Teachers' Perceptions of Hidden Curriculum in Shaping Student Character

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ABSTRACT

Although the hidden curriculum is not taught in official programs, it has a strong influence on shaping the character and personality of the students. This paper will attempt to investigate how the hidden curriculum works in the character education of secondary school students. This study is a Qualitative research and the Ethnographic research qualitative design is applied. The sample of the study will comprise 60 Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) and were chosen in University Campus (Islamia Collegiate School of boys and University Model School of girls) of the district Peshawar Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study had a sample of 20 SSTs (10 SSTs in each school with Purposive sampling technique being applied to select the sample. The instruments of data collection were semi-structured interview and Observation as Findings reveal that most of the teachers might not know the term hidden curriculum, but their actions are based on the principles of this concept and lead to the development of such qualities as perseverance, fairness, and responsibility. Educators have recognized the essence of character education as a requirement to the personal growth as well as academic achievement. The paper emphasizes the role that character is developed in day-to-day interactions and at an unconscious level, thus making it clear that teacher-student relationships must be harmonious. It concludes that such awareness of the hidden curriculum can be incorporated into teacher training and education policy to help build character better preparing students to deal with not only academic issues but also life outside of school.

Keywords: *Teachers 'Perception, Hidden Curriculum, Character Building, Secondary School level*

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a pillar to the development of people, societies and states. The major objectives of it are to train people to live, qualify them to work in different professions, and cultivate moral and social character (Ahmad, Ghafar and Khan, 2021). One of the main tools of attaining these purposes is the curriculum which offers the guidance in teaching and learning. Conventionally, the term curriculum can be used to refer to written documents that state learning objectives. Nevertheless, researchers claim that a curriculum that emphasizes purely on academic competencies is not complete. It also has to encompass more general life skills like communication, collaboration, respect, and health (Mulenga, 2018; Ali, Idris and Mehmood, 2022).

National curriculum is focused on 3 domains in Pakistan namely, cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor. However, most educators are focused on the delivery of content but do not pay enough attention to moral and emotional elements. This usually causes problems like lack of discipline, disrespect and unethical conduct on students. To deal with these issues, scholars underline the significance of the hidden curriculum which refers to the unofficially taught lessons, values, and attitudes which students acquire as a result of

teacher actions, the interaction of peers, and school culture (Alsubaie, 2015; Borges et al., 2017). Hidden curriculum entails values such as respect, accountability, perseverance, and self-control that play a great role in molding the character of the students.

A hidden curriculum is an unexpected process in learning that is not stated in the core curriculum. It explains the way a teacher uses a subject as a method to develop the knowledge of the students well beyond the intended subject matter. Formal curriculum involves students in courses, classes, and learning activities, and information and skills teachers deliberately pass on to students. Although the so-called Hidden curriculum is known as informal, unwritten, social, and cultural learning that learners obtain during their studies at school (Glossary of Education, 2015).

The concept of a hidden curriculum, according to Alsubaie (2015), refers to an implicit curriculum, which conveys and signifies attitudes, knowledge, and behavior that are passed across or exchanged without awareness; conveyed indirectly through words and actions that all people experience in culture. Hidden curricula have the unintentional natural learning (Borges, Ferreira, de Oliveira, Macini, and Caldana, 2017).

According to Hafferty (1998), a set of factors that exists at the organizational structure and culture is what he describes as hidden curriculum. A hidden curriculum refers to that which children learn due to the organizational design and structure of the public schools, the attitude of teachers and the administrators, and the behavior they exhibit (Benawa, Peter & Makmun, 2018). The hidden curriculum influences the character of students significantly. A hidden curriculum is comprised of teachers, their actions, the campus, and even the students themselves and may affect and develop a character of a student.

The term character refers to a code of behavior, thoughts, and attitudes based on general principles, moral power, and honesty. The character of an individual is seen through life qualities that include self control, good attitudes, humility and wisdom. Consequently, character education is spelt out as a coherent and structured method of education, which promotes self-respect, responsibility, and honesty as a decent citizen. The values, morality, and ethics are also outcomes of education (Otewa, 2016).

