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DIETARY VALUES: HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THANE DISTRICT

** Mrs Susmita S. Mhalunkar,*
***Dr Pratibha S. Patankar,*

** Research Candidate, Department of Education, Shivaji University, Kolhapur (MS)*
*** Professor & Head, Department of Education, Shivaji University, Kolhapur (MS)*

Abstract

Hidden Curriculum in schools has become more widely discussed and addressed by educators. Before admitting their wards in a specific school parents' study hidden curriculum of the schools. Thane district is very close to Mumbai and it has multilingual character as the district encompasses population of Marathi, English, Hindi, Urdu, Gujrathi and Telugu speaking communities. The district has the secondary schools of Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and English medium, and of SSC, CBSE and ICSE boards that implement diet discipline through the diet schedule after every fifteen days as a part of values to be inculcated among students through hidden curriculum. This is done in consultation with a dietician and the school development committee. The dietary discipline helps students to eat a variety of food that is required for the proper physical growth. The present research paper attempts to trace the dietary rigors implemented by the secondary schools in Thane district as a part of hidden curriculum. These disciplines form a necessary part of hidden curriculum and school culture.

Keywords: *Hidden curriculum, dietary values, secondary schools, students.*

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Introduction:

Hidden Curriculum is labeled as "hidden" because it is customarily unacknowledged or unexamined by students, educators, and the general public. Therefore, the values and lessons reinforced by hidden curriculum are often accepted as they are. Hidden Curriculum involves the implicit educational, social, patriotic, moral and cultural messages imbibed among students while they are in school. It is based on the understanding that students learn lessons in school that may or may not be part of the formal course of study. Similarly, schools are the preservers and promoters of certain values. Every school promotes hidden messages through teachers and learners. Through Hidden Curriculum schools can imbibe patriotic, moral, religious and dietary values among students by compelling upon them in the school premise. Thane district is close to Mumbai, the capital cosmopolitan city of Maharashtra state that encompasses both cosmopolitan and rural culture. It has multilingual character as the district encompasses population of Marathi, English, Hindi, Urdu, Gujrathi and Telugu speaking communities. The district has the secondary schools of Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and English medium. These secondary schools also vary in respect of their boards-SSC, CBSE and ICSE. The present research paper attempts to examine the dietary values through hidden curriculum in the secondary schools of thane district.

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Dietary values are equally necessary like the other values that are taught in the schools through hidden curriculum. Good nutrition is the prime factor for students. Madhuri Karmokar-Sharma in her article, "Healthy Tiffin for School Children" opines:

> Good nutrition is the key to health. This is important in all stages of life, but all the more so in school years. Two main growth spurts- childhood and adolescence occur during school life. No doubt then that children require good quality nutrients to support their growth, development, immunity, mental and physiological strength and health. Each meal and snack for the child should therefore contribute towards their daily nutritional needs. (Karmokar-Sharma 2018)

The dietary discipline helps students to eat a variety of food that is required for the proper physical growth.Apple and King in their scholarly research paper "What Do Schools Teach?",reassert views of Elizabeth Vallance stating "the functions of hidden curriculum include the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterized generally as social control." (Apple & King 1983) Dietary values, train the students the value of obedience in terms of food habits. It is also an effort of establishing equality.

Objectives of the Study:

1) To study dietary values as a part of hidden curriculum in the secondary schools of Thane district.
2) To examine implementation strategies of dietary values as hidden curriculum in the secondary schools of Thane district.

