

Development of Social Justice in the Education Policies of India: An Exploratory Study on the Evolution and Impact on the Social Justice in the Educational Policies

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Abstract

This study critically evaluates the effectiveness of India's educational policies in supporting social justice, equity, and inclusivity for under-represented groups, especially the minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. The study examines how different national programmes, particularly the National Education Policies of 1968, 1986, and 2020, have addressed structural gaps in access, retention, and learning outcomes within the framework of the constitutional ideal of equality and justice. The study is based on a qualitative, interpretivist research paradigm, using a thematic analysis of academic literature, policy papers, and national reports and aims to find discrepancies between the goals of policies and their actual implementation. The findings show that although subsequent policies have, in theory, made admirable efforts, problems still exist because of socioeconomic limitations, a lack of political will, and inadequate oversight and monitoring systems. The study comes to the conclusion that in order to change India's educational system and make it one that genuinely serves all the classes of society fairly, it is imperative that the government maintain its commitment by way of fair monitoring and evaluation systems, engage the stakeholders from the underrepresented groups in making policy directives and in the institutional decision-making bodies, allocate resources strategically, and implement inclusive teaching methods and pedagogical training in the teacher training curricula.

Chapter 1- Introduction

Educational policies are created to guide the direction of change that the society seeks for itself. Although governments at all levels play the most significant role in developing the policy, all other stakeholders who execute these policies play a crucial role in the success of the policy directives (Papanikos, 2011). Throughout the history of modern education, educational policies have been governed by the three objectives of social order, economic prosperity and social welfare (Hunter, 1996 as cited in Ball, 2012). Social scientists, researchers, policy makers use critical theory to uncover the existing problems, institutionalised inequalities that hinder the aims and objectives laid down by the constitution of the land. Political ideology, is perhaps the most influential factor in educational policy decisions. Ideology is defined as a range of political, legal, philosophical, religious, ethical, and artistic ideas that comprise a political and social doctrine and influence party, government, and collective behaviour (Martin, 2014; Erkihc & Akman, 2021). Of the many ideologies that have historically influenced policies, social

democracy is the most prominent one. The practical development of the programmes, rationality-based education, and fostering of social justice and equity can be considered the main outcomes of social democracy in the curriculum (Erkihc & Akman, 2021). However, the specific topics and challenges within a prescribed educational policy have not been researched enough (Sari & Aypay, 2024). This study was aimed to bridge the gap in the research to help future policy directions on the issues of the development of social justice and eradication of inequalities in India. This chapter is intended to provide the background of the research issue, the historical context of the issue, the theoretical framework, the purpose and significance of the study, and the nature of the study. The study undertaken was that of an exploratory nature based on qualitative thematic analysis of multiple sources and types of literature.

1.1 Historical context of social inequalities in India

One of the main reasons for inequality in Indian society is the caste system that originated during the Vedic time of 1500 BC (Basham, 1954). The caste system endured in India even after its independence and the country's adoption of the contemporary world tenets in its constitution led to the creation of the educational policies as a conscious effort to eradicate this societal evil. However, the ground reality of the society and the curricular terrain shaped by the policies have been interpreted sporadically in terms of gauging the inequality and the advancement of social justice. Even while India's literacy rate has increased significantly—from 18% in 1951 to 65% in 2001 (Asadullah & Yalonzky, 2010; Bharti & Nag, 2024)—there are still large disparities in educational attainment across gender, caste, and religion, which contributes to the country's high level of educational inequality. Low economic mobility in poor nations, where children from underprivileged origins have little possibilities for progress, further exacerbates this imbalance (Bharti & Nag, 2024). According to the annual report (2022-23) of Ministry of Education, such systemised marginalization sustains inequality and hardship in society in addition to causing conflict, violence, and disturbance. In India, certain groups, including Scheduled Castes, Religious minorities and Scheduled Tribes encounter structural exclusion and therefore remain economically poor from one generation to the next. Indian government has been well aware of these social practices and included measures to eradicate them. Articles 15, 17, and 46 of the Indian Constitution safeguard the educational interests of marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Article 15 prevents discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or birthplace, while Article 17 abolishes untouchability. Article 46 directs the State to support the educational and economic advancement of weaker sections. Additionally, Article 29(1) guarantees any community with a distinct language, script, or culture the right to preserve it, including establishing educational institutions based on language or religion (Basu, Sarkar, 2022). The 1986 NPE recommended a program to advance women's equality as well as particular provisions for minorities, the physically and mentally disabled, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and other educationally disadvantaged groups (Asadullah & Yalonzky, 2010). There is now an established system of quota or reservation of seats in government jobs, educational institutions and other government representative bodies for SC, ST and OBCs (Jandhyala, 2021; NPE, 1968). The government has implemented a quota system, reserving seats in public sector employment, educational institutions, and government representative bodies for SCs (15%), STs (7.5%), and OBCs (27%) and many state governments have enacted pro-poor measures and created educational initiatives to benefit such communities (Jandhyala, 2021). Despite these efforts, the literacy rate in India, especially among the marginalized communities, remains a concern. Poverty, resource constraints, and social and cultural barriers continue to hinder the progress of universal education in India (Kandula et al, 2022; Choudhury et al., 2023; Ministry of Education, Government of India. 2017). Muslim children between the ages of 3

and 5 have the lowest pre-primary education attendance rate at 16.9%, compared to Hindus at 20% and those of other religions at 35.9% (Varghese, et al., 2018). The ratio of graduates to eligible individuals is lowest among Scheduled Tribes (0.49), followed by Scheduled Castes (0.58), Other Backward Classes (0.75), and upper castes (0.88), with the largest gaps in fields like engineering and medicine (Varghese et al., 2018). While some Indian colleges advocate for gender equality, many ignore faculty representation based on caste. Some scholars maintain that OBC/ST/SC quotas reflect prejudices in public institutions by diminishing the quality of education and providing little advantages, thus illustrating the opposition to the basic idea of equity and equality (Dhawan et al., 2023).

