the assumption that since educational institutions are believed to be the reflections of a society, the discrimination and marginalization in terms of gender, class, caste etc. prevalent in the society are more likely to manifest in the design and implementation of the curriculum as well. In this process, while the voice of the powerful and the dominant finds representation in the classrooms, a large number of learners belonging to varied socio-cultural and economic backgrounds silently wait for their opportunity to be heard. Besides, many issues are taught as normal to the learners and very rarely do learners muster the courage to question these practices. Hence this paper argues that Critical Pedagogy through varied discursive practices can serve as a way to empower learners, and enable them to express their views with regard to issues that affect them and find the connect between the world built for them in the classroom with the real world outside. According to (Baynham, 2006), "what happens in the classroom should end up making a difference outside the classroom" (p. 28).

It is considered essential for educationists and teaching practitioners to wear a critical lens as they are regarded as the next best agents of socialization after parents. For applied linguists and language teachers, critical skills are useful to understand "the ways in which education, regulation, and the study and use of language relate to the realization, maintenance, and reproduction of the distribution of power in society" (Mahboob and Paltridge, 2012). It is possible that what a teacher does in a classroom in the name of imparting curriculum or teaching a concept may contribute to the continuance of inequality or domination of certain vested interests in the world outside. For instance, teachers' day-to-day interaction with pupils, their classroom practices, lessons and activities, their own ideologies etc. may be telling us loudly about certain overt and covert social and cultural relations prevalent in society regarding gender, morals, social class, stereotypes, cultural expectations, politics, etc. It might happen consciously as a stated objective or unconsciously without one's knowledge. Given this background about the enormous weightage that schooling has on learners' ways of thinking, it is apparent that there is a need to understand the role of schools and classrooms in relation to society. The question here is: are schools neutral sites or do they serve as agents of social reproduction?

The paper initially presents the varied perspectives about the role of schools in society; demonstrates how schools carry forward the dominant social structures in the form of hidden curriculum, and concludes pointing to the need for adopting a critical pedagogic approach to effectively face the challenges of the hidden curriculum.

I

School and its Role in Society: Varied Perspectives
A standard view of the classroom would argue that schools and classrooms are far from any kind of social and cultural influences and they provide equal treatment to all the learners without any discrimination. Every individual is a free-willed and free-thinking human being and it is up to him

or her to utilize the opportunities provided equally to all. This stance is a clear development from the earlier notions of individuals as "subjects of autocratic regimes, cogs in a given social order, or beings in eternal obeisance to God" (Pennycook, 2001: 119). The standard view stems from the liberal humanist approach to individualism. According to this, "individuality is something securely possessed within each of us as our unique 'essence'" (Barry, 2011). Our individuality can transcend the environmental influences or forces of society, experience and language. These assumptions have lead to the understanding that it is ultimately the individual who is responsible for his or her progress, as success lies in utilizing the opportunities available equally to one and all. In the educational context, it means that everyone who goes to school can bring about a change in their lives as well as in the society by using available opportunities. This argument sounds optimistic. However, the supporters of this stance happily forget the fact that individuals are anything but free or equal in the structure of a society. In other words, the standard view talks about the way free thinking individuals act in relation to social structure but does not discuss how social structures also profoundly affect the way people think (Pennycook, 2001).

This view of the individual as a reflection of the social structure is put forward by those who take a 'reproductive standpoint' in the alternative conceptions of schooling. Proponents of this view investigate the relationship between the macro and microstructures existing in society. According to Marxist theory from which the reproductive standpoint emerges, human beings are mere pawns within larger class struggles. People live in 'false consciousness' that is produced by ideologies, which are in turn produced by the dominant class. This means that how an individual feels about her existence and how she thinks about it are already determined by dominant ideologies. The concept of free-will is only a myth. Human beings become embodiments of certain habits, dispositions, attitudes and behaviour as a part of the habitus through socialization (Jenkins, 1992, as cited in Pennycook, 2001). In short, what one learns at home is not deviant from practices that are concomitant with the dominant ideologies of the society.