The rationale behind character education is that it can assist the young pupils in conquering aggressive, dishonest, unjust, irresponsible, uncooperative and unwanted behavior. Consequently, character development has gained much importance in every learning institution. Numerous research studies have been conducted on the same in various industrialized countries across the globe. The Pakistani government has not been left behind in recognizing the value of character in the life of an individual and a nation (Ahmad, Ghafar & Khan, 2021).

Character is described as a pattern of behavior that is not present in isolation, or in other words, character is connected with ideas and values of a person. The nation lifestyle and communal attitude of living should serve to develop character, which is a manifestation of differentiation in the society. Student group will also be managed to impact the most successful implementation of a hidden curriculum capable of developing a character of a student into a tough person (Gunawan, Kusumaningrum, Triwiyanto, Zulkarnain&Nurabadi, 2018).

Character education thus not only concerns official education but the building of truthfulness, fairness and responsibility by indirect experiences at school (Gunawan et al., 2018). Educators have a crucial role in the given process as the way a teacher manages the classroom, relationships with learners, and personal behaviors teaches more than textbooks (Sari and Doganay, 2009; Ali, Idris, and Mehmood, 2022). Despite the popularity of international studies on hidden curriculum in higher and medical education (Gardeshi, Amini & Nabeiei, 2018; Gao, 2015), there are fewer studies about the opinions of teachers on the topic at

the secondary level, especially in terms of values that are taught informally. It is the gap that makes the current study justified.

Statement of the Problem

The hidden curriculum plays an important role in building the values and behavior of students and in some cases it is more influential than the formal training (Gardeshi et al., 2018; Ali et al., 2022). However, in Pakistan, it has not been popular in the official educational planning, and perceptions of teachers regarding its role in building of character is not well explored. This gap is critical at the secondary level where moral and social traits have not yet been developed.

The hidden curriculum has become a widely neglected aspect of formal education plans in spite of its influence owing to the fact that it is not taught directly. One should know how teachers perceive the hidden curriculum, and how it helps to shape behavior and values of students. Such knowledge can be applied to apply the hidden curriculum positively and overcome any undesirable negative outcomes. The hidden curriculum plays a significant role in character formation of the students as a research of District Mardan underlined it to be crucial and in need of systematic application (Ali, Hussain, Zeb, 2023). Although it is important, hidden curriculum is not always formally structured depending on perceptions of individual teachers, which may result in varying outcomes. Although the hidden curriculum plays an important role in the character building of the students, there is little focus on the perception of the teachers on the hidden curriculum and its contribution to the moral and social growth of the students. This paper examines the perceptions of teachers to the hidden curriculum and how it influences the character building of secondary students in District Peshawar to offer an insight to effective usage of the curriculum.

This paper will explore the beliefs of teachers with regard to the concept of hidden curriculum in District Peshawar and how it leads to the development of values such as respect, responsibility, perseverance, self-control, and fairness. The perception of these would give the way to improve character education in school.

Objective of the Study

- To explore teachers' perceptions regarding the hidden curriculum at the secondary level.

Research Question

- What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the hidden curriculum?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hidden Curriculum

Hidden is an English word, that is, hide. The term hidden curriculum is applied to the aspects of learning in school which students acquire by default, not as a lesson, and not explicitly taught in the classroom. This may involve norms, beliefs and attitudes that are manifested in the form of culture, policies and relations between students and teachers in school.

It is quite common to find that many experts will give more attention and concern in understanding, developing and evaluating written or formal curricula over unwritten or hidden curricula. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that an explicit written curriculum is simpler to understand and interpret as compared to inexplicit, more allusive one. Other scholars believe that a covert curriculum carries the same elemental

quality which is assigned to a formal or written curriculum. Still others feel that a hidden curriculum is very crucial and has a much bigger influence on the learning process of the student compared to the formal curricula.

