
UNIT 4 KNOWLEDGE, SOCIETY AND POWER

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Education, you would agree, is not something static and ahistorical. In fact, a careful look at history suggests that what we call education changes from time to time, and alters its priorities. These days you may feel that education ought to be secular, scientific and professional; but then, as some of our ancient texts depict, when religious institutions were overwhelmingly powerful, education, far from being secular and technical, was essentially spiritual and theological. Each society has its own notion of education. To make sense of education – what we learn, what is being regarded as 'legitimate; knowledge, or the way we learn – we need to contextualize or situate it in specific time and space. As a matter of fact, when you begin to look at education sociologically, you realize that it cannot be seen in isolation; it is organically related to the social needs of a particular age. What prevails as education cannot be separated from

its polity, economy and culture. Let us take two examples. These days, environmental education is being taught from school to higher education level. A major reason for this is that in complex/industrial societies environment has become a matter of great concern, and it is important to strive for the kind of knowledge that makes sense of the growing environmental crisis, and arouses ecological sensitivity to resolve it. Likewise, as women's movements are gaining more and more legitimacy, school curriculum is accepting *gender sensitisation* as an important objective of school education.

You would agree that it is not difficult to appreciate that education is integrally related to our collective concerns. These collective concerns manifest themselves as politico-economic ideas. It is interesting to explore the relationship between education and politico-economic ideas. At this juncture, you can also notice that every dynamic society lives within many such ideas and aspirations. If you look at our own society, we would find that there are, for instance, Gandhians, Marxists and Dalit activists, and each of these has a set of people with shared ideals, aspirations and beliefs about the kind of society that needs to be created. And depending on the kind of society they seek to create, they have their own agenda for education. These different socio-economic projects, be it Gandhism, Marxism and Ambedkarism, are often regarded as **ideologies**. With your sociological imagination it is not difficult for you to understand that education or curriculum is inseparable from these ideologies. That is why, every dynamic society has been perpetually debating on education. It is, in fact, a site of contestation.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After working through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the meaning of ideology, and how it shapes and organises social institutions and society, including those dealing with education;

- analyse if education is or can be neutral and 'value-free';

- relate ideology to the study of curriculum and analyse premises of different curriculum ideologies and their manifestation in pedagogy;

- examine and analyse the hidden curriculum in formal curriculum and as manifested in classroom practices including teacher's biases and attitudes and its role in impacting student learning;

- explore the concept of 'relative autonomy' of education in formulating the curriculum; and

- appreciate the need and importance of your own role as a reflective teacher in challenging the status-quoist pedagogy through critical learning and equality of opportunity in classroom.

4.3 MAKING SENSE OF IDEOLOGY

As we intend to explore the relationship between ideology and curriculum, it is important to conceptualize what is ideology, in our everyday conversation we often use this word. We tend to equate ideology with a set of beliefs, attitudes and aspirations that a person or a social group cherishes and use the word to describe political beliefs – say, Gandhism, Marxism, Liberalism, etc.

concept, and is linked to a specific group's value system or any set of ideas such as liberalism, fascism and behaviourism among others. In fact, Sociologists have been debating on the meaning of ideology for quite some time. From this fairly long history of this debate we would choose three major trends.

Karl Mannheim who developed and enriched 'sociology of knowledge' as a sub-discipline made a remarkable contribution to the understanding of ideology. For Mannheim, 'there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured'. We do not think in isolation. We think as a social group. What we think – or the way we perceive the world – depends on our group experiences: the life we lead, the struggles we engage in, the interests we seek to retain, and the hopes we cherish. Each social group (and this group, Mannheim emphasized, need not necessarily be based on economic class, it may rest on caste, racial, gender, ethnic or religious identities) has its own mode of thinking; each social group is looking at the world from a particular vantage point. To put it otherwise, each social group has a 'perspective' or a 'worldview' which, according to Mannheim, can be regarded as a '*total ideology*' of the group. As a total ideology, it is rooted in concrete socio-historical experiences; it need not be confused with the 'psychological motive' of a particular individual. For example, when we say that capitalists have an ideology we are not talking about what capitalists as individuals are thinking. Instead, we are interested in knowing how capitalists as a class, because of their engagement in a concrete socio-historical setting, are looking at the world.

According to Mannheim, a distinction can be made between *ideology* and *utopia*. For example, the ruling group has a vested interest in preserving the existing order. Its ideology retains the status-quo; it is conformist in nature. But the emergent group seeks to overthrow the system; its thinking is revolutionary. Mannheim regarded it as utopia.

4.3.3 Ideology as 'False Consciousness'

Karl Marx is considered the first to provide theoretical framing of ideology with relevance to sociology. According to Marx, ideology emerges out of the mode of production in society, meaning ideology is determined by whatever is the economic model of production. In his case and in ours, the economic mode of production is capitalism.