Extending this assumption to the educational context, schools, just like homes, serve as "agents of social reproduction than of social change" (Pennycook, 2001). For instance, cultural and knowledge capital of learners coming from different communities is valued differently in schools because of the popular conceptions about what constitutes knowledge and what does not. These conceptions in turn lead to decisions about what to teach and how to teach. Illustrating this view point, a study on education imparted to Indochinese refugees by Auerbach (1995) revealed that regardless of whether the refugees are skilled enough for higher paying jobs, they were only educated for work as waiters, janitors and other low-paying jobs. With regard to English language education, content was geared more towards specific job-related vocabulary, literacy tasks and competency in functions such as following instructions, making clarifications, etc. This explains that educational institutions and classrooms are agents of social reproduction and function within the matrix of macro social and economic policy. This study also demonstrates that there is something hidden in the curriculum and there are agendas that dictate most decisions in the grand mission of educating people.

However, research points out that though social reproduction may be the inherent goal of educational institutions, this does not happen in a deterministic way or too easily without resistance. The reproduction standpoint allows no understanding of opposition and resistance and of the complex ways in which teachers and students act within the context of schooling. Many studies have shown that learners have an agency and show resistance in different ways to overcome power and

domination. The classic ethnographic study by (Canagarajah, 1993) in the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka showcased the varied and subtle ways through which students resisted the curriculum imposed upon them. The resistance standpoint was also well demonstrated in Willis' ethnographic study (1977) on working-class students in an urban high school. It was observed that these students were more interested in learning "how to work the system and get out of classes" (Willis, 1977 as cited in Apple, 1980). The students wanted to gain some measure of control over their time and activities in schools. Two things were happening simultaneously in that particular educational context. On one hand the education system was reproducing the dominant ideology that mental labour is more valuable than manual labour. On the other hand, the students were resisting this dominant form of labour by rejecting it and trying to learn skills and values that are required for the workplace. From this, it can be understood that learners carve out their own ways of reacting to the formal curriculum.

Considering the dominant role of macro social structure in imparting curriculum and the power of students' agency in the implementation of the curriculum, it becomes very clear that schools are not just involved in transmission of cognitive skills but have a much greater say in making or breaking dominant ideologies. In order to understand the ways through which reproduction and resistance work in an educational context, it is necessary to enhance our understanding of the role of the hidden curriculum and what actually goes on in classrooms. Such comprehensive and critical outlook gives the teachers and most importantly the students the confidence to do their wee bit to transform the 'patriarchal, homophobic, racist world increasingly governed by the interests of multinational business' (Pennycook, 2001, p. 127).

The next section gives an overview of different perspectives about hidden curriculum and how teachers and learners reproduce and resist the influential forces of such curriculum.

II

Hidden Curriculum: Impact on Learners

The term hidden curriculum seems to be self-explanatory. However, it is more mysterious than 'formal curriculum' and is quite complex to define. The hidden-curriculum concept is based on the belief that students learn lessons in school that may or may not be part of the formal course of study. For example, at school students learn how they should interact with peers, teachers, and adults; how they should perceive different races, groups, or classes of people; or what ideas and behaviours are considered acceptable or unacceptable. According to Giroux (1978), what students learn in school is determined more from the hidden curriculum than the official curriculum. Going by the unofficial reports, 80 per cent of what students remember after schooling is not aspects that are taught as part of the formal curriculum. For instance, most of the things that people remember about their school experiences are related to how a particular teacher motivated or punished learners, how the differential treatment of teachers for boys and girls in the school effected them, etc. These things remain in one's memory more vividly than when and how one has learnt grammar or science concepts. So it can be said that hidden curriculum is 'what schooling does to people', or it is related to the 'non-academic outcomes of schooling'. However, Martin (1976) states that these definitions lead one astray and in fact, they make it appear as if hidden curriculum is tied to schools alone. According to him, hidden curriculum exists wherever there is some kind of formal or informal education. For instance, apprenticeship to craftsmen, internships in hospitals, private music lessons, and summer camps – everywhere there is an underlying hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum is described as 'hidden' because it is not a part of the stated mission. In

spite of this, the values and lessons reinforced by the hidden curriculum are often the accepted status quo. Lempp and Seale's study, (2004) in medical education revealed that medical students are trained to become traditional stereotypes through learning processes, which are not overtly written in the statement of objectives. The hidden curriculum includes 'loss of idealism', 'adoption of a "ritualized" professional identity', 'emotional neutralization', 'change of ethical integrity', 'acceptance of hierarchy' and the learning of less formal aspects of 'good doctoring'. It was also found that teaching by humiliation was adopted by professors to make the students learn the importance of hierarchy in the education system. The findings of the study reiterate the popular belief that since the practices and messages conveyed through hidden curriculum are acknowledged as status quo, they will remain unchanged though they are unacceptable and undesirable for the progress of the learners and the society. Such practices call for a reform in the educational policies.