This background is crucial to understand how the latest NPE 2020 which aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2025 and to achieve 100% universal access to education from pre-school to secondary level by 2030 (*New-Education-policy-2020-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-NPE*, 2020). It also throws light on the continued lack of targeted emphasis on redressing the social evil and ensuring equity and equality in education.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Social science research is often guided by a theoretical framework that guides the structure and methodology by defining the key ideas, frame the research questions, analyse and interpret the data, and meaningful addition to the corpus of knowledge (Van Der Wadt, 2024). Van Der Wadt (2024) further argues that unlike in the natural sciences, the multifaceted approach and the factor of social settings and human behaviour lead to the acceptance of the postmodern tradition of more organic, dynamic and interpretivist paradigm in creating the theoretical framework.

Social exclusion and social justice theories often intersect to explain inequalities in access, rights, and resources. Social exclusion theory highlights the ways individuals or groups are marginalized from mainstream social, economic, and political systems, as discussed in foundational works like *The Truly Disadvantaged* by Wilson (1987), which examines how systemic exclusion affects urban, marginalized communities. Meanwhile, Rawls' (1971) *A Theory of Justice* outlines principles of social justice, advocating for fairness in the distribution of goods and opportunities, emphasizing that societal structures should support the least advantaged. Sen's (1992) *Inequality Reexamined* bridges these ideas by emphasizing the importance of capabilities—basic freedoms and opportunities—as essential to both inclusion and justice. Together, these theories provide a framework to understand and address the structural barriers and inequalities that hinder true social participation and equitable access to resources.

Qualitative analysis has been used as the methodology in this dissertation to find out about the development of social justice as aimed in the educational policies. A systematic review of literature is attempted to find out the themes arising on the issues, and an analysis and synthesis of the review is then produced following a constructivist approach. The stages of the framework applied to the review of literature follows identifying the research questions, identifying the relevant literature, a descriptive analysis of themes, and summarizing the result of the review (Vuta, 2020). Although many empirical studies have been conducted on the issues of social justice, access to education among marginalised population in India, the specific topics and challenges within a prescribed educational policy have not been researched enough (Sarı & Aypay, 2024). Among the major empirical work undertaken, Das (2016) who conducted an all-India study on access to education, points out that the marginalised population (SC, ST and OBC and Non-Hindu minority groups) still is at a very low percentage and that they require targeted intervention to achieve universal primary education rate. Major constraints are access to

education, social stigma, zero economic mobility of parents, lack of schools supporting local languages and generational poverty.

1.3 Problem Statement

The publication of the latest educational policy in 2020, without a comprehensive census data makes the gaps in the approach to the problem visible and eminent. It is not known to what extent the three educational policies have been able to mitigate the historical and structured injustice and in creating equitable platforms for the marginalised population to attain the benefits of the education policies. The accuracy in which these policies address the systemic obstacles that these groups encounter have not been thoroughly examined. In recent years, quite a few newspaper articles have brought out the plight and ground reality of the marginalised groups in context of access to education, discrimination and exclusion to the point of dehumanising them (Thorat, 2021; Mishra, 2021).

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine critically the effectiveness of the educational policies in addressing equity, inclusivity and alleviation of social justice. This study aims to critically assess the effectiveness of educational policies in promoting equity, inclusivity, and social justice and to highlight the nuances of the social terrain in which the educational policies have operated and how far the policies have been successful in affecting the social justice in the educational system. This study investigated whether underprivileged groups can access the ideas of equality and human rights as best represented in the educational policies. Furthermore, the study looked at the effectiveness of the policies in raising the educational achievement among the marginalised population and the perspectives of the educators and policymakers about the role of the policies in achieving social justice.

1.5 Research questions

The study was conducted through a review of literature related to the implementation of social justice in the educational policies, its impact on the marginalised population and the perspectives of the stakeholders. The research objective was to find out the present state of India's educational system as poised to development of social justice and universal access to education.

The study tried to capture the purpose and relevance of the issue through the exploration of literature review based on the following research questions-

1. To what extent do the principles of equality and human rights are realized in the Indian educational policies?
2. How has student achievement and participation rates among the marginalized communities been affected by the policies?
3. How do the stakeholders- the policymakers, and the teachers perceive the effectiveness of the policies in attaining social justice?

These research questions guided the purpose of the study comprehensively to find out the effectiveness of the Indian educational policies in addressing the issues of social justice, inequity and the diverse perspectives associated with caste - based stratification of the society. They also helped to understand the level of improvement in accessing education by the marginalised groups, and developed a better understanding of the various perspectives held by the stakeholders on the implementation of the policy directives. The study aims to provide a bird's eye view of the impact of the policies on Indian educational system, thereby helping to identify the gaps and success of the policies.

1.6 Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

Thematic analysis of current relevant literature was regarded as the appropriate methodology to help synthesize the many views and perspectives on the topic chosen following the idea of Fink (2019) with regard to research literature review as a systematic, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work. The choice of the four sources of literature- books, dissertations, research and journal articles, and national newspaper articles allows the study to effect representation and legitimation of the study in providing an adequate picture of the social reality (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). The use of multiple sources also led to a deeper meaning-making process of the phenomenon. The study follows the assumptions that the published literature has already been subjected to peer review and critical analysis. However, since the thematic analysis looked at literature sources from different origins, it is assumed that the critical theory of “meaning- making” is not overshadowed.

The significance of the study lies in its aim to understand the social reality of the marginalized population in India. The examination of social equality, and social justice in the educational policies covering seventy-five years would provide a critical insight into the successes, limitations and the gaps in these policies in addressing social justice issues. Such identification may lead to improved and more effective policies, and structural changes in the education system leading to a more equitable educational terrain in India.