Educators impart the hidden curriculum, which they teach without even intending to teach, through their interactions, modeling and school or classroom culture; it is made up of unspoken values, beliefs, norms and culture. The hidden curriculum, however, is arguably the most significant in the sphere; as it often makes an unalterable impression upon educator to aspire when becoming a member of the profession (Betkowski, 2022).

Hidden curriculum is not indicated in the official curriculum yet may have a lot of impact on the learning and development of students. To provide an example, the hidden curriculum can either reinforce cultural norms and values, or define the sense of self-worth and motivation towards students. It is also capable of shaping the behavior and relationships of the students with other people.

Concept of Hidden Curriculum

Hidden curriculum was coined in the late sixties by the American sociologist Philip Jackson. Jackson in his masterpiece book, Life in Classrooms, suggested that schools did not only impart academic knowledge to students; it also imparted on them significant cultural norms, values, and beliefs in an implicit or informal way.

The work of Jackson was one in a larger group of criticism of American education and how schools sustained cultural, social, economic disparities. He held that the hidden curriculum helped contribute towards the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of students and was also an important element in creating social and cultural variations among students with various backgrounds.

The idea about the hidden curriculum has become popular in education, sociology, and psychology since the first publication of this concept in 1993 by Jackson. It has been applied to characterize a broad array of implicit lessons taught in school such as feelings towards authority, behavioral norms and cultural values.

Types of Hidden Curriculum

There are two types of hidden curriculum:

1. Intentional Hidden Curriculum
2. Unintentional Hidden Curriculum

Intentional hidden curriculum refers to chosen values and beliefs included by an educator in learning and teaching setting. This may encompass such things as classroom rules, expectations and discipline policies, their values and beliefs as are taught explicitly through the curriculum.

Teachers could be purposeful when they demonstrate particular behaviors. There can be instances of opportunity to be a model of a particular behavior or a character virtue to allow students to observe a moral action or do what is good in a situation.

Unintentionally hidden curriculum on the other hand is implicit messages and values which are taught in an unintentional manner through the manner in which the teachers deal with the students, the manner in which the classes are organized and also the way the schools are managed. To illustrate this, when a school

is usually congratulatory to its high performing students then it will send the wrong message that academic performance is the most valuable thing.

Character Building

The term character is a Greek word, i.e. character, meaning, a tool by which a mark is made by a tool; or by which a mark is produced by a tool. When applied to personality and morality the word had come to refer to a unique feature or characteristic peculiar to a person. As time passed, the definition of the word has been changed to represent the totality of qualities and traits that constitute the moral and ethical character of a person and their values, beliefs and behaviours. In that regard, character is defined as the totality of the traits, habits, and dispositions of a person that constitutes a distinctive and identifiable personality (Muslich, 2022).

Character can be described as a combination of good traits which are expressed in thinking, emotions and actions. People with a strong personality are capable of being rational and not easily thrown about wrong in regard to the worth of something that lies outside of themselves.

The construction of character is known as character building which involves the definition and reinforcement of the traits and principles that outline the moral and ethical character of a person. Such a process may include a number of experiences, relationships, and educational experiences that enable an individual to learn and internalize valuable virtues like honesty, responsibility, kindness, respect, self control, fairness, perseverance, courage and compassion. Character building aims at producing an all rounded person capable of making good decisions and behaving in a way that is in line with their values and beliefs. It is a lifelong journey, which involves hard work and dedication but it may result in self-development and life satisfaction. Character are also included in the affective domain in the world of education particularly learning activities that carry the academic morals.

Character education has been defined as the deliberate effort in schools to inculcate the psychological traits of the students that stimulate and empower them to behave in manner that is ethical, democratic and socially productive and effective. It is worth taking note that we have been long preoccupied with the interpersonal, particularly, the moral, side of character; in other words, with the motivation and ability to act in a manner that is ethically right and socially responsible. Nonetheless, at least four subcategories of character exist: moral, performance, intellectual, civic. character is the complex of psychological traits, which inspires and allows acting as a moral agent, acting optimally, acting to seek knowledge and intellectual prosperity, and acting to be a productive member of the society. Character education can also be described as a given curriculum that creates knowledge of the good character qualities and characteristics to the students. In this way, the character education can be discussed, in general, as the attempt of the educational institutions to bring the values of positive character to the learners.