Training the students for effective citizenship in the larger society constitutes one of the important goals of education. Educational institutions, especially schools take it on themselves, more than families, to train the children in acquiring skills required for specific roles. Teachers primarily take on this didactic function of making students conform to minimal standards of order and diligence (Le Compte, 1978). In a study conducted on four fourth-grade classrooms in Albuquerque, New Mexico, it was observed that 16 per cent of the teachers' statements in the classroom were oriented towards establishing who was boss in the classroom. The hidden curriculum that existed in every classroom was 1) do what the teachers say; 2) live up to the teacher expectations; 3) keep busy; 4) shut up and sit down, and 5) stick to the schedule. An analysis of the findings revealed that students were taught to acquire the skills of obedience and compliance to make them fit well with the labour workforce, physical or mental, at a later date. Bowles and Gintis (1976) observed that the targeted traits in many American schools are punctuality, obedience to authority, perseverance, dependability, deferring gratification, tact, and predictability. An analysis of the teacher's management of the classroom and strategies followed point to the fact that learners are actually being trained as efficient work force. However, these traits in the long run will prevent students from developing a sense of solidarity and community with their peers (Giroux, 1978).

Gender roles are another vital aspect that seems to be vociferously reinforced through hidden curriculum. Booher-Jennings' (2008) qualitative study at an urban upper primary school revealed that educators teach a great deal about motivation and hard work during the process of their preparation for high-stakes testing. It was observed that there was gender disparity in the way teachers went about in counselling the learners. For instance, boys were always targeted for their poor behaviour and attitudes while girls were counselled to improve their self-esteem to pass the test. Gender differentiation becomes very apparent to students at a very young age with the way the division of labour was done in classrooms. For instance, in the organization of a cultural programme or a fair in schools, boys are usually assigned the responsibilities of talking to people and getting things done, while girls are given the tasks of receiving the guests, etc. These findings affirm Dillabough's (2003) observation that schools maintain and transmit gender codes through formal structures and informal practices. These examples show that the hidden curriculum can play a vital role in dictating the terms of social and cultural reproduction in educational spaces.

It is surprising, however, to note that students are aware of some of the aspects of the hidden curriculum and also demonstrate their reaction to it in several ways. The dominant role of hidden curriculum and students' resistance can be understood well in a case study done in the context of tensions

between Quechua communities in Raqaypampa, Cochabamba in Bolivia and its state schools. The conflict brought to light questions concerning the hidden curriculum in rural schools. Researchers Regalsky and Laurie (2007) analysed how teachers exercised their authority by implementing the hidden curriculum over indigenous peasant communities, who at the same time were also struggling for their own space. Teachers who come from the indigenous communities alienated themselves from their place of origin and acquired the identity of a state authority. These teachers resorted to such measures where the children of the peasants would subjugate themselves to the state authority. For instance, teachers call the children from their community members as 'less civilized', 'dirty' and 'ignorant' in front of the other children to develop doubt about the community's struggle for authority in the children's minds. The conflict between the state authority and peasant communities was also imminent in the acceptance of what is true knowledge. The agricultural practices and forms of animal husbandry prevalent in peasant communities were considered backward. Children of peasants also carved their own means to cope with violence and to diminish teachers' authority.

This case study thus proves that "actual curriculum consists of constructed realities realized in particular institutional contexts and distorted by these contexts with social class implications" (Stenhouse, 1975, as cited in Regalsky and Laurie, 2007). Keeping in view the effect of dominant ideologies in moulding students' lives and the various ways in which students' try to demonstrate their resistance, it is argued in the following section that there is a need to create a space for discussing such issues and equip the learners with the ability to think critically and act rationally.