1.7 Nature of the study

The selected nature of the study was a thematic review of four sources of literature- books, dissertations, government reports, and research and scholarly articles.

These scientific literatures were sourced from the multiple databases using different search terms, and key words and phrases. The databases used for the study to source the literature were Google Scholar, UNICAF University access to PROQUEST and EBSCO databases, Journal of Indian Education, ERIC, and CORE. The thematic review of literature was thought best to guide the study since the issue of social justice involves and cuts across multiple disciplines of social sciences. Such a method would allow for the study to identify and interpret the themes and patterns emerging from the review of the literature. The analysis of various types of sources will lead to the extrapolation of themes across the various literature, capture the nuances of the social realities faced by the marginalised population and aiding the study’s objective to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational policies in the development of social justice in India.

1.8 Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The study follows the assumptions that the published literature has already been subjected to peer review and critical analysis. The credibility of the literature selected for the study is assumed to be reliable due to the nature of the sources themselves. The published articles in peer – reviewed and scientific journals, books have gone through the critical evaluation and expert scrutiny (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2015). Since qualitative analysis presupposes that social behaviours are diverse and intricate, the literature sources contained a range of viewpoints. This presumption enabled the study to investigate multiple perspectives and develop a more substantial, complex comprehension of the topics being studied. The findings of the literature review were assumed to be rooted to the social construct of India and the themes that were extracted were specific to Indian context of social justice, historical and economic background of the issue, and the development of the formal education systems and the educational policies in India.

The author was aware of the inherent bias due to the secondary nature of the analysis. The limitation imposed by the length and breadth of the existing research was made aware of.

Since the field of social justice in itself is multifaceted, the term may be interpreted differently in the existing research literature. Hence the study was limited by the diverse approaches to the study of social justice, cultural context, terminology used in the literature. As Rizvi and Lingard (2015) point out, the educational policies are framed in alignment with the national aspirations and factors of globalization and market economy. Policies thus represent political ideologies of the political party in power, thereby promoting certain agenda which may lead to difficulty in assessing genuineness of the advancement of social justice (Tilak, 2020; Apple, 2004). Hence the study was limited by the political ideology represented by the policies, the inherent bias in the primary research due to the researcher's ideological principles, and the local and regional context in which the primary research was conducted.

1.9 Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the study

Chapter one introduces the complexities of the educational policies in India highlighting the objectives of achieving social justice, equity and equality in education. It looked at how the policy objectives have been altered to promote social justice and equity, and then later be more aligned to the global educational policy directives (Velaskar, 2010). An exploration of the historical background of the caste system revealed that such socially entrenched system has been obstacles to educational gains from one generation to the next, thereby continuing the fractured social strata, economic inequalities, and exploitation of the marginalized groups (Basu & Sarkar, 2022).

The current study draws from the theoretical frameworks of social justice and social exclusion to guide critical review of literature in order to find out the effectiveness of the educational policies in India in eradicating the multifaceted inequalities present therein. These frameworks emphasise the demand for policies that decisively dismantle institutional barriers to education for underserved populations.

The research was based on a thematic analysis of literature, using varied sources to gather multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of the educational policies in the development of social justice. The chapter brought out the gaps between the policy objectives and the ground realities of Indian formal education system. It thus offers a significant insight into the need for further research across multiple disciplines to direct future policy directives and in evaluating the success of the current policies with regard to attainment of social justice, removal of historical social barriers in the education system of India. With this aim in view, the chapter two is devoted to the thematic analysis of the literature sourced from books, published research and educational articles, newspaper editorials. A qualitative analysis of existing literature was attempted to find the major themes associated with the educational policies and the attainment of social justice. The qualitative analysis was deemed appropriate due to the multifaceted nature of the social justice, made complex by the Indian social order divided into caste, creed, religion, language, gender, and geographical locations.

The third chapter will look into the methodology, the research design, and the steps conducted in the research. It will explain the process of literature review, and how the themes were arrived at. It will also explore the rationale behind the choice of sources of literature.

Chapters four and five will look into the analysis of the review, and the interpretation of the themes presented by the review of the literature. Chapter five will examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the policies in promoting social justice and identify the gaps therein. It will, therefore, place the themes returned from the literature review in the broader context of present and future development of the transformative social policy directives. This will enable the present study to, therefore, evaluate the success of India's educational policies in promoting equality and equity in the education system, paving the way for further research in the areas identified.

Chapter 2- Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study is to gauge the progress of social justice through the post-independence educational policies in India. This chapter looked into the context of the study by highlighting the background of the issues mentioned, the various studies and research conducted in recent years to address the concerns, and, most importantly tried to identify the various current themes emerging from the literature pertinent to the research questions raise, most importantly, the effectiveness of the educational policies in advancing social justice, and educational success among the marginalised population. The historic and structured caste-based discrimination and social exclusion in India is often referred to as a form of hidden apartheid, persisting to this day as a result of complex and antagonistic socioeconomic and socioreligious dynamics (Chatterjee, 2021). This chapter also provided the insight into the gaps in the recent trend of research related to the research questions posed and synthesized the key findings of the literature.

The sources of the literature review were chosen to be the government reports, books, peer reviewed dissertations and scholarly articles between the time period of 2014 and 2024. The time period chosen was well thought of to provide enough depth to the three national education policies. The literature review followed the tenets framed by Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins (2012) that using the multiple source types enhanced the meaning-making process and synthesis of the researches undertaken and the identification of the gaps in the researches. This was also asserted by using multiple databases, search terms, and key words. The main databases used were Google Scholar, UNICAF university Proquest and EBSCO databases, Journal of Indian Education, ERIC, and CORE. Since the phenomenon is multidisciplinary in nature, search terms and phrases used in the search were combined with and/or often to identify the sources related to the research questions as mentioned in Chapter one. Search terms like “Education Policies of India Social Change”, “Educational policies of India Analysis”, “education and social change in India”, “National education policy India”, “educational policy in India status of SCST”, “Casteism in higher education India”, “education policy India and/or Sc/ST” were used to source the relevant literatures.