Characteristics of Good Character

Although that there is no universal definition of character education that can be provided, as cited in Pearson and Nicholson (2000), London (1987) highlighted the point that it is more valuable to present the attributes, which are related to good character. Pearson and Nicholson (2000), believe that good character is represented in three interdependent areas, which include self, others and the society. Using their own actual self, students are able to examine self-discipline, responsibility, trustworthiness, courage, and self-discipline. Such character traits: honesty, respect, empathy, kindness, and caring come into play with students that have a relationship with the classmates, teachers, friends, and families.

The value of all the character traits to students cannot be overlooked, since they have a significant role in the academic and personal growth of the students. Nevertheless, this research will allow the researcher to concentrate on Five (5) specific character traits that are significant to the secondary level students, and which might be more evident in the classroom when observed.

Here are the following character traits that can be studied in this research:

Respect

Respect can be defined as an admiration and deference towards a person or thing. It is about appreciating and valuing the value or the thing in question and treating other people kindly, thoughtfully and understandingly even when you do not agree with them. It may also include paying attention to the opinion of others, operating on mutual social norms and rules and shunning actions that are potentially hurtful and degrading. Respect might also be directed to things, concepts or belief which are valued or deemed important that include the natural environment, religious or cultural heritage, or to the laws within a society.

Responsibility

The responsibility is a condition of accountability or responsibility of something. It is being a duty or obligation to perform some acts or give decisions and be responsible of the consequences of the actions or decisions. Personal and professional life is an area where responsibility plays a role because it can be utilized to make people act in a trustworthy and reliable way and as well as the society as a whole.

Perseverance

Perseverance is the attribute of staying on with a course of action especially during difficulty or adversity. It is the capability to be driven, persistent and hardworking in spite of the challenges and difficulties to accomplish some long term goal or objectives. Endurance is a good quality that in most times is the key to success both personal and professional.

Self-Control

Self-control can be understood as the capacity to control thoughts, feelings, and actions with particular reference to difficult or demanding circumstances. It is a conscious decision of acting according to personal goals, values, and duties despite the temptations or distractions. Self-control is a critical attribute of individual growth since it enables one to keep emotions, thoughts and actions under control, and behave in a responsible and suitable way.

Fairness

Fairness refers to the aspect of being fair, unbiased and impartial in treatment or decisions made. It is defined as considering everyone, groups or even situations in the same way without any prejudice or discrimination. Equity is a significant element of personal and interpersonal communication since it can be used to develop a feeling of trust and respect and encourage a feeling of justice and equality.

According to Davis (2006), although there is a certain agreement in the education field concerning the kind of qualities a moral individual ought to exhibit, like responsibility, self-control, fairness, and respect, the modalities in which students ought to develop the qualities considered good, have been found to be far more difficult to establish.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is based on the Theory of Moral Development formulated by Lawrence Kohlberg that gives a perspective of the effects of the hidden curriculum on moral development. Kohlberg emphasized that:

1. The hidden curriculum is part of social interactions in schools and influences moral values.

2. Hidden curriculum is an excellent instrument in the moral growth as opposed to formal lessons.

3. In schools, fairness and justice encourage moral maturity by students.

Recent literature helps uphold the stand of Kohlberg that moral development should no longer be based on the authoritarian methods of moral development but should instead encourage democratic involvement, respectful and fair debate in the learning environment and classroom. His hypothesis is used to examine the effects of the hidden curriculum on the development of character in children in high schools.

Research Design

The research paper will use the qualitative ethnography design to investigate how teachers perceive the concept of the hidden curriculum in building student character at the secondary level in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ethnography is particularly appropriate in the interpretation of lived experiences and practice of cultures in natural settings. Qualitative research is based on the interpretation of the experiences and social realities by people, and the data is gathered by means of interviews, observations, and open-ended responses.