Marx's approach to ideology was set forth in his theory of base and superstructure. According to Marx, the superstructure, which is the realm of ideology, grows out of the base, the realm of production, to reflect the interests of the ruling class. The fundamental premise of the materialist conception of history is that men must be in a position to make history, and for that they need to fulfill the basic needs of eating, drinking, clothing and shelter. What we are depends on what we produce and how we produce. In other words, morality, religion, metaphysics and all the rest of ideology no longer retain semblance of independence; they depend on the *mode of production*: the forces and relations of production. No wonder, 'the hand-mill gives us a society with the feudal landlord, and the steam engine with an industrial capitalist'.

Ideology, in the Marxian sense, need not be equated with all ideas. Essentially, what gives its distinctive identity is that it serves the interests of the ruling class. Although it projects itself as objective and value-neutral, the fact is that, as

the Marxists would argue, it *falsifies* and *hides* the reality for preserving the interests of the ruling class. Whereas the ruling class sees its ideology as a desirable proposition for the entire society, the Marxists debunk it as ‘false consciousness’. Let us take an example. The idea of ‘individual equality’ is cherished in a capitalist society. Yes, on the surface, the worker is free to enter into any agreement with an employer which is suited to his or her own interest. But the real fact is that this ideology of freedom falsifies the reality and hides its contradictions. The reason is that workers, far from being free, are forced to sell their labour power if they want to survive precisely because they have been deprived of their means of production. In other words, the ideology of individual equality in a capitalist society, as the Marxists argue, is merely an illusion.

4.3.4 Ideology and Hegemony

Another important thinker who enriched our understanding of ideology was *Antonio Gramsci* – an Italian Marxist. What is important to note is that Gramsci was not contented with the ‘negative’ conception of ideology, as in case of Marx, because, for him, ideology is precisely ‘the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc’. Moreover, ideology is also the terrain on which the ruling class achieves hegemony (supremacy) not simply through coercion, force or violence but by gaining legitimacy by acquiring *consent* even from the oppressed/marginalized classes. In other words, the ruling class *hegemony* is established by creating a shared ideology. In the process of consolidating the ideological hegemony of the ruling class, argued Gramsci, civil society – mass media, educational/cultural institutions – play a key role. Another important fact about the Gramscian understanding of hegemony needs to be understood. Hegemony presupposes that one takes into account the interests of the groups over which hegemony will be exercised. According to Gramsci, to counter ideological hegemony revolution requires a new strategy, which is, an alternative hegemony to be established by the working class. This requires an active role of the ‘organic intellectuals’ of the working class. In other words, ideology remains an important terrain on which these intellectuals have to play an extraordinarily creative role.

You can now see that social sciences have been enriched by this intense debate on ideology – its nature and formation, its circulation and hegemony. Although there is a difference of opinion among social scientists, it is not altogether impossible to have a comprehensive understanding of ideology on which we can have a reasonable amount of consensus. In the following Box, we summarize the key points emerging out of our discussion on the concept of ideology:

Ideology is a perspective or a worldview reflecting the nature of society a specific social group seeks to create: its polity, economy, culture, and network of relationships.

Ideology is essentially sociological, not psychological. In other words, ideology is not about one’s personal likes and dislikes. Instead, it is a well-articulated worldview of a specific social group at a certain juncture of history. It is in this sense that one can say that Brahminism or Gandhism or Marxism is an ideology.

Ideology is not necessarily false or erroneous. As a perspective, it may be partial, incomplete or fragmented. It is, therefore, not proper to

distinguish 'objective' Science from 'subjective' ideology. In fact, Science itself can be seen as an ideology of some kind. It is better to see ideology as a representation of the world, may be an incomplete and inadequate representation.

A dynamic society is the one having multiple ideologies. Far from being static and homogeneous, a dynamic society is an arena of conflict. This conflict manifests itself in the form of ideological struggles. If we look at our own society we see divergent and conflicting ideologies: Gandhism, Ambedkarism, Marxism and liberal individualism.

Not all ideologies have, however, the equal power to establish their supremacy or hegemony. It is more likely that the dominant/privileged classes are more successful – particularly because of their control over mass media and educational institutions – in giving a 'universal' character to their ideology. Yet, it should not be forgotten that history is in continual flux, and even marginalized ideologies assert themselves, and resist the dominant ideology. Society evolves because of this conflict.

Check Your Progress

1. What do you understand by ideology?

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2. What does the term 'hegemony of ideas' mean? In the discussion above, whose ideas are being referred to?