Illustration:

Dietary values are the part of hidden curriculum that is clearly evident in the school culture. Hidden curriculum is not hidden. Secondary schools in Thane district implement dietary discipline in such a way that it is declared a couple of days prior to implementation so that all the stakeholders should follow the rigors. Catherine Cornbleth in her scholarly research paper entitled, "Beyond Hidden Curriculum?" states, "students seem to learn much that is not publicly set forth in official statements of school philosophy or purpose or in course guide and syllabi. This learning, which includes information, beliefs, and ways of behaviour in one's society,is often attributed to a hidden curriculum of schooling. With few exceptions, this hidden curriculum is portrayed as a powerful, detrimental force that undermines the professed commitment of the schools to foster intellectual development and a democratic community." (Cornbleth 2006) This showcases that dietary values are the part of implied curriculum which the schools follow. The researcher has selected 1175 student from the secondary schools in Thane in order to examine the dietary values as a part of hidden curriculum implemented in their respective schools. These schools develop dietary discipline through the diet schedule for their students and fraternities. The following tabulated information throws light upon the responses of the

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secondary school students of Thane district regarding dietary values:

Table No. 1:

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Do you consider your school insists on dietary values like other values, too?	49	48	254	537	288

It is observed that the students of secondary schools insist upon dietary values seriously like other values. It is observed that 288 respondents strongly agree that their schools consider dietary values equally seriously like other values, 537 respondents state that they agree with this view, 254 respondents remain neutral, 48 respondents disagree with this idea; whereas 49 respondents strongly disagree with the statement. But, it is clearly evident that the secondary schools of Thane district follow dietary values rigorously like other values.

Schools are the second important social institutes after family to teach and nurture values among the growing minds. Along with Moral, Patriotic and Religious values, schools are also making their students disciplined regarding their diet. It is observed that schools are providing dietary plans and compelling their students to follow the same. Naina Mishra in her article, "Diet chart at schools, bane or boon?" rightly pinpoints the importance of diet values through diet charts implemented dietary values,"A 'diet menu chart' is what many city schools have been coaxing parents to follow while preparing lunch box for their kids. If it is stuffed paratha for Monday, it's vegetable salad on Tuesday. Wednesday may have fruits on the menu and Thursday will have uttapam. At Delhi Public School the menu includes food items enriched in carbohydrate, protein, fats, vitamins, minerals and fats." (Mishra 2019) Similarly, the secondary schools in Thane district also compel their students to follow dietary values seriously. Often times, students feel it unnecessary compulsion forced upon them. Also, it makes them feel that the students in other schools where dietary values are not compulsory are privileged. Some secondary schools of Thane district make the diet plan mandatory. The researcher has following observations:

Table No. 2:

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Do you think the students of other schools where diet plan is not compulsory, are more privileged?	68	186	408	352	161

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The above tabulated information highlights that majority of students of secondary schools i.e. 408 prefer to remain neutral. It is observed that 161 respondents strongly agree with the view that they think the students of other schools where diet plan is not compulsory are more privileged, 352 respondents agree with this view, 186 respondents disagree with this idea; whereas 68 respondents strongly disagree with the statement. It is evident that the secondary schools in Thane district follow dietary values which are not liked by majority of students. Consequently, the students feel that the students are more privileged where the diet plan is not compulsory.

Students in secondary schools are busy with curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. As a result, they stay in the school for more time. Either they are asked by their teacher or coach to report early or to stay back after the teaching hours. Therefore, they stay for extra time in the school that requires additional tiffin. Madhuri Karmokar-Sharma vocalizes her personal experiences as a mother regarding the additional tiffin for her children. For her additional tiffin is very essential, "The key to an interesting yet quick healthy tiffin is creativity and planning. I am a mom entrepreneur, I have two kids and 4 tiffin to pack in the morning. I have learnt that failing to plan is planning to fail when it comes to morning kitchen marathon."(Karmokar-Sharma 2018)When a question was posed to students whether they are asked to carry two separate tiffin if they are spending more time in the school?, the following are the responses:

Table No. 3:

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Are you asked to carry a separate tiffin if you are spending more time in the school?	150	169	265	121	470

The information given in the above table amplifies that 470 respondents state that they are asked to carry two separate tiffin if they are spending more time in the school, 265 respondents state that they are asked sometimes for the same, 121 say often they are asked to carry two separate tiffin, 169 respondents state rarely, whereas, 150 respondents say never. It is clearly evident that the secondary schools of Thane district follow dietary values as majority of students agree with the idea of two tiffin asked by the school if the students are spending more time in the school.