III

Need for Critical Pedagogy

The need of the hour, however, is not just to understand that there is a powerful influence of hidden curriculum in perpetuation of dominant ideologies, but also to develop educational programmes and policies that minimize its negative effects. Giroux (1978) emphasizes that "any pedagogical approach to curriculum and course development in the schools that ignores the existence of the hidden curriculum runs the risk of being incomplete as well as insignificant". Lortie (1975) points out that a severe shortcoming of teachers is their 'subjective, idiosyncratic approach to teaching'. In response to such situations, it is suggested that issues related to hidden curriculum can be used as a vehicle for social criticism, for questioning the problems and discussing how to gain control of it (Martin, 1976). Vallance (1980) agrees with Martin when she says that hidden curriculum can be used as a tool for educational dialogue or for discursive functions. The positive outcomes of employing critical discursive practices can be best illustrated through a study conducted in four classrooms in Hong Kong (Pennycook, 2001). Out of the four classrooms, the students of the section who came from incompatible habitus exhibited a potential for change due to the "creative, discursive agency and efforts of their teacher" (Pennycook, 2001: 409). This shows that different approaches to teaching have different implications for the reproduction or transformation of students' lives.

Identifying and dealing with the resistance and agency of the learners should be a part of the educational process according to Apple (1980). Different studies mentioned above illustrate how educational institutions serve as platforms of interaction between macro (e.g., social and cultural struggles) and micro (e.g., curricular practices) aspects of society. However, these issues can neither be dealt with in a deterministic fashion nor can be tackled too easily (Canagarajah, 1993). Considering the complexities in handling hidden curriculum, Giroux (1988) suggests that there is a

need to develop a language of both critique and hope in educational theory.

Critical pedagogy is one such approach which advocates the necessity for 'skilled critical questioning' (Brookfield, 1987 and Pennycook, 2001) for teaching practitioners and learners. It is an umbrella term encompassing all the critical theories and approaches that focus on developing the critical thinking skills necessary to understand, question and challenge inequality and domination. The existence of critical approach to teaching is based on the assumption that one cannot have a laid back stance accepting everything given as standard. Critical pedagogues believe that it is essential to develop in the learners the ability to see through the beliefs and practices that are given as normal in a society either for appreciating and accepting them or for changing them for better.

This goal can be achieved to a certain extent through employing discursive practices where the learners' attention may be drawn to the agendas underlying many practices in education. Students become critically conscious of the actions of the others as well as their own and learn to question them. According to Ira Shor (1992) a student can become critically conscious only when she learns to go beneath the surface meaning. Putting forward a radical view, Kincheloe and McLaren (2007) suggest that students must be made aware that what they are taught and the way they are taught have political agenda. A critical pedagogic approach, in short, is based on the belief that learners are not empty accounts which are to be filled in by the teacher, but individuals with potential to think, reason, understand and critique in a rational manner. By adopting a critical pedagogic approach, students from different sections can be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to effectively encounter the challenges posed by the hidden curriculum.

IV

Conclusion

This paper attempted to elucidate the existence of a hidden curriculum in education and the necessity for adopting critical pedagogy as an approach towards raising critical consciousness of the learners. In Indian education context, there is a certain momentum in the efforts to implement critical pedagogy and make the curriculum equitable. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) has highlighted the need for alternative pedagogies in congruence with its emphasis on the utilization of local contexts i.e., social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds of the students for knowledge selection and knowledge building. For instance, Mishra (2014) points out that the text books developed post 2005 are much more inclusive in terms of class and gender. Similarly JNTU has started a course on Gender Sensitization to raise students' awareness about gender issues and other dimensions of inequality in the modern world such as caste, class, regional and religious affiliations. In a paper that upholds the necessity of Critical Pedagogy in Indian schooling, Ramesh (2007) vehemently argues that the 'the nama, rupa and guna of schooling in India has for centuries remained a reflection of the dominant culture' (p. 11) and it is time to bring a change in the 'culture of silence' imposed on the learners belonging to marginalized sections in the classroom. A qualitative study conducted by Mehta and Pandya (2015) regarding the relevance of Paulo Freire's theory to Indian educational context reveals the student-teachers' perspectives towards the need for social change. The participants' lived experiences emphasize the oppression prevalent in the Indian society; the need for social change, and the necessity for a critical pedagogical approach in the classroom.

Work at the research and curricular levels point at the fact that a lot of thinking is going on in this area and this is expected to have a positive impact on the lives of everyone involved in the teaching

learning process, especially those from marginalized sections, and make them actively participate in the globalized world of today.

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