Population of the Study

A much broader population is the research population, which comprises people of common characteristics (Creswell, 2014). The population in this study is all the teachers and students of two schools within the University of Peshawar campus in the Islamia Collegiate School (Boys) and University Model School (Girls). In these institutions, there are 60 teachers in the secondary level.

Sample of the Study

The method used to sample the participants was purposive so that the participants were selected deliberately in the context of the research goals. A total of twenty teachers (10 each of the schools) were selected, as well as their 10 respective classes to observe. This is the size of the sample (about 15-20 percent of the population of teachers) that is recommended in qualitative research.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection was done by two tools.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews also give the opportunity of flexibility and insight in investigating the views of the participants. The researcher himself walked to teachers, gained rapport and made interviews.

Classroom Observation Checklist

The observation was conducted in the classroom of 10 th class to observe how teachers integrate hidden curriculum and how they foster values during regular lessons. The researcher used a structured observation checklist to document the classroom practices.

Pilot Study

Three secondary school teachers in another institution (ICMs School System) were used as a pilot study in refining interview questions and validating instruments. The pilot test assured the value of tools and aided in assuring reliability to the primary study.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles, with voluntary participation and informed consent and confidentiality of the answers.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This paper provides the essence of the findings through the interview of teachers and classroom observations. It puts into perspective the views of educators concerning the nature of character education, the place of hidden curriculum and values that are taking shape in practice which gives an overall picture of how character development is created in schools. These findings are based on the voices and experiences of teachers, as well as, classroom insights.

Philosophy on Character Education and Incorporation into Teaching Practice

The majority of the teachers are aware that character education is the key to academic achievement. They emphasized such qualities as responsibility, perseverance, self control, and respect as important in enabling students to overcome and keep motivated as well as committed to their studies.The educators also noted that such characteristics of character as empathy, kindness, and fairness establish a positive atmosphere which encourages cooperation and interaction in the classroom. It was highlighted by many that character education is helping in holistic development making students be equipped with the main aspects of life like problem-solving, decision-making that is ethical, and communication.

Nevertheless, some teachers, who are in the minority, did not see character education as a direct correlation of academic outcome. They felt that the intellectual capability, study habits and external support systems played a greater role in academic achievement.

Sub-theme: Methods for Incorporating Character Education

- Inclusion in Curriculum: Character development is commonly incorporated by the teacher in academic instruction via literature, case studies, life examples and projects.

- Explicit Instruction: There is explicit instruction through dedicated lesson in order to teach traits.

- Modeling: Most of them emphasized the need to be modeling such traits as kindness and respect in their everyday activity.

- Classroom Environment: Numerous rules and norms are made reinforcing respect and inclusivity with the help of group discussion which cultivates empathy.

- Partnership with Parents/ Community: Teachers accessed the parents with resource, home activities and community opportunities such as volunteering.

The obstacles mentioned include time limitations and a deficiency of parental cooperation, which were cited by teachers.

Relationship Between Character Education and Student Well-Being

It was also generally accepted by teachers that character education has beneficial effect on the well-being of students. It builds social-emotional capacity (empathy and resilience), promotes a favorable school climate of safety and respect, and personal development and self-efficacy.

Such qualities as perseverance and gratitude were regarded as especially useful in creating emotional strength and mental coping strategies.

Problems: Certain educators reported that there were external influences like parental support that are not available, curricular demands, and responsiveness of the students that adversely affected the ability to achieve homogenous well-being.

Character Traits Inculcated Among Students

Educators made efforts to instill various qualities such as honesty, empathy, respect, perseverance and responsibility.

Sub-theme: Specific Methods for Teaching and Reinforcing Traits

- Explicit Instruction and Modeling: The teachers used direct instruction along with regular role modeling.

- Use of Traits in Routines: Traits were strengthened with routine activities like the morning meetings and group projects.

