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PERSPECTIVES OF CURRICULUM: A REVIEW

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Abstract: Curriculum can be recognized as an authoritative prescription for the course of study of a system of schools. According to old concept, the curriculum was merely an outline of the course of study. The new concept of curriculum represents a very broad dimension in itself, which means that it is tailored very flexibly by the curriculum developers to meet the diverse needs of the students at various age levels in recent days. The different aspects of this very curriculum helps the learners to acquire various knowledge, whether it is taught directly by the school or indirectly inculcated among them through both teachers and peers. In most of the textbooks, core, hidden, latent and null curriculum are present more or less. Core or written or overt curriculum directly inculcates the required knowledge through the syllabus mentioned in textbooks. Although many of us think of hidden or covert and latent curriculum as the same but there is a very subtle difference between these two types of curriculum. There is a bit of difficulty in understanding the null curriculum even after so many debates and efforts to extend its knowledge base. The general purpose of this paper is to understand the concepts of core, hidden, latent and null curriculum as well as their identification in textbooks. By reviewing some selected past and present significant articles, this review article is aimed to identify and bring forward the importance of the different aspects of the curriculum involved in various textbooks, and fortify insights for the due improvements in the textbooks so that the new curriculum runs parallel to the recent trends in education. This is a sincere effort to present the various types of curriculum in current textbooks and it is also hoped that we can one-day meet the challenges to build up an ideal curriculum through optimal incorporation of core, hidden, latent and null aspects of the curriculum in textbooks which may lead to advancement in the curriculum development.

Keywords: Curriculum, Core curriculum, Hidden curriculum, Latent curriculum, Null curriculum, Textbooks.

Introduction: The term *curriculum* has been used with quite different meanings ever since its concept came into existence. Education is a process, and curriculum is the means to the process. The term 'curriculum' is, etymologically, derived from the Latin word "*currere*", meaning run or run-way or a running course. Curriculum is from Modern Latin, in which this term means 'a course of study'. Thus, curriculum can be said to be a course to be run for reaching a certain goal. Curriculum in use can be prescriptive, descriptive or both. Diverse concepts of curriculum regarding its contents and functions are available worldwide since educationists give their own interpretations and opinions. Nowadays, the growing area of interest is the factors that influence the learning environment in the school or classrooms. The orientation of the mind-set of the educators can greatly influence the students' learning. The development of curriculum has taken a huge leap from the ancient years till recent years. Previously, the curriculum focused mainly on the cognitive development of the individual rather than overall development. But the current curriculum implemented focuses on the all-round development of the learners, including the cognitive, conative and psychomotor domains. Through curriculum analysis, new social, economic and individual needs of the learners have been identified because of the inclusive education pattern, but the changes brought in the education field are far behind the changes that are happening in the real world. This is a concern among the educationists and the curriculum needs reform for its effective advancements.

The core curriculum is rather concluded as common instead of what is essential in a particular level. It is generally presented at institutions, schools and various organizations for different purposes. The curriculum is not rigid, and can be analysed and reformed whenever needed. A common structure is implemented by the curriculum makers that is used by the schools officials and teachers to build up knowledge among the students. The core curriculum has an important role in the Indian system of school development as a means of managing educational change. A core curriculum is that in which all or some of the subjects or courses are based on a central theme in order to correlate the subjects and themes. The content in this written curriculum has to be flexible to meet the diverse needs of learners. The learning experiences of the students are mainly based on the local situations that will enhance their intellectual abilities, ethical values, as well as love of learning. As for the hidden curriculum, this is a recent controversial curriculum issue. Hidden curriculum can be recognized as the implicit or unspoken content, or behaviours, or rules, or norms in an educational setting that inculcates moral values within the learners. These are basically the lessons that are 'not formally taught' in the lesson plan. It transmits beliefs and values in the learners and thereby enhance their personal growth. Since this is unspoken, there lies a disadvantage with this curriculum that the teachers can use this unethically and influence the students negatively. That is why, there is a need for deep understanding of the concept of hidden curriculum both by the teachers and the learners. Latent curriculum, according to the educationists, is the information that is either considered to be already taught in the previous class or the students are already aware of that concept. Apart from this, the latent curriculum also includes those parts which are not directly mentioned in the chapters but are related to the topics concerned and will be eventually taught in the next subsequent classes. Different from the other curriculums is the null curriculum, which is neither taught by the schools nor learned by the students. It is a multi-faceted concept and is generally described as 'what is not taught'. Various concepts about the null curriculum has made it a muddied juncture, that is to say, it is ambiguous. The topics in the textbooks that are considered too unimportant, too controversial, too inappropriate may fall under the category of null curriculum. It is of the knowledge that since due to lack of time in schools, some of the parts from the written or core curriculum are intentionally eliminated or left out by the teachers, which in turn sends out messages to the students that these parts or topics are not that important. The reasons for these left out topics should be explained by the teachers. But it would be very advantageous if these null curriculum could be connected or included in the core curriculum for the advanced knowledge of the learners.