A synthesis matrix of the literature was drawn to identify the major themes discussed in each of the literature for a comprehensive analysis of the sources. At least two sources have been included in the study on the three levels of formal education viz- Pre-primary and primary, Secondary, and Higher education to ensure the broad coverage of the research issues. A subsection has been included to ensure that the readers understand and identify the various terms associated with the unique structure of Indian caste system, the legal terms, and the various commission references to the commissions created by the Indian government followed by the relevance of the study, the theoretical framework followed by the study, the review of the literature based on the themes identified from the synthesis matrix, and a summary of the chapter.

2.1 Key Terms and Phrases Commonly Used in the Literature Sources

Caste system -In India, caste system has been the societal structure from around 1500 BC. The basic tenet of caste system follows that each category of population will do the work as has been laid down in the religious texts. Thus the society was divided into four Varnas or caste- The Kshatriyas- who fought for the land and people eventually becoming the kings; Brahmins- who looked after the socio-religious part of the land and provided education as per the requirement of the land, as well as the varna system; Vaishyas were the tradesmen of the land and had many subcastes and sections; and the Shudras, who performed all the menial jobs and unclean jobs including burning dead bodies, cleaning toilets, gathering garbage etc and were considered to be “untouchables” or outcaste (Anand, 2020). With time, the Kshatriyas and

Brahmins became most powerful, wielding absolute authority over the life and liberty. This was also the beginning of complete social segregation and exclusion for the Shudras and some subcastes of Vaishyas who were denied all rights, and privileges, including the right to education. During the medieval times, the surge of invasions led to other people in the list of exclusion- namely the non-Hindus like the Muslims, Parsees, and any foreigner and also the tribes living in the outskirts of the society.

Census data on the marginalised population- . According to the 1991 Census, SCs account for 138.23 million (16.5 percent); STs 67.76 million (8.1 percent); and Minorities 145.31 million (17.2 percent). As regards OBCs, it is difficult to quantify the size of their population in the absence of the Census data. However, according to the estimates by the Mandal Commission in 1993, the OBCs constitute 52 per cent of the country's total population. Some of them may belong to the categories of SCs and Minorities (Chatterjee, 2021).

The SCs constitute 16.23% of India's population as per 2001 census. The population of STs in India stood at 84.33 million as per the Census of 2001. STs constitute 8.2% of the total population of the country with 91.7% of them living in rural areas and 8.3% in urban areas. The proportion of ST population to the total population had also increased from 6.9% in 1971 to 8.2% in 2001. Between 1961 and 2001, the literacy rate of STs increased 5.32 times, while that of total population increased 2.69 times. However, the gap between the literacy rates of STs and of the general population continued during the three decades between 1971 and 2001 almost at the same level of 17.70% and above, but with marginal variations (Commission, 2008). According to the Indian Planning Commission (2008), the SC representation in Central Government Services show that the percentage of SC employed in the service is most in Group – D which constitutes of the bottom rung of the service and include posts like driver, peon, cleaner, gardener, barber, cook etc and is least paid (Manisha, 2021).

Dalits- Under the leadership of Jyotirao Phule and Dr B.R.Ambedkar, the movement to assimilate these low castes and untouchables gained momentum. The new term “Dalit” was coined to include all the outcastes, low castes and the untouchables under one umbrella.

Mandal Commission- The Mandal Commission, officially known as the Second Backward Classes Commission (1979), was established by the Indian government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai to identify socially and educationally backward classes and recommend measures for their advancement. The Commission, chaired by B.P. Mandal, recommended a 27% reservation in public sector jobs and educational institutions for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The Mandal Commission sought to address historical inequalities by extending affirmative action to OBCs, leading to widespread debates on caste-based reservations in India (Jaffrelot, 2003).

Mudaliar Commission- The Mudaliar Commission, or the Secondary Education Commission (1952–53), was chaired by Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar. It was set up by the Government of India to examine the state of secondary education and suggest improvements. The commission emphasized diversified curricula, vocational training, and the development of democratic citizenship.

Other Backward Castes (OBC)- refer to castes that are socially and educationally disadvantaged but not part of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Scheduled Tribes (STs). They are recognized by the Government of India for affirmative action through reservations in education and employment.

Reservation policy or Quota system- In India it is a form of affirmative action that reserves a percentage of seats in government jobs, educational institutions, and legislatures for historically marginalized communities such as SCs, STs, and OBCs.

Right to Equality in Indian Constitution – Constitution of India acknowledged these structural societal evils and enforced the fundamental rights for all Indians.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of caste, creed, religion, race, sex or place of birth; Article 14 provides equality before law for everyone; Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in public employment; Article 17 provided for abolition of untouchability; Article 23 and 24 provides the right against exploitation, Prevention of atrocities against SC/ST Act 1989 (Chatterjee, 2021).

Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)- The first modern census in India was undertaken by the British in 1872 (Wikipedia contributors, 2024). In 1935, under the census, about four hundred groups were classified as untouchables or of low caste and this list came to be known as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – SC and ST respectively (Anand, 2020).

2.2 Relevance and Background of the Study

In the existing collection of literature, the struggles against the caste-based discrimination have not found major importance even after seventy-five years of independence and the promise to “end all caste discrimination by 2009” (Commission, 2008). This structured social evil in all its complexity have stayed under - researched. Even with various schemes and laws present to tackle this deep-rooted social prejudice, rigid caste system keeps the country fractured along lines of societal discrimination, violence and hatred, educational attainment, and overall upliftment of basic human rights and qualities. Varughese & Bairagya (2020) conclude in their study that the governmental measures have done little to reduce the educational gaps of the marginalised population.