Religion is yet another social institute that contributes in shaping the personality of students. It is equally important in penetrating values among students. Religious festivals, celebrations, rituals, traditions and fasting are part of religious rigors. Generally, schools are secular institutes that accommodate and respect every religion. Students maintain their religious membership and follow their religion. Though regular diet is necessary, schools allow students to observe their fast. The following are the responses:

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Table No. 4:

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
During religious fasts, are allowed to skip your meals in school?	244	203	276	157	295

The information stated in the above table intensifies that 295 respondents state that they are allowed to skip their meals in the school during religious fasts, 276 respondents state that they are sometimes allowed, 157 say often, 203 respondents state rarely, whereas, 244 respondents say never. It is clearly evident that the secondary schools of Thane district respect dietary and religious values of their students.

Majority of secondary schools of Thane district have school canteens that provide food items and snacks to students and fraternity. These canteens are run by an outsider who has signed a contract with the school management. Further, the school formulates a canteen committee that monitors the food quality and hygiene in the canteen. The schools with diet plans make it compulsory for the vendor to provide food items according to the diet plan. Of course, this sounds ideal wherein the contractor of the canteen is never at profit.In Australia the secondary schools implement the NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy that "increases the availability of healthy food and drink options in school canteens to make the healthy choice, the easy choice. It is mandatory for all NSW Government schools with a canteen to meet the requirements of the Strategy by adhering to the Food and Drink Criteria." (NSW Canteen Strategy 2020). On the similar lines one can trace how the secondary schools in Thane district implement the hidden curriculum of dietary values through their school canteens. The following are the responses:

Table No. 5:

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Does your canteen provide you tiffin according to the diet plan?	364	80	213	167	351

The information in the above table brings to light that 364 respondents state that the school canteen never provides them the tiffin according to the diet plan, 351 respondents state that they always get the tiffin according to the diet plan, 167 say often, 213 respondents state sometimes, whereas, hardly 80 respondents say rarely. It is clearly evident that the secondary schools of Thane district follow dietary values rigorously as majority of students agree that the school canteen makes them available the tiffin according to the school diet plan.

Healthy eating patterns in students promote optimal childhood health, growth, and intellectual development. It prevents immediate health problems, such as iron deficiency anemia, obesity, eating

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disorders, and dental caries. Further, it may prevent long-term health problems also. Dietary discipline can help children and adolescents attain full educational potential and good health through healthy eating behaviors.Secondary schools of Thane district are aware about the comprehensive development of students. Almost every school implements values through hidden curriculum. These schools orient students regarding the dietary values to be nurtured during their school days. Diet plan, compels students to eat the food as instructed by the school authorities. It also brings uniformity and equality among students. Gradually, this dietary compulsion makes the school to form separate or unique identity. Such schools seem more disciplined as they implement dietary values through hidden curriculum more rigidly than other schools. The following are the responses:

Table No. 6:

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Do you think that your school is more disciplined than other schools as it takes care of overall development of students' personality through the dietary discipline?	80	52	301	140	602

The above table highlights that 602 respondents state that they always consider their school is more disciplined than other schools as it takes care of overall development of students' personality through the dietary discipline, 301 respondents state that they sometimes feel so, 140 say often, 52 respondents state rarely, whereas, 80 respondents say they never feel so. This analysis indicates that the secondary schools of Thane district that follow dietary discipline are more disciplined as majority of students agree with this idea.