Objectives:

The objectives of this review study are:

1. To see the different types of work that has already been done related to identification of core, hidden, latent and null curriculum.
2. To find out any findings or advancements related to curriculum studies.
3. To study the importance of core, hidden, latent and null curriculum in various textbooks.
4. To find significant future opportunities for research related to incorporation of possible null curriculum within written curriculum.

Methodology:

It is a kind of meta-research, which includes the keywords for the literature search like core, hidden, latent and null curriculum. A total of twenty-seven relevant authentic articles were identified. After examining the abstracts, contents and subject-matter, the significant twenty articles were considered for this review.

Studies undertaken for reviewing:

International Perspectives:

Yasmin (2005) examined the **“Curriculum and Textbooks: Issues, Concerns and Formation in Bangladesh”**. The evaluation of curriculum and textbooks was based on value judgement, quality, accuracy, probability, acceptability through both formative and summative evaluation systems. The effectiveness of the curriculum and textbooks was examined to ensure reform and changes in it accordingly. The curriculum was found to be inconsistent and ambiguous as compared to previous curriculum formation which was systematic. It was recommended that the education specialists should figure out the issues and make collective efforts to reform and construct the existing curriculum.

Levander and Mikkola (2009) conducted a study entitled **“Core Curriculum Analysis: A Tool for Educational Design”**. This study emphasizes on the electronic core curriculum analysis by designing a matrix for describing scientific professional knowledge and skills. The teachers evaluated the curriculum in qualitatively different ways and the descriptions were stored in a database for future designing of curricula. The analytic dimensions exhibited in the descriptions were categorized as Implicit, Explicit, Extensive and Brief. The core curriculum analysis was found to be a powerful developmental tool for determining the powerful analytical ability of teachers and also evaluates the essentiality of teaching-learning process.

Vittika et.al. (2012) conducted a research on **“The Finnish National Core Curriculum: Structure and Development”**. In Finland, the local curricula designed by the teachers are based on the national core curriculum which has a dual role: an administrative steering document (mission, values, conception of learning, developing learning environment, school culture and working methods), and a tool for teachers to develop their own pedagogical praxis (objectives and core contents of teaching). This collaboration lead to a shift of curriculum development towards its structure and pedagogical functionality.

Alsubaie (2015) focused on **“Hidden Curriculum as One of Current Issue of Curriculum”**. This study investigated the aspect of hidden curriculum in both positive and negative way. Some teachers use this hidden curriculum in a positive aspect through their behaviour and teaching and some others use this purposely. It concluded that the hidden curriculum to be promoted and reinforce the regular curriculum. Also it was recommended that the educators should positively use the hidden curriculum to change negative beliefs and thoughts.

Burrill et.al. (2015) conducted a study on **“Curriculum and The Role of Research”**. This report is based on the analysis of responses to survey questions from 11 countries: Australia, Brazil, Egypt, England, China, Honduras, Indonesia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, and 6 states in US. The paper also puts forward the role of textbooks, teacher support and technology in attaining curriculum goals. The effect of this research is that other countries can examine their standards/ curricular goals relative to these mentioned countries across the world.