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4.4 CURRICULUM AS A CONTESTED TERRAIN

For many of us as teachers, curriculum is a list of content that is to be taught based on the existing practices of teaching that content. For some, curricula is what schools consciously and purposefully do. So what is curriculum? In simple terms, the curriculum is a prescription for what is to be studied in a school or a system of schools and what is prescribed is the content to be covered at a level or in a course or set of courses and the prescribed methods of teaching

and assessing what is taught. The definition of curriculum can be seen in a broader perspective to include learning objectives, methods of teaching and ways of assessing the students; classroom organization and management practices.

However, what most of us are not aware is that the prescribed content is both a hotly contested and fiercely debated area. You you might have noticed the government, parents, teachers and different groups are engaged in discussions around curriculum from time to time. Why does the idea of the curriculum attract such attention and significance in educational discourse and policy making?

To answer this question, we need to understand that school curriculum reflects different visions of society as seen through the eyes of teachers, parents, interest groups and employers and there is no unanimity or consensus on issues such as what the content should be, how teaching should be undertaken and the larger issues of what are the aims of schooling, the expectations from schools and the quality and nature of what schools do as opposed to what is expected of them.

Since, there is no single opinion about the aims of education, discussions about curriculum always involve unresolved differences or viewpoints about good / bad consequences of one or another curriculum and unanswered questions like Should the curriculum be based on the needs of the economy or society? On international or rational or local contexts? On the need for preserving or changing the society and culture? On bridging the divides that exists in society? Or on what type of life human beings aspire for or is worth living?

Any curriculum is the outcome of ideas about *what should be taught and learned*, so the fundamental question or the starting point underlying the development of the curriculum is an answer to questions such as “*What knowledge is worth teaching*”? or “*What knowledge is of most worth*”? This is an important issue because the curriculum should reflect the knowledge that is most significant and worthy of being taught. Answer to this question involves building reasoned arguments involving ideological or philosophical aspects to develop one or the other framework of curriculum. Depending on the ideological persuasion, this framework can be based on the contemporary understanding of the scope and nature of education, or it can be a critical one highlighting the hidden curriculum involving issues of race, gender, caste and class, and is aimed at making the school children unfold the layered understandings of these categories and their own place in the social and cultural order in that society.

Based on the ideological framework it draws upon, the curriculum serves three kinds of functions; these could be described as conservative, creative and critical. In its conservative aspect, education has tried to preserve and transmit through instruction, the existing social structure, its belief and value systems, customs, traditions and mores. In this way, it has acted as an agency to preserve the status quo, an existing pattern of social life and give society at any point of time a stability. To give an example of how the sheer weight of tradition decides the kind of knowledge to be included in the curriculum, Latin continues to be taught in Europe for centuries, although, it had lost its relevance on the pretext that it trains the mental faculties of reasoning, memory concentration etc.

However, in history, education has not only functioned as a residual institution merely to preserve existing social patterns but also taken on a more active role, that of enriching social heritage by adding on to it and creating new knowledge, ideas, technologies and forms of art and craft, and by creating among students the urge to think independently, critically and the urge for change. As explained earlier, it is in the very nature of education to disseminate cultural heritage and at the same time to develop new thinking and urge for change. Even the most conservative and traditional societies have therefore, transformed under the impact of education, conservatism slows down the process of change but cannot stop it.

It is important to recognize that curriculum issues about what to teach and how to teach it are themselves a response to political (and ideological) questions about whether existing, cultural, social and economic patterns in society ought to be preserved or transformed and what kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes should the curriculum reflect so that preservation and transformation of society can take place.

4.4.1 Is there Anything Like a ‘Neutral’ Curriculum?

We have discussed earlier that curriculum is always an area of contestation and debate and this arena of ‘ideological battle’ does not only reflect the conflicting personal opinions of individuals, but different political ideologies through which individuals acquire their understanding of society, social life and the relationship between education and society. Out of the prevailing ideologies, the one that has the backing of powerful social institutions and classes becomes dominant in a society. As already discussed in the previous section on *Ideology and Hegemony*, this subtle hegemony of ideas which Gramsci mentions, is also the terrain on which the ruling class achieves hegemony not simply through coercion, force or violence but by gaining legitimacy by acquiring *consent* even from the oppressed/marginalized classes. Among other social institutions engaged in the process of socialisation, educational institutions like schools play an important part in the legitimisation and perpetuation of the ideologies that seek to serve the interests of the dominant groups. These underlying ideological perspectives influence curriculum thinking and development but are not explicitly stated and do not emerge on the surface. This makes the curriculum seem ‘objective’, ‘value neutral’ and ‘unproblematic’. To understand this better, it is important to examine how the vision of what the school curriculum should be, has changed from time to time depending on the way in which the relationship between education and society has been interpreted. These changes are reflected in the selection and organization of curriculum content, and the methods for its transmission and assessment. How school curriculum is a product of the interests, values and expression of the dominant social groups in society can be examined along two dimensions: curriculum change and curriculum continuity.