- Cooperative Learning: In the form of group tasks, teamwork, empathy and collaboration were promoted.

- Reflection and Self-Assessment: The learners reflected and set the goals of their personal character development.

Problems: There were those teachers who emphasized academics by virtue of the curriculum requirements or they thought that character education did not have direct quantifiable outcomes.

Sub-theme: Success Stories or Challenges in Teaching Traits

- **Successes:** Personality encouragement, empathy role-playing, and peer modelling were reported to be effective.

- **Difficulties:** Characteristics like honesty (e.g. cheating) and self-control (e.g. impulsivity) needed to have regular expectations and methods such as mindfulness.

- **Strategies:** The teachers dealt with personalized goal-setting and peer support systems.

Creating a Positive and Respectful Classroom Culture

The educators acknowledged that a respectful classroom culture is the key to academic and personal achievement.

Sub-theme: Building Positive Relationships Strategies.

Personal Connections: Teachers managed to develop trust because of knowing students personally and treating them with care.

It was made with a safe space that promoted expression and inclusivity.

- Community and Collaboration: Teamwork facilitated peer support and collaboration.

Difficulties: There were problems with workloads and socially large classes, which complicated personal contacts. Teachers were also able to practice professional distance so that they were not favoritistic.

Sub-theme: Modeling Behavior of Teacher.

Role modeling was also emphasized as essential by most teachers respect, empathy and consistency. Humility was also practiced by teachers who would admit and learn their lesson.

- Challenges: At times, stress resulted in lack of consistency to model positive behavior.

- Sub-Theme: Relationship among Positive Culture, and Success.

- Academic Success: An honorable culture enhanced engagement and ownership of learning.

- Personal Success: Students gained confidence, emotional well-being and social skills.

- Community Skills: With respectful settings, students were ready to undertake social and professional assignments in the future.

Dealing with Student Disrespect.

Sub-topic: Approaches to dealing with disrespectful Behavior.

- Clear Expectations and Consequences: Expectations and consequences tended to be established and imposed together with the team.

- Restorative Practices: Conversations allowed teachers to mend relationships and consider causes.

- Positive Reinforcement: Respect was reinforced.

- One of the minorities preferred harsh punitive measures with no involvement.

Sub-topic: Communication with Parents Strategies.

Teachers emphasized:

- Active Communication: On-time information on events.

- Collaboration: Sharing of problems with parents.

- Professionalism and Empathy: The neutral, respectful communication to establish trust.

Sub-theme: The value of Consistency in the Disciplinary Measures.

- Regularity in the rules and penalties was regarded as the key to being fair and responsible.

- Promoting Respect and Dignity Among the Peers.

- Sub-topic: Ways of Developing Empathy and Understanding.

- Role-playing, discussions and real life situations elicited perspective-taking.

- Teachers established explicit expectations on diversity appreciation and demonstrated empathy.

- Some teachers feared that excess focus on empathy could be taken away.

Sub-theme: Inclusivity and Diversity Promotional Strategies.

- Providing secure spaces using different resources and visions.

- Speaking of such concepts as equity and social justice in order to develop a critical thinking skill.

- Promoting the different backgrounds by means of family and community partnerships.

Other teachers would not discuss diversity, instead focusing on the academic content or being afraid of confrontation.

Sub-theme: Correlation between Positive Relationships with Peers and Success.

- Academic Advantages: Study teams and cooperation enhanced work.

- Emotional Well-Being: Peer support enhanced a sense of belonging and self-esteem.

- Conflict Resolution: Students have acquired communication and empathies.

- Some minority felt that peer relations might lead one away academics or make them less independent.

Assurance of Equitable Treatment.

Sub-theme: Ways of recognizing and managing Bias/Discrimination.

Educators also encouraged inclusiveness through open communication, self-reflexivity, and collaboration with fellow professionals.

Some of them rejected the necessity because they feared conflict or tension.

Subtopic: Promotional Fairness Strategies.