Gholami and Rahimi (2016), Ghahramani and Dorri (2016) critically analysed the concept of **“A Reflection on Null Curriculum”**. The paper is generally based on the fulfilment of two main objectives: the different types of null curriculum and the general factors affecting it. This study is based on the reviewing of several studies on curriculum designing and various scientific sites were searched for more information and required data. It was found out that there were some factors affecting curriculum designing in Iranian educational system and also curriculum developers must make efforts to include some tips to meet the educational needs and purposes.

Gardeshi et.al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study on **“The perception of hidden curriculum among undergraduate medical students”**. This study was based on semi-structured interviews of the students, which were recorded and converted into scripts, which were again divided into sentences and phrases- called units. Units put together with similar groups- called codes, finally similar codes as themes. 32 students studying in years 1-7 in Shiraz Medical School, Iran, were interviewed. It was concluded that it was necessary to provide data about hidden curriculum and encourage patient-centered curriculum to the medical students.

Bas and Senturk (2019) formulated a study **“Teachers’ Voice: Teacher Participation in the Curriculum Development Process”**. The purpose of this research was to perceive the participation of teachers in the process of curriculum development. For this, a qualitative instrumental case study was designed and 27 teachers from 5 public high schools in the province of Nigde, Turkey participated in the research. It was found out that the teachers have more opportunities to participate in curriculum development at the local level, rather than at the central level. It was recommended that the teachers should be more involved in curriculum designing for its better development and they know the conditions of their students and school in a more better way.

Kazemi et.al. (2020) conducted a research on **“Development and Validation of a Null Curriculum Questionnaire Focusing on 21st Century Skills using the Rasch Model”**. This study is both a qualitative and quantitative research to determine the aspects of null curriculum in Iranian ELT context in BA level with focus on 21st century skills. A questionnaire was prepared on mixed methods which contained 48 items based on: Ravitz (2014) and Ashraf et.al. (2016) questionnaires. These items were divided into 10 different constructs and each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale. 80 university instructors teaching at BA level participated in the study. The findings of the study confirmed that the Rasch model fits the null curriculum in ELT: focusing on 21st century skills.

Cahapay (2021) conducted a review work on **“A systematic review of concepts in understanding null curriculum”**. The purpose of this paper was to synthesize the concepts in understanding the null curriculum as there still lies difficulties in it. The method for this study was systematic review- which uses explicit methods to reduce biasness and provide reliable data. The process used was called Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). From the reports, it was found out that the null curriculum being described as a phenomenon taking multiple dimensions, occurs at hierarchial levels and can be identified by various frames of reference.

National Perspectives:

Akhtar and Khalida (2006) conducted a study on **“A critical study on development of Indian National Curriculum with Special Reference to Science Education, Social Studies and Information Technology at Secondary School Level since Independence”**. The purpose of this study was to make an in-depth study of the curriculum in NCERT textbooks of classes IX, X, XI and XII of UP. 600

students from class IX and X each, 600 from Life Science of class XI, 600 from Social Studies, 600 from Life Science of class XII and 600 from Social Studies of XII were taken. Similarly, 150 teachers from each stream also participated. The interpretation of data was done by frequency and percentage calculation. It was concluded that science and social studies curriculum can be made more attractive and Information Technology is only in primitive stage.

Parashar A.K. et.al. (2012) reviewed on **“Innovations and Curriculum Development for Engineering Education and Research in India”**. It was reviewed that contrasting initiatives was desirable for sustainability in engineering education in different institution for Indian higher education. For future progress, there should be important developments on academic programme, policy statements, and education projects.

Kidwai et.al. (2013) wrote a book entitled **“The Policy and Practice of Public Primary Curriculum in India-A Study of Textbooks in Public Primary Schools of District Morigaon (Assam) and District Medak (Andhra Pradesh)”**. This study put forward the challenges and opportunities faced by students, teachers in interpreting the prescribed curriculum in classrooms. For constructive discourse and practice, the Department of Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), District Institute for Education and Training (DIET), and State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) is working to improve the quality of education in Morigaon and Medak.