4.4.2 Curriculum Ideologies

Curriculum ideologies reflect the vision of what the school curriculum should be—the purposes of schooling and how these purposes can be achieved. In other words, each ideology embodies distinct beliefs about the type of knowledge to be taught in schools, how instruction should take place, how children should be assessed—each ideology is based on its own distinct values, its own purposes of education.

In this section, we will briefly discuss the different curriculum ideologies in order to understand how the agenda of education—questions of what is to be taught, how it is to be taught and assessed get shaped by the needs of society and the functions education is expected to perform to fulfill those needs.

The *classical-humanist ideology* had its origins in pre-industrial society and remained important till the end of the 18th century. It was based on the view of society ruled by a set of elite who acted as the protectors of traditional and classical values based on universal truths. They sought to transmit the same values through education and saw the role of education as ensuring continuity and stability and preparing elite who could preserve the culture and traditions in society. The curriculum for the objective of *cultural reproduction* in this society, lay emphasis on classic subjects such as history, mathematics, grammar and literature and ignoring modern subjects as science and technology. Rigorous standards of academic excellence are required to uphold this view of education from teachers and students. Teaching or instruction is mostly formal and didactic, based on books and assessment of learning is examination oriented to test the acquired knowledge. Since within this ideology, the objective is preservation and conservation of society, the objective of the curriculum is not to espouse change by critiquing the prevalent traditional values.

Enlightenment in Europe in the 18th century shaped a vision of society which is liberal and progressive, with emphasis on freedom and equality of individuals. *Within this ideology, the reproductive function of education is political*, to have a society in which individuals are free and equal and come together to determine the common good for society. This vision draws its inspiration from the ideals espoused in Rousseau's Social Contract, and the educational views expressed in his Emile.

Liberal-progressive ideology which has its roots in the Enlightenment saw education as a process which emphasises development of rationality of all rather than focussing on development of authoritative knowledge of a handful elite. Since it is based on individual freedom and autonomy, the curriculum reflects the developmental needs of the learner rather than the preservation and transmission of society's culture. Here the focus is on stimulating the curiosity of the learner with the help of the teacher who is seen a guide or a facilitator.

Subsequent to Enlightenment, was the advent of industrialisation in Europe during the 19th and 20th century which had a different function for education. It necessitated the fulfilment of the economic needs through a mass-based school system. According to the *modernist-vocational ideology, reproductive function of education is not cultural or political, like in the case of the two ideologies discussed earlier, but economic*: to reproduce and regenerate the patterns of economic and industrial life on which the modern technocratic society is founded. The main purpose of the curriculum, within this ideology, is to impart the requisite knowledge and skills for producers and consumers to function in a market economy. The curriculum is geared towards preparing pupils for the world of work, by emphasising knowledge and practical skills that are relevant for working life.

	CLASSICAL	PROGRESSIVE	VOCATIONAL
POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE	Conservative	Liberal/ Communitarian	Technocratic
VIEW OF SOCIETY	Elitist	Egalitarian	Meritocratic
REPRODUCTIVE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION	Cultural continuity	Social Improvement	Economic regeneration
GUIDING EDUCATIONAL METAPHORS	'Academic Excellence'	'Learning from Experience'	'Practical Relevance'
TYPES OF SCHOOLS	Public Schools	Private and public Schools	Vocational/ polytechniques Schools
CLASSROOM ORGANISATION	Rigid grouping of pupils on the basis of intellectual ability	Flexible grouping of pupils on the basis of needs and interests	Grouping of pupils on the basis of vocational needs
CURRICULUM CONTENT	Subject-centered: rigid subject differentiation	Child-centered: weak subject differentiation	Worked-centered: differentiation of subject matter around practical work-related activities
CURRICULUM KNOWLEDGE	Objective Knowledge	Subjective Knowledge	Technical Knowledge
TEACHER'S ROLE	Expert, transmitting cultural heritage	Facilitator, enabling pupils to learn from personal learning	Manager, maximizing effective achievement of objectives
TEACHING METHODS	Formal methods	'Discovery' instruction	Practical
ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES	Traditional examinations to test the acquisition of knowledge	Informal evaluations of qualitative qualitative developments in pupil's	Practical tests to assess skill in apply knowledge

Source: Wilfred Carr, *The curriculum in and for a democratic society. Journal of Curriculum Studies. Vol. 6, 1998, issue 3, pp 323-340*

<p>Check Your Progress</p> <p>3. What do you understand by the curriculum?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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4. What kind of curriculum do schools need to perform following roles?
- a) preservation of society;
 - b) progress and change;
 - c) both roles, that is, a & b
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4.4.3 Classroom Practices and Ideology: Exploring the Linkages

On the basis of our discussion about the relationship of curriculum with ideology, let us examine how educational notions and practices are linked with ideologies.