- Regular assessment and positive criticism.

- Discrimination and respect in classes.

- Team learning to foster knowledge.

- Personalized intervention towards various student needs.

- Student choice in decision making.

Sub-theme: Fairness and Success Relationship.

Equitable treatment boosted motivation, emotional state, trust, and good teacher student relationships.

Nurturing a Culture of Responsibility and Ownership.

Sub-topic: Accountability Promotion Strategies.

- Specific academic and personal objectives.

- Constant feedback and learning.

- Collaboration and peer support.

- Appreciation of hard work and dedication.

Sub-theme: Ways of promoting ownership of learning.

- Giving freedom of choice in assignments and projects.

- Promoting a growth mind mentality on improvement.

- Goal-setting and tracking of progress.

- Engagement applications in real life.

- Active learning through student-guided discussions.

The Training of Problem-Solving Skills.

Sub-topic: Techniques of Instruction in Problem-Solving.

- Real-life situations and case studies.

- Team brainstorming.

- Exploration projects that are open-ended.

- Logical thinking puzzles and plays.

Some of them felt that problem-solving occurred naturally without any kind of organization on how to solve problems.

Sub-theme: Critical Thinking and Creativity Promotional Strategies.

- Open-ended question and analysis.

- Project-based learning to an actual world innovation.

- Arguing and multimedia to get a wide point of view.

Others regarded creativity and critical thinking as inborn attributes or not pertinent to other subjects.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher outlines the findings of the research results that have been gathered in the field. The researcher presents the study findings by acquainting the results with some of the previous research and theories that pertain to this study to achieve and bolster the discussion of the findings of this research. This study proves the widely held perception that schools not only impart knowledge in the academic field but also influence values, attitudes, and dispositions through the unconscious mechanisms. This is consistent with the study of Jackson (1968) who introduced to popular demand the idea of the hidden curriculum, and other works that highlight its role in moral and social growth of students.

The main emphasis on the teachers used in this research was that the character development is frequently achieved through the routine, rules and interpersonal relationships as compared to overt teaching on the moral issues. This is similar to the theory of moral education by Durkheim, whose thesis was that discipline, collective action, and common school culture gave the student the framework which they needed to develop self-control, responsibility, and respect of the social norms. The significance of the study is also the inability to ignore the fact that teachers are aware of the presence of the hidden curriculum and have different perceptions of its importance to character development. Although the majority of the participants acknowledged that their actions and classroom activities convey values, most of them reported having ambivalences regarding the degree to which they had control over the processes. This fact is aligned with the previous studies (e.g., Thornberg, 2009; Jerald, 2006), according to which the hidden curriculum is widely recognized by the teachers, who are frequently limited in their efforts due to systemic requirements like standardized testing, lack of time, and administration. The outcomes imply that the teachers can be seen as moral agents on the one hand and as operating as a part of larger institutional systems at the same time, which leads to the conflict between intention and practice.

The statistics continue to demonstrate a number of ways through which the hidden curriculum influences student character. One of the strongest effects appeared as teacher modelling, whereby students will see and internalize the attitude of teachers towards respect, fairness and empathy. Routines within the classroom (punctuality checks, participation policy, reward/punishment policy, etc.) were the regular reinforcers of such characteristics as self-regulation and perseverance. Teacher practices also facilitated peer dynamics, which were also at the heart of collaboration, competition, and empathy shaping. Such mechanisms can be attributed to the works of other researchers like Giroux and Penna (1983) and Apple (2004) that point out that, in classroom life, values are not taught, but rather caught. The other interesting result is the correspondence or lack of correspondence between the formal and the hidden curriculum.