The effectiveness of the educational policies in successful implementation of all educational directives towards the attainment of social justice is marred with many dichotomous laws, practices, and impunities privileges. According to the Planning Commission report (2008), the gaps between the marginalised groups and the privileged class with regard to the attainment of minimum literacy, drop -outs, and attaining higher education is increasing annually. This is a serious concern and needs to be addressed in order to implement the directives of the latest NPE (2020) – to ensure that everyone has access to pre-primary education and elementary literacy by 2025 (Ahmed et al, 2021). The Planning Commission Report (2008) acknowledges the historical disadvantages faced by the marginalised groups and the need to address the structural inequalities. Although various measures have been put in place like 15-Point Programme of 1983, building more schools in the minority populated areas, opening of SC/ST hostels in towns and cities for easy access to secondary and higher education, various scholarship schemes, teaching in local languages etc, the lack of monitoring and actual social zeal to carry out these directives have been few. Malish & Ilavarasan (2016) explains how institutional practices, the attitude of the teachers and professors towards the marginalised groups can impact upon their educational experiences and success. Choudhury et al (2023) similarly brings out the socioeconomic inequality of the SC and ST households which impact upon the access and completion of pre-Primary education. There is also a need for further research in augmenting the success of the policy directive of teaching in the local language especially in tribal areas and how the mainstream curricula get imposed due to lack of teaching in the tribal languages (Sharma, 2018). The systemic embodiment of discriminatory and exclusionary practices in the higher education institutes (Dhawan et al, 2022) leading to violence and suicides of the students from the marginalised groups are not researched enough, most often relegated as individual, and sporadic incidents (Mitta, 2023). In order to attain effective educational equity for the marginalised population, these disparities must be eliminated.

The relevance of the current study

So far, there has been a dearth of research in critically evaluating the effectiveness of the three educational policies with regard to addressing the structural inequalities. The three research questions focussing on the three main areas of the development of social justice as per the directives of the educational policies may lead to articulate and highlight the positive and the negative impacts of the policies, thereby providing an insight to the gaps in addressing the issues of social justice in the field of education. The three research questions will try and address the issues of social justice related to the directives of the policies, as well as the practices that have hindered or progressed the cause of social justice as envisioned in the Indian constitution. The study will also explore the perspectives of the key stakeholders on the implementation of the directives. Thus, the study is meant to provide a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the educational policies, and the gaps and limitations thereof.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Following the works of Van Der Wadt (2024) it is helpful to point out that the social science research is guided by a theoretical framework that helps in the contiguity of the study in the field of the knowledge. Since social science research is often multidimensional, ensuring the study follows in the footsteps of the right theoretical framework helps in framing the research question, identifying the methodology and the analysis of the data. The diverse methods and the impact of the societal influences and human behaviour leads the social science research to adopt the evolving and interpretivist paradigm in creating the theoretical framework (Van Der Wadt, 2024).

Social exclusion and social justice theories are interlinked when conducting multidisciplinary research like that of race, caste, and discrimination as is envisaged by this study. Another aspect that has been looked at in this study is the ethnographic framework of habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977), looking at the perspectives of the stakeholders in the implementation of the policy directives. Social exclusion theory informs on how a particular group may be isolated and discriminated against (Wilson, 1987). At the same time, Rawls (1971) establishes the fundamental concepts of social justice, encouraging equity and social obligation to support the marginalised groups. Sen (1992) argued for the fundamental rights and equal chances to all for societal justice and equity. These theories provide the conceptual and theoretical framework for contributing towards the development of the research questions, and analysing the effectiveness of the educational policies in advancement of social justice for the marginalised groups. The three research questions drawn for the study, therefore, follows the tenets of “justice as fairness (Rawls, 1971), allocation of fundamental rights and resources for the marginalised groups (Sen, 1992), ” systematic exclusion from economic and educational opportunities” (Wilson, 1987) and that “the educational system tends to reproduce existing social hierarchies” (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, the research questions address the multifaceted aspects of the effectiveness of the educational policies in ensuing social justice, equity and inclusivity in India.

Although chapter 3 will look at the methodology for the current study in detail, it is mentioned here in explaining the method adopted for the study and its relevance to the framework mentioned. This study is a qualitative secondary analysis of literature aimed at finding out the effectiveness of the educational policies in advancing the social justice, equity and equality in Indian education system. A synthesis matrix has been used to arrive at the themes to guide the review of the literature in a constructivist and interpretivist paradigm. The elements of the framework used for the literature review are as follows: establishing the research questions, identifying critical literature, analysing themes descriptively, and summarising the review's findings (Vuta, 2020).

2.4 Review of the Literature

The review of the literature was undertaken to critically identify the themes related to the research questions, following a synthesis matrix, and the various research methodology applied in them. It then proceeded to synthesize the various studies related to the research questions. Eleven studies were selected for the study to provide the multiple aspects of the research questions a broad and effective understanding.

2.4.1 Themes identified from the sources

Three major themes can be identified from the sources to understand the effectiveness of the educational policies in advancing social justice. The first major theme located in almost all the studies point towards the continuation of the systematic obstacles, caste- based discrimination in the actual realisation of the policy directives. The second important theme emerging from the findings of the studies show that the success in completing the complete formal education from pre-primary to higher education for the marginalised groups is not a smooth path, amplified by structural and historic socioeconomic disadvantage due to the caste-based discrimination, lack of resources including the availability of teachers in remote areas, lack of monitoring of the programmes and the personnel involved in the dissemination of the government directives. This is then reflected in the minimum student attainment among the marginalised groups, and success in employment opportunities other than the generational, low -paying, disparaged work. The third theme shows how the persons instrumental to uphold the policy directives for all practical purposes continue to harbour the age -old beliefs and biases, thereby causing the directives to become difficult to execute.