Most educational institutions are status quoist and aim to preserve the existing order. Knowledge is viewed as static, fixed and predetermined. This ideology of knowledge encourages a certain type of pedagogy that facilitates the fulfilment the objective of transmitting the knowledge that exists from one generation to another without much of critical reflection, innovation or creativity. Students are considered as ‘blank slates’ or ‘empty jugs’ and teachers job is to fill these empty minds.

The ideology of learning supported by this type of pedagogy is that which encourages rote learning and memorisation of fixed, given facts and information. The ideology of learning does not encourage any questioning or challenging of existing facts or knowledge.

This model of ‘teacher- controlled passive learning’ is further supported by the ideology of the existing assessment system wherein students are only expected to reproduce chunks of information without any understanding or application of the acquired knowledge. This type of education system supports the existing power structures and ideology of the dominant groups.

4.4.4 Pedagogy of Change

The transmission model of education has to be changed to give way for a model that facilitates critical thinking by challenging the notions of aims of education, pedagogy, learning and assessment. The locus of control in this type of learning is the learner herself, the teacher acting as a facilitator of learning. Students are encouraged to think critically, develop and apply ideas and concepts about the existing physical and social phenomenon; they are asked to express their opinion on various matters. Teaching is done through methods like ‘cooperative learning’ to not only increase student achievement but also give equal opportunity to all. Performance of students is judged by using approaches like ‘Portfolio assessment’ which focuses on assessment over a period of time and on self improvement.

Activity

The following paragraphs on school curriculum are from two different historical and political contexts .Read them carefully, in the light of our discussions so far, and answer the questions given below:

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1. *Thus the school curriculum came to be dominated by literacy and numeracy, increasingly framed as generic employment skills, with more specific preparation for work from age 14. Apart from ICT-the poster boy of New Labour (Political Party in the UK) modernisation-policy makers showed little interest in the rest of the curriculum and inevitably there followed little interest in the rest of the curriculum and inevitably there followed a serious decline in the number of pupils taking languages, history or geography. Even creative subjects such as music suffered....”*

2. *“The most important aspect, however was the content of education which was limited to passive and learning of ideas projected by British authors and conveyed through books published in Britain. These ideas denigrated oriental learning, cultivated the concept of British and Western superiority, encouraged prejudices based on community, language and region, and promoted alienation from Indian society and culture. All this suited the rulers, and made most of the educated people to uncritically accept the point of view of the British ruling classes. The spirit of questioning and enquiry, of critical evaluation in social and economic life of creativity in science, technology and other fields was discouraged and constrained in a variety of ways.... For both teacher and pupil, the textbook was the curriculum. It was seen as containing the only knowledge that mattered in the sense of having been approved by authorities as the basis of examination” (Kumar, 1991, pp 67)*

a) Discuss the general ideological perspectives and vision of society that underpin the curriculum stated in the two paragraphs above. Give reasons to justify your answer.

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b) In your opinion, how is the question ‘what is worth teaching’, in the paragraphs above, influenced by ideological considerations? Justify your answer by highlighting the linkages between ideology and selection of content.

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c) Discuss how the organisation of curriculum content and methods of its transaction and assessment derived from dominant ideologies. Give examples from the above paragraphs.

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d) How are the curriculum ideologies discussed different? Explain the differences.

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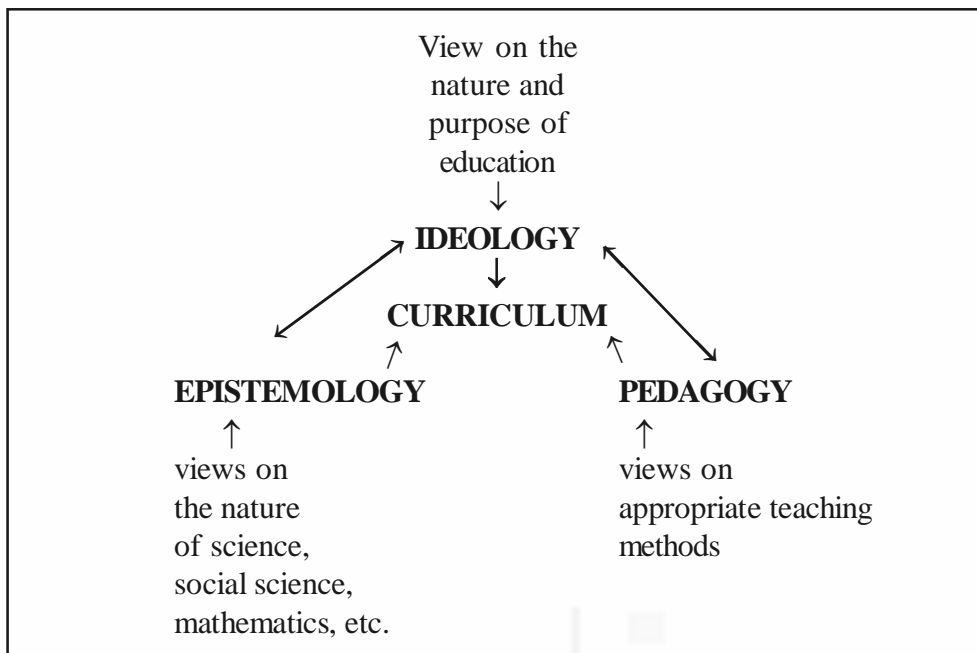
4.5 IDEOLOGY, CURRICULUM AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