A number of teachers mentioned inconsistencies: even though the official curriculum talks of citizenship, respect and non-discrimination among students, the institutional processes of ranking, overemphasis on examination tests, or overemphasis on strict hierarchical regulations, often convey conflicting messages. These mis alignments are also uncanny as they may compromise character learning by bringing confusion or cynicism to the students. A study conducted by Alsubaie (2015) and Margolis (2001) also cautions against any discrepancies in explicit values teaching and implicit classroom instruction to diminish the validity and efficacy of character education programs. The research also raises the issues of reproduction or contestation of inequalities through the processes of hidden curriculum. Teachers did not be conscious but believed and admitted that classroom relationships were different and depended on social background, gender, or academic performance of students. These minor differences like paying more attention to high-achievers or treating boys and girls differently respectively may result in the cumulative impact on the sense of belonging, self-esteem, and perceived ability of students. This observation resonates with the view of Bowles and Gintis (1976) that the hidden curriculum is a reproduction of social stratification. Meanwhile, a number of teachers said that they actively employed inclusive practices to balance inequities, indicating that teachers do not passively transmit anything but mediately facilitate the processes of the hidden curriculum. Since the hidden curriculum is a very powerful factor in character formation, teachers need to receive professional development training that goes beyond teaching and content area knowledge and training to include reflective training on inferred messages.

Instructors require the assistance to critically assess their own classroom practices, routines, and interactions, and to bring them to agree with the values they seek to instill. This may involve reflective pedagogy training, cultural responsive pedagogy training and classroom management training that promotes responsibility, empathies and respect. Research highlights that it is through reflective awareness of the hidden curriculum that teachers can increase their efforts in order to tap into the potential of the curriculum in positive character building. In terms of institutional and policy level, schools should realize that character education is not a case of having creating an extra lesson on values but a case of coherence in all aspects of school life. The values are implicitly expressed in policies dealing with assessment, discipline, extracurricular activities, and the school culture. It is therefore important to ensure that these structural elements are aligned with the above objectives of character education. As an example, the emphasis on rigorous exams and the need to reduce their frequency, as well as to support teamwork, empathy, and equity, may be stimulated through leaning toward group learning. Although the current research gives a good understanding of the perception of teachers, it is restricted by the fact that it is based on self-reported information and classroom observation in a particular setting. Student views should be included in future studies so that how the hidden curriculum is perceived and interpreted by the learners themselves can be known. Longitudinal research might also determine how the practice of hidden curriculum affects the character development. Moreover, comparative research in a variety of cultural and institutional settings might shed light on the functioning of the hidden curriculum in different educational settings. Overall, this paper shows that the perception of teachers regarding the hidden curriculum can help understand that this aspect is in the core of forming the character of students. The results indicate that many

values like responsibility, respect, perseverance, and empathy are reinforced on a daily basis via daily practices, teacher modeling and school organization. Nonetheless, discrepancies between official curricular goals and unofficial messages and equity issues make this process more complex. The research supports the argument that effective character education must be holistic wherein the hidden curriculum may be brought to light, be critically analysed and deliberately adjusted to the overall objectives of education.

CONCLUSION

This paper is an eye opener to the importance of character education in determining academic performance and personal development of secondary students in terms of instilling values of respect, responsibility, self control and perseverance. The results indicate that although the teachers may not directly refer to the hidden curriculum, they tend to transmit it through behaviors and pedagogies when they are not conscious of their values in that manner. Although character education is advantageous outside the classroom setting, there are inconsistencies in delivering the education which indicate the possibility of having more uniform practices to promote fairness and favorability of learning among all students. The study also focuses on the close correspondence between what teachers believe and what they do, which proves the effectiveness of role modeling. Lastly, it indicates the hidden curriculum as a significant field of study in the future to determine how education influences the character of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Depending on the research literature and findings in the field, the following suggestions would be possible:

1. Workshops Workshops that engage teachers to consider and deliberate on how they perceive the hidden curriculum.
2. Regular feedback systems should be implemented with the teachers being allowed to provide insights and some form of concern on the hidden curriculum, an aspect that encourages a better comprehension of how their activities and their instructional practices impact students more so than the formal curriculum.
3. Promote the use of professional development sessions by schools as a way of encouraging teachers to be more conscious of the way they transmit values and behaviors implicitly when thinking about building more conscious character building.

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