As Jandhyala (2021) points out, that 25% of the primary schools which numbers 53,000, do not have their own buildings and the rest functions from neglected ones. In the same context in finding out the cause behind low levels of primary schooling, Jandhyala provides the context that Bihar has its roots deep in the sociocultural feudal system, the basis for the marginalised groups being discriminated against more as a consequence in education whereas Kerala, which has its political roots in the liberal socialist values, has more equitable distribution of the marginalised groups in the education systems. Similarly, Khalid et al, (2024) discusses how the two hundred million population of SC face constant poverty and are compelled to live in inhospitable areas vulnerable to floods and other calamities that affect the educational attainment of the SC children (Deshpande, 2011, as cited in Khalid et al, 2024). This is also reiterated by Choudhury et al (2023), where it is mentioned that SCs and STs have remained socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged due to their specific livelihoods and settlements as have been the Muslim minorities (Chauhan 2008; Jodhka 2016, as cited in Choudhury et al, 2023). The authors further point out that the ST households' enrolling their children in pre-primary schools is 7 times less than that of the Hindu mainstream caste population and that the gaps in the access to education has become glaringly pronounced in the post COVID-19 pandemic times. The discrepancy between the policy goals and actual implementation is brought out by Kulal et al, (2024), where the latest educational policy has been criticized for being dystopian in its objectives like increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio to 50% by 2035, bring back 20 million school drop-outs to the mainstream education, and add 3.5 million capacity to the universities (Kalyani, 2020) without significant increase in education fund which could mitigate the current challenges of funds, resource allocation, and adequate training.

Attitudes, assumptions and prejudices affect the educational progress of the marginalised groups. For instance, Malish (2016) argues how the assumption of the teachers regarding the students from the marginalised groups as academically weak and not capable of scoring good grades negatively affected the students while the encouragement and support received from the teachers led the students to succeed with high grades. Thus, the attitude of the teachers as stakeholders in actualization of the policy directives are

central for the educational mobility of the students. Another study shows how many of the mainstream caste academics and administrators disregard systemic discrimination, seeing the students from the marginalised groups who access higher education through the quota system as threats to the future failure of their own children and using derogatory labels for such students usually associated with the traditional “unclean”, “polluted” livelihoods of their forefathers (Dhawan et al, 2022).

The themes above reveal the barriers to attaining of social justice and educational equity as envisaged by the educational policies. Poor infrastructure, continued social prejudices, corrupt practices, and lack of zeal to eradicate such social evils play the multifaceted role in the actualization of the policy directives.

2.4.2 Evaluation of the research methodology used in the sources

Social science researchers use the three known methods- quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods to investigate the specific phenomenon or domain. Since social science studies are embedded in the complexities of the society, the choice of the method depends on the research question, context of the research and the aim of the study. As mentioned by Leavy, (2017), quantitative research in education may identify the educational outcomes, policy changes, and analysing the effectiveness of the policies while qualitative research methods may be insightful in uncovering lesser-known dynamics of the societal phenomena like caste discrimination, hidden inequities experienced by the marginalised groups (VanderStoep & Johnson, 2008). Many educational researchers aim to provide a more nuanced insight and choose the mixed method approach to address the multiple factors and complex multidisciplinary phenomena (E. Chestnut et al., 2018). According to Bowen, (2009), a qualitative researcher uses multiple sources to seek consolidation of the themes and findings and ratification of the same.

Following the above tenets of the choice of the various methods of research, the identified sources have been found to employ the three methods which compliment the aims and objectives of the respective studies. Many sources have relied on empirical quantitative data to analyse the educational outcomes using regression model, Pearson-Cramer index, and Gini index to calculate inequal access to schooling (Choudhury et al, 2023; Asadullah & Yalonetzky, 2012). Such studies using large data from National Sample Survey, Census data etc. Qualitative methodology of case studies and interviews have been used to understand the experiences of the students from the marginalised groups (Malish & Ilavarasan, 2016), while Dhawan et al (2023) used interviews to identify the hidden prejudices of the teachers and mainstream students against the students from the marginalised groups, highlighting the lived experiences of the social phenomenon of caste- based discrimination. Parakkal (2023) uses a comparative case study research design combining ethnographic study and participatory research to find out the linkages between the policy goals and the students from scheduled Tribes on inclusive education. Thus, each source has used the research methodology that best fits the research aims and objectives.

2.4.3 Justification for the instrumentation selected for the study

According to Miles & Huberman (1994), the qualitative researcher aims to provide a complete, systemic, and integrated synopsis of the context in its social setting. Following their footsteps, it would be ideal to say that this study used selective literature pertaining to the research questions, compared and contrasted the sources and findings to identify the patterns, and then drawing inferences. As such, a thematic literature review has been the instrument selected for the study using a synthesis matrix since it allows for a systematic organisation of the themes and is most accessible and flexible approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a beginner researcher, working within the timeframe given and restriction of using only secondary data, thematic analysis was valued to be the most relevant instrument as a foundational method

of qualitative analysis (approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The instrument selected allowed for in -depth analysis of various source literatures in assessing the three research questions.

2.5 Summary

This chapter looked at the rationale and background of the study, the review of the literature drawn from different sources, the themes arising from the review, and provided the justification for the same. This chapter is therefore crucial for the progress of the study and its understanding before the chapters on methodology and conclusion can be drawn. The chapter identifies the existing gaps in the research, evaluates the need for the study placing it firmly in the corpus of the existing knowledge base by linking the theoretical frameworks, themes identified in the source literature and the relevance of the thematic analysis as the methodology chosen.