You can now understand why education plays a key role in the process of transmission and communication of ideologies. It would not be wrong to say that in modern times we are living in a schooled society. Because it is at school that the child learns many important lessons of life; it is a leading source of socialization. No wonder, learning material, school texts, modes of teaching and evaluation – in fact, the entire curriculum – acquire tremendous relevance. One’s worldview depends, at least to a certain extent, on what one learns at school, and how one learns. *It is believed that the school curriculum is a major carrier of ideological messages.*

You can take some striking illustrations to see the relationship between ideology and curriculum. To begin with, let us take the most important or visible aspect of the curriculum – the contents of knowledge as defined through multiple disciplines like mathematics, geography, physics, history and literature. Mathematics, for instance, is often being seen as an abstract/value- neutral science of numbers. But then, a careful analysis would suggest that in a patriarchal/capitalist society school mathematics is not entirely free from ideological biases. It often legitimizes gender stereotypes: men as active doers (traders, businessmen etc) in the public space vs. women as passive consumers (buying vegetable, milk etc). Again, while introducing concepts like ‘percentage’, it depicts essentially a mercantile world of profit and loss. Seldom is mathematics used for other meaningful social purposes (for instance, the philosophy of sharing can be introduced while the child learns concepts like ‘division’ and ‘fraction’). Likewise, school history, as critics point out, is not particularly known to be sensitive to the history of marginalized communities, tribal and women.

We have already discussed in the earlier section that the prevalent dominant ideology shapes the curriculum and the curriculum, in turn, plays an important social and political role in initiating pupils into the culture, practices and social relationships of the society. In this section, we will discuss how curriculum serves to reinforce the dominant ideology and the existing patterns of economic, cultural

and political life of society, mainly through the hidden curriculum. So you will note that more than the manifest curriculum, it is the hidden curriculum which is filled with ideological messages.



Source: Litledyke, M (1996): Ideology, Epistemology, Pedagogy and the National Curriculum for Science: the influence on primary science, p. 121. *Curriculum Studies, Volume 4, Number 1.*

4.5.1 What is Hidden Curriculum?

Hidden curriculum is different from the formal curriculum. The hidden curriculum is the informal curriculum and is not reflected in the formal statement of what the student is expected to learn, like but it impacts students' learning in different ways. In fact, the formal curriculum impacts learning in a smaller measure which is as little as 10 percent of all learning; the rest is attributed to the hidden curriculum (Massialas, 1989). Yet the role of hidden curriculum as a force is not taken into account by the teachers, parents, students, and curriculum policy makers. In schools, textbooks or the 'official school knowledge' contain a big part of hidden curriculum, the other part is communicated informally by other schooling practices like teacher attitudes, their beliefs embedded in cultural assumptions and peer interaction.

Let us, for instance, look at the hidden curriculum manifesting itself through some of the 'taken-for-granted' school rituals and practices like morning assembly, roll call, classroom seating arrangements and classroom practices. What do you recall?

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Even today the teacher-taught relationship, as Paulo Freire would have argued, remains hierarchical (Freire, 1972). The child is seen as a passive receiver of knowledge; he/she is not an active participant arguing, questioning, contesting and evolving with the teacher.

Likewise, examinations objectify children and hierarchize them; other 'disciplinary' activities (school uniform, 'right posture' in the classroom, regular assembly, strict division of time according to the 'time table') tend to create a docile body and mind. The result is that, as critics argue, through schooling the child grows up as a 'conformist', a 'loyal' citizen who accepts the status quo, and is deprived of spontaneity and the language of dissent. In other words, this hidden agenda needs to be known. Schools, far from being neutral, serve the interests of the Establishment!

4.5.1.1 Learning obedience and respect for authority

One of the most important skills that students learn in school is obedience and respect for authority. By being obedient, passive and conformity to rules, their teachers and seniors, students learn to experience success, academically and socially. Students learn that although formal curriculum lays stress on learning, scholarship and academic excellence, with the values of hidden curriculum like pleasing the authorities and following rules unquestioningly, they are able to cope effectively in school.