Everyday tiffin is the area of interest wherein one can trace what food items are included in tiffin. Also, tiffin showcases every school's hidden curriculum as the students carry food items in the tiffin as per the instructions of their school authorities. Time and again, it is observed that the students carry home-made food items in their tiffin. Gradually, it also indicates the school authorities plan to establish uniformity and equality through tiffin. Also, it is evident that the secondary schools follow the traditional food diet that is suitable and reasonable for the students and parents. However, the schools insist upon their students to consume home-made regional food as the major part of their diet poaln. The following are the responses:

Table No. 7:

What do you carry in your tiffin to school every day?		
You carry in your tiffin	Frequency	Percent
Chapati-Bhaji	792	67.4

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Junk, dry snacks (e.g., Namkeen)	76	6.5
Homemade snacks (Pohe, Upma)	241	20.5
As per the dietary schedule given by the school	66	5.6
Total	1175	100.0

The above table indicates that 792 respondents carry chapati and bhaji in their everyday tiffin, 76 respondents carry junk, dry snacks like namkeen, 241 respondents mention they carry homemade snacks in tiffin like poha and upma and remaining 66 respondents mention they carry as per the dietary schedule given by the school.

Dietary schedule of a school is a part of hidden curriculum of that specific school. Such dietary schedule is intended for the proper growth of students. Often time, students feel the dietary schedule as repetitive, forced and tiresome. Sometimes, students feel it as unnecessary. But, dietary schedule is basically, dietary value that helps students to inculcate the habit of healthy diet that will also accelerate their growth. Dietary schedules are formed by school authorities in consultation with a dietician. The researcher attempts to trace the opinions of students about the dietary schedule. Following table highlights the responses:

Table No. 8:

Opinion about the dietary schedule	Frequency	Percent
It seems repetitive	256	21.8
It feels forced and tiresome	155	13.2
I like it because it provides a balanced diet	642	54.6
Unnecessary	122	10.4
Total	1175	100.0

From total 1175 respondents in the above table, 256 respondents mention that the dietary schedule seems repetitive, 155 respondents state that it is forced and tiresome, 642 respondents mention that they like the dietary plan because it provides a balanced diet and remaining 122 respondents feel it is unnecessary. This information is graphically presented below in the form of pie chart.

The dietary schedules in the schools are the part of implied curriculum where the schools desire to teach students the value of food and balanced diet. It is through a committee the dietary schedule or dietary plan is made. The committee consists of students, class representatives, teachers and administration. Every member has a voice in deciding the dietary schedule.

Table No. 9:

Who decides the dietary schedule?	Frequency	Percent
Students	334	28.4

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Class representatives	161	13.7
Teachers	404	34.4
Administration	276	23.5
Total	1175	100.0

The above table showcases that 334 respondents state that students decide the dietary schedule, 161 respondents opine that the class representatives decides the dietary schedule, 404 respondents register that teachers decide the dietary schedule, and remaining 276 respondents feel that the school administration decides it.

The dietary schedule in the schools is the part of hidden curriculum. The dietary schedule or dietary plan is made and implemented by the school authorities. After every specific time interval the dietary schedule is changed. Often times, the entire school implements the dietary schedule. Sometimes, every class implements a different dietary schedule; and it is also observed that every standard implements its own dietary schedule. The observation is stated in the following table:

Table No. 10:

How is the dietary schedule implemented?		
Dietary schedule implemented	Frequency	Percent
Every class has a different schedule.	314	26.7
Every standard has a different schedule	223	19.0
The entire school follows the same schedule	481	40.9
Other	157	13.4
Total	1175	100.0

The above tabulated information projects that 314 respondents state that every class has a different dietary schedule, 223 respondents say that every standard has a different schedule, 481 respondents mention the entire school follows the same schedule and the remaining 157 respondents mention others. This indicates that majority of the respondents state that the entire school implements the dietary schedule.

Conclusion:

The secondary schools in Thane district implement hidden curriculum rigorously. The values of dietary discipline are implemented in majority of the secondary schools. Like moral, patriotic, religious values, dietary values are also taught by schools. These dietary values form an inseparable part of hidden curriculum of secondary schools in Thane district. It is evident that majority of secondary schools teach nutritional values to their students.

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