Chapter 3- Methodology

India's socioeconomic environment has been significantly shaped by its educational policies since independence, especially in conjunction with addressing concerns of social justice, equity, and inclusivity. This research aims to evaluate the extent to which these policies have advanced social justice, specifically among under-represented groups. A variety of stakeholders, including governmental organisations, academic institutions, and civil society organisations, have an impact on educational policies as instruments of social change (Papanikos, 2011). Their advancement is influenced by more general political, social, and economic beliefs, which establish how much they advance societal justice and democracy in education (Erkihc & Akman, 2021). This study attempts to close the knowledge gap by providing a thorough examination of how educational policies contribute to social justice in India.

This chapter looked at the research methodology, and the justification for the use of the particular research methodology in light of the available sources of data, in this case, the published literature on the issues identified in the research focus, and the nature of the research questions. The chapter outlines the sources of the literature, including scholarly research, government publications, and newspaper articles. In order to ensure the study's validity and ethical considerations, the chapter aimed to describe the research design, including the means of collection of literature for the literature review and analysis.

3.1 Research Questions

Violence against members of marginalised castes, tribes, and minority populations has escalated in recent years, sparking national debates about the goals, application, and impact of far-right nationalist ideology. By critically examining educational policies and their function in promoting social justice, this research is essential in filling in these gaps.

Thus, the research questions formulated were –

1. To what extent do the principles of equality and human rights are realized in the Indian educational policies?
2. How has student achievement and participation rates among the marginalized communities been affected by the policies?
3. How do the stakeholders- the policymakers, and the teachers perceive the effectiveness of the policies in attaining social justice?

To address these questions, secondary sources of data namely published literature was used. The need for careful, evidence-based insights into the consequences of India's educational policies on social justice provided the rationale for this selection. Furthermore, careful consideration and scrutiny of existing

seminal works provided the basis for selecting the nature of the literature to be included in the study, namely, scholarly research, government publications, and national newspaper articles.

Peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books are examples of scholarly research that offers a theoretical and empirical basis for examining how Indian educational policies implement equality and human rights. Academic literature is an essential part of this study because works by Velaskar (2010) and Jandhyala (2021) have especially looked at the relationship between education and social justice in the Indian context. Such sources have been chosen following Bowen (2009) who refers to the legitimacy of incorporating government reports, media sources, and published documents in qualitative research.

National Education Policies (NEPs), census reports, and statistical data from organisations such as the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) are examples of government publications that provide authoritative insights into the goals of policies, methods of implementation, and quantifiable results. These resources are crucial for determining how deeply human rights and equality are ingrained in policy papers and how they affect marginalised communities' actual access to and success in school (Tilak, 2006). Scott (1990) provides justification for the use of documentary evidence in social issue research, including policy papers and media reporting. Similarly, national newspaper articles were chosen since they offer current vantage points, documenting current discussions, stakeholder viewpoints, and current events pertaining to social justice and educational policies. Such articles are a valuable addition to academic and government resources because it chronicles policy successes and failures, draws attention to emerging problems, and captures the real-life experiences of those affected (Nussbaum, 2011).

National newspaper articles provide contemporary perspectives, capturing ongoing debates, stakeholder opinions, and real-time developments related to educational policies and social justice. Because it reports on policy triumphs and failures, highlights new issues, and reflects the lived experiences of impacted people, media coverage is a useful addition to scholarly and governmental sources (Fairclough, 1995, Nussbaum, 2011).

This study offers both depth and breadth in assessing India's educational policies and their effects on social justice by triangulating these many sources, ensuring a well-rounded analysis of the research objectives. These literature sources give desktop research methodologies a sound academic framework for analysing social phenomena, particularly when it addresses social justice and educational policies.

3.2 Research Methodology

The thematic review of literature was deemed the most appropriate framework to inform the study, as the matter of social justice intersects with and encompasses various disciplines within the social sciences. Such a method would allow for the study to identify and interpret the themes and patterns emerging from the review of the literature. The analysis of various types of sources would lead to the extrapolation of themes across the various literature, capture the nuances of the social realities faced by the marginalised population and aiding the study's objective to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational policies in the development of social justice in India. This approach is justified by Scott, J. (1990) especially in studying of social issues. Using the theoretical frameworks of social justice and social exclusion, the current study guides a critical evaluation of the literature to determine how well India's educational policies are doing at eliminating the complex disparities that reside there. The need for policies that firmly remove institutional obstacles to education for marginalised groups is emphasised by these frameworks.

The review of literature was deemed appropriate since document analysis as a qualitative research method (Bowen, 2009) where published documents, government reports and media sources have been used.

As a research methodology, the choice of the published documents selected have been substantiated by newspaper articles which are important tools of secondary source of data in shaping, and influencing public opinion, policy narratives and stakeholder perceptions (Fairclough, N., 1995; Nussabaum, M.C., 2011).

Different search terms, in addition to key words and phrases, were used to collect these scholarly publications from various databases. Google Scholar, UNICAF University access to PROQUEST and EBSCO databases, Journal of Indian Education, ERIC, and CORE were used to source the literature for this study.

The foundation of the research was a thematic review of the literature, which gathered many viewpoints on how well educational policies contribute to the advancement of social justice. The chapter highlighted the discrepancies between the goals of the policy and the actual conditions of the Indian formal education system. It thus provides a valuable perspective on the need for additional research in various fields to guide future policy directives and assess the effectiveness of the current policies in terms of achieving social justice and removing historical social barriers in India's educational system.

3.3 Research Design

The study is directed by the theoretical frameworks of social exclusion and social justice, which offer an objective lens through which to assess educational policies of India. These frameworks aid in evaluating how well India's policies eliminate institutional barriers to education for marginalised groups and address systematic inequities. Scott (1990) emphasises how appropriate this method is for studying social concerns.

The study is guided by the theoretical frameworks of social justice and social exclusion, which provide a lens for critically evaluating educational policies. These frameworks help assess how well India's policies address systemic disparities and remove institutional barriers to education for marginalized groups. Scott (1990) underscores the suitability of such an approach in the study of social issues.