4.5.1.2 Individualism and competitiveness

The values of cooperation and common good are extolled by the formal curriculum, but the hidden curriculum promotes individualism and competition. Teachers lay stress on individual achievement, promoting competition in the class so that students strive for 'highest scores.' This is a commonly observed in our country during the Board exams.

From the discussions, we find that the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum teach contrarian or opposite values; the former teaches 'common good', while the latter teaches 'competition; formal curriculum teaches equality of opportunity, hidden curriculum teaches that some children are privileged over others; formal curriculum teaches democracy whereas hidden curriculum teaches children that school is an authoritative place.

4.5.1.3 Schools reproduce and reinforce social inequalities

Schools are a part of the larger social structure which is characterized by inequalities in social class, caste, language, gender and ethnicity. Do schools also reflect the unequal social relations that exist in society? How does this happen in school?

The Right to Education Act (RTE) makes education the fundamental right and duty of every child aged between six and 14. Non-discrimination and equality in school are fundamental to the Right to Education. A report by HRW (2014) says discriminatory practices such as verbal and physical abuse, segregation and denial of school meals are forcing many marginalised children to quit school. This is contrary to almost 100 percent enrolment in primary schools shown in government figures. The Report notes that, *Instead of encouraging children from at-risk communities who are often the first in their families to ever step inside a classroom, teachers often neglect or even mistreat them.*"

Although all schools should function on the principle of equality of opportunity for all, there are several studies suggest that, in actuality, as in the larger society,

the school does not treat students equally. There is a deep rooted discrimination by teachers and other school staff against the poor and the marginalised students in school. In this context, Nambissan's study (2009) reveals how teachers engage in caste based discriminatory practices evident in the division of tasks in school. Tasks like sweeping are more likely to be given to Dalit, those like serving water and food to teachers are given to children from general castes.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund, 80 million Indian children drop out of school before completing elementary education. Many are from low caste or Dalit communities, Muslims and indigenous tribes people, who have long faced mistreatment because of deep-rooted prejudices.

.....Another Musahar boy in the same class told researchers the teacher would make them sit in a corner of the room and throw keys at them when she was angry.

"We only got food if anything was left after other children were served. The teacher hit my classmate so hard that she broke his hand. After this incident, gradually all Musahar children stopped going to school."

Other children spoke of being forced to sit separately and subjected to insulting, derogatory remarks by teachers and other staff.

In some schools, such children were never considered for leadership roles such as class monitor because of their caste or community, the report said. Many children were expected to perform unpleasant jobs such as cleaning toilets, it added.

This demoralises children and leads to low self-esteem, possibly to truancy, and to early employment and marriage.

Source: <https://in.reuters.com/article/india-school-children-dropout/bigoted-teachers-lead-marginalised-indian-school-kids-to-drop-out-hrw-id>

Unequal social relations that exist in society are also reproduced and reinforced in school in several ways which includes curriculum, pedagogy, teacher attitudes and behaviour, peer interaction and day to day school rituals and practices which get institutionalised over a period of time.

4.5.1.4 Seating arrangement in class

Students are expected to sit freely in the classroom but it is observed that, in practice, children are guided by the teacher's preferences. 'Intelligent' children sit in front and those considered 'weak' sit at the back. In many cases, girls and boys are segregated and occupy different spaces on teacher's perception of 'good, well-behaved and intelligent' children, reinforcing existing cultural norms through gender segregation. The front benchers are expected to learn the lesson by rote and answer questions asked by the teacher, the rest, for fear of humiliation prefer to remain out of the teacher's gaze. Children who can reproduce textbook information also become 'teacher's pet', as they display 'good behaviour' and are more willing to follow rules and instructions. The

message that gets conveyed by the teacher is that some children are 'intelligent' and 'capable' of studying, are 'disciplined', whereas others are not only lack the ability and interest to study and are 'disobedient'. Consequently, the teacher denies such children meaningful opportunities to interact and learn, leading to a lack of confidence and low self esteem. Research suggests that children who are considered 'weak' by the teacher, more often than not, belong to the marginalised groups in society (Dalits, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, Urban Poor and girls) and come from poorly schooled or non-literate backgrounds, the discriminatory attitude of the teacher pushes them to the margins of the classroom where they get no pedagogic attention.

4.5.1.5 Textbooks and representation of the marginalized

Earlier we have discussed how components of hidden curriculum affect student learning-explicitly and implicitly. It is important to examine here if the formal curriculum or 'textbooks' adequately represent the stories, lives and struggles, and the heroes of the marginalised groups. In an exploratory study conducted near Jaipur, Rajasthan, Dalit children felt it was rare for the teacher to draw attention of the class to the lives of the Scheduled Castes or their leaders. (Nambissan, 2009, p. 10)

The textbooks points to the lack of presence of women and lessons focus mostly on men. Studies in the Indian context (Karlekar, 1986, 2003, p. 83) Bhog, 2002, p.1640) show that stories in language textbooks were mostly male-centered and in nearly 50% stories men were the only actors. It was also found that women are portrayed in the stereotypical role as wives and mothers confined to household chores. Most research suggests that textbooks and the hidden curriculum in schools also reinforces rather than counter the subject choice of girls and boys based on gender (Nambissan, p. 536, Seminar, 2004); man come across as 'doers' engaged in work with technical skills, women are shown in passive roles.