Patankar and Jadhav (2013) conducted a study on **“Role of Teachers in Curriculum Development for Teacher Education”**. This paper dealt with the curriculum development process, role of teacher as curriculum developer and to communicate the best practices for curriculum development. It was concluded that since teachers can play an important role in curriculum development for teacher education as a planner, implementer, decision-maker etc. So the process of curriculum development was decentralized to increase teachers' involvement in the process.

Sankaran (2015) formulated and investigated on **“Indian Education Crisis: Challenges in Curriculum Building”**. The purpose of this paper was to focus on the nature of our school curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation and also to determine their impact on overall education process and outcomes. The assumptions in the process of curriculum design which we never challenged, was questioned- based on Vivekananda's and western philosophy of education. The curriculum planners are responsible for their operations and the consequences they generate.

Kundu (2018) conducted **“A Study on Indian Teachers' Roles and Willingness to Accept Educational Technology”**. For this research purpose, 175 primary and secondary teachers from various schools in West Bengal, India, were launched to focus on their perception to their new roles. It was found out that the teachers who were in facilitator and delegator roles were more willing to adopt educational technology.

Majeed and Wani (2018) carried out a study on **“Trends of Research in the Field of Curriculum Studies-India and Abroad (2000 to 2018)”**. The methods of this study were frequently used subject-matter, research methods, samples, trends in data collection tools and data analysis. It was found out that mixed method containing both qualitative and quantitative research methods were best for curriculum design. Other research tools that were used were questionnaire, interview, observation, percentage, standard deviation, ANOVA, Structural Equivalency Model etc.

Chitra (2019) formulated a study on **“Emerging Trends in Teacher Education in India”**. The purpose of this paper is to determine the significance of changes occurring in teacher education in India and also to provide the process of national trends relating to global trends as well as the reforms and innovations in teacher education. It has been concluded that the teacher education programs should be more structured and modified for the teacher candidates to easily face the challenges in the field of education.

Rashmi and Raj (2019) carried out a research on **“Analysing teacher education curriculum in India: Problems & Prospects”**. This study was analysed by looking at recommendations of different educational committees, salient educational surveys, research literature etc. After critically analysing, it was found out that our education system views teacher education and school curriculum separately.

Therefore, an ideal teacher education curriculum is to be designed has been advised to satisfy the needs of the contemporary education system of the country.

Batra (2020) investigated a recent study on “**Re-imagining curriculum in India: Charting a path beyond the pandemic**”. This paper was reflected on the role that curriculum can play in enabling an ecologically and socially just world post-pandemic. The present health crisis compels us to rethink the meanings and purposes of education because the existing curriculum will not suffice the needs of education in the post-pandemic world. The current pandemic situation will lead us to re-construct the curriculum into a relevant one which will address the question “What knowledge has the most worth?” anew.

Conclusion:

Contribution and significance of core, hidden, latent and null curriculums on different phases of development of the learners can be understood by critically analysing various textbooks. Core curriculum occupies the major portion of the textbooks for gaining knowledge about the topics concerned. Hidden and latent curriculum occupies a smaller proportion of the textbooks. Before the beginning of any chapter, teachers must explain the latent curriculum to the students so that they can link the present concepts to their previous knowledge. They can also add a bit of exciting topics at the end of their teaching to lit up curiosity among the learners. In contrast, some of the concepts in the null curriculum can be included within the core curriculum so that the students can gain a higher level of knowledge and understanding. Efficient learning activities should be present within the core curriculum to develop the psychomotor domain of the learners, alongside cognitive and conative domains. But all the activities present in textbooks may not be possible to carry out within the limited time period, so these topics are put within the null curriculum by the teachers intentionally. In these aspects, the textbooks in operation can be enhanced in many ways that can benefit the learners and also develop their different domains of knowledge in a more advanced way. Despite these challenges, curriculum analysis is, no doubt, a powerful developmental tool to catch up with the recent trends in education.

Future Perspectives:

There is a scope of further improvements and advancements in curriculum by making some desired reforms like including a bit of null curriculum in core curriculum, adding small efficient learning activities, taking into consideration the limited time period for a particular session. Researches involving the reformation of the flaws in the existing curriculums can be undertaken so that the learners gain enhanced and enriched knowledge to go in flow with the recent trends and advancements in education.

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