Stereotyping of gender roles in textbooks: Man in 'active' and woman in 'passive' role

Research by Western scholars highlights the hidden curriculum of teacher bias towards boys, their negative attitude towards girls, the 'masculine' atmosphere in science labs as partly responsible for girls losing confidence in science and maths. (Ibid, p. 537).

The foregoing discussion highlights the role of the hidden curriculum made visible through textbooks, teacher attitudes and biases, and attitude of teachers themselves, in reproducing and reinforcing the unequal social and gender relations that exist in society. Schools as public institutional spaces offer equality and non-discrimination, but in practice, as in the larger society, the school treats students differentially, depending on their social class, religion, language and gender. Students reinforce and reinforce the larger system of inequality and the status quo continues.

Check Your Progress

5. What is hidden curriculum and how does it impact student learning?

.....

6. How do the marginalised get affected by the hidden curriculum transmitted by teacher biases? Explain.

.....

7. What are the advantages of using ‘cooperative learning’ strategies in classroom in the context of hidden curriculum?

.....

4.6 REVISITING THE DISCUSSION ON CURRICULUM AND IDEOLOGY: RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF EDUCATION?

In the previous discussions, we have seen the linkages between ideology and curriculum. Ideological values of the dominant group and their vision of society find reflection in the curriculum through selection of content, its transaction and assessment. In this way, we have discussed, curriculum is not value-neutral; it legitimises the ideas and interests of the dominant groups. But does this mean that the educational and curriculum philosophies have no role in deciding what is taught?

4.6.1 School as a ‘Local’ Institution

The school is a complex institution which has a ‘local’ character and functions to meet the expectations of various stakeholders like students, parents, community and the employers. Although curriculum can be seen as a product of the dominant ideology, classroom practices may, at times, support particular

teaching and learning practices as a response to local factors. These relationships have themselves been changing over time as a result of growing knowledge – for example, increasing awareness of the importance of teachers’ assessment practices (Black & William, 1998).

4.6.2 Role of political actors and bureaucracy

Curriculum formulation involves a wide range of participants. The authority over curriculum rests, in most cases, with central or state governments. The role of political and bureaucratic personnel becomes important in making decisions about formulating policies about curriculum and revision. A powerful bureaucrat’s or politician’s opinion or individual preferences can influence what might be added or dropped from a proposed curriculum.

4.6.3 Role of stakeholders

Teachers, principals, administrators, politicians and subject matter experts from schools, colleges and universities play an important role in the curriculum formation and revision process and have their preferences and opinions.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have discussed that ideology is a perspective or a worldview reflecting the nature of society a specific social group seeks to create: its polity, economy, culture and network of relationships. A dynamic society is likely to have multiple ideologies, divergent and conflicting, which results in ideological struggles in society. All ideologies do not have equal power to establish their supremacy and hegemony; it is the ideology of the dominant classes that are successful in hegemonising through the civil society, educational institutions and media, etc. This ideological battle is played out in the domain of education too where questions such as ‘what is worth teaching’ whose knowledge is most worthy’ become the premises on which curriculum is formed. Curriculum therefore is not neutral or value free because curriculum ideologies reflect the vision of what the school curriculum should be-the purposes of schooling and how these purposes can be achieved.

School curriculum, especially the hidden curriculum is a major carrier of ideological messages and impacts student learning adversely in case of marginalised.

By and large, schools reinforce the status quo and reproduce social and gender inequalities. Only a pedagogy that empowers the learner to critique and question the given and fixed knowledge will enable her to question the transmission model of education and challenge the aims and purposes of education.

4.8 UNIT END EXERCISE

1. Analyse the role played by schools in developing ideological hegemony.
2. Examine any text book and illustrate how textbooks convey hidden messages to learners.

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Ideology is seen as an individual's viewpoint of a specific group at a particular juncture in history.
2. Hegemony of idea refer to the process of by which dominant culture maintain its dominant position. Here, ideas of dominant culture is referred to.
2. Curriculum covers all that is supposed to be taught in schools i.e. content, methods teaching and assessment.
4. (c)
5. It is an informal curriculum and is not reflected in the formal curriculum.
6. Refer to section 4.5.1.5
7. Cooperative learning strategies will help in promoting cooperative values, and thus minimise individualism and competitiveness promoted hidden curriculum.

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