Government reports, media sources, and scholarly articles, and research papers were used in a document analysis technique (Bowen, 2009). Newspaper stories, which are essential in forming public opinion, influencing policy narratives, and reflecting stakeholder views, further supported the selection of materials (Fairclough, 1995; Nussbaum, 2011). The Journal of Indian Education, ERIC, CORE, UNICAF University's PROQUEST, and Google Scholar were among the databases from which pertinent scholarly papers were gathered using a variety of search keywords and key phrases.

The study used Notebook LM and QDA Miner Lite to find and analyse issues and themes that appeared in the literature. To arrange and condense the main discussion points from the chosen sources based on thematic patterns, a synthesis matrix was created. In order to emphasise the discrepancy between policy aims and actual educational realities in India, the literature review approach methodically investigated to what extent the educational policies support the social justice goals and highlighted the gaps in the current policy implementation.

The selection of this research approach was based on its capacity to offer a thorough, multifaceted examination of Indian educational policy. A comparative and interpretive approach is made possible by the theme literature review methodology, which is crucial for assessing the efficacy of the existing educational policies meant to promote social justice.

3.4 Instrumentation or Sources of Literature

The following sources of literature were considered for the study. The aim was to evaluate the present discussion topics. Hence, unless very pertinent to the study, the articles sourced were from 2014 to 2024.

The lack of census data has resulted in incorporation of some government publications dating beyond this timeline.

Type of the source literature	Number of sources
Government of India publications	6
Research articles	14
Scholarly/academic journal articles	12
Books	2
National newspaper articles	3
Total types of sources-5	37

Selecting a variety of literary sources guarantees a thorough and reliable study, which improves the research's validity. By using five different kinds of sources, triangulation of data is accomplished, enabling cross-verification and mitigating bias.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Sources of Literature

All sources of literature are chosen from academic databases and peer reviewed international and national journals of eminence. While academic journal articles (12 sources) and research papers (14 sources) offer peer-reviewed, evidence-based views that bolster scholarly rigour, government publications (6 sources) offer official policy frameworks and statistics data, guaranteeing authoritative legitimacy. Books (two sources) provide in-depth theoretical debates, while articles from national newspapers (three sources) bring current relevance by reflecting stakeholder opinions (Bowen, 2009; Scott, 1990; Fairclough, 1995; Fink, 2009; May, 2011). The reliability of each source of literature lies in being published in authoritative journal and international research databases. The study uses data from globally renowned research agencies like SAGE publications, Springer publications, and universities, whose strict publishing guidelines guarantee that the chosen publications have a high level of academic legitimacy.

The inclusion of 37 sources provides historical and contextual richness, enhancing the validity of the study's assessment of India's educational policies and their contribution to social justice.

3.6 Data Collection and Management

A number of academic and governmental papers were prudently sourced using various search techniques in order to obtain a comprehensive insight on the research topic. Multiple search terms and thematic keywords related to "educational policy," "social justice," "marginalized communities," "discrimination", "SC and ST+ education", "Lower caste+ higher education", and "policy effectiveness" were employed to refine the scope of relevant literature.

The study's validity was strengthened by triangulating multiple data sources—government reports, scholarly papers, and media sources—to reduce bias and ensure that conclusions were well-supported. Software tools such as QDA Miner Lite & Notebook LM thematic coding and identification of patterns across various sources, ensuring structured analysis and interpretation. A synthesis matrix was developed to categorise and compare findings across different sources, highlighting common themes, gaps, and contradictions in the literature.

3.7 Data analysis Procedure

The present study describes how documents pertaining to India's educational policies and their effects on marginalised communities were subjected to open coding, coding frequency analysis, and thematic synthesis using QDA Miner, a qualitative data analysis program and manually synthesising thematic

matrix. In order to derive significant insights, the study methodically coded the source literature, discovered the underlying themes, integrated the pertinent codes, and synthesised the conclusions.

Two methods were used to examine the data or literary sources: QDA Miner and the creation of a thematic synthesis matrix. Open coding was done as a preliminary step using the QDA Miner. Since grounded theory served as the methodology's foundation, this kind of open coding made it possible for the themes and codes to emerge naturally from the sources through an inductive process. Every source document was thoroughly examined, with the essential components underlined and tagged with the descriptive terms that best express the underlying idea. After then, the labels were framed into codes. Multiple sections and codes were eliminated by merging similar descriptive keywords. After then, the codes were labelled and categorised into broad themes.

At first, the selected 37 source literature were imported to QDA Miner and evaluated through a scrutiny reading. After that, open coding was carried out by labelling text passages with descriptive terms like "Stakeholder Opinions," "Gaps in Policy," "Financial Support to Lower Castes," and "Lack of Access to Higher Education." Effective tagging and classification were made possible using QDA Miner's coding tools. Similar codes were combined after the first coding to create more precise groups. For example, "Scholarship for SC/ST" and "Financial Support for Marginalised Students" were gathered under "Financial Assistance," while "State of Literacy in Lower Castes" and "Dropout Rates Among SC/ST Students" were combined under "Educational Attainment Disparities."

The study then employed coding frequency analysis to evaluate the relative importance of different themes. Each code's occurrence count was calculated using QDA Miner's frequency analysis tool, which helped to evaluate its importance. It was possible to identify patterns by visualising code frequencies using graphs and charts.

Alongside the codes in QDA Miner, the manual synthesis matrix was done to create integrated narratives after the codes were finalised. In order to generate overarching themes, texts within each topic cluster were methodically analysed, with crucial portions highlighted. Affirmative action policies' effects (reservation policies, scholarship programs, and inclusion efforts), stakeholder perceptions (perceptions from students, faculty, and policymakers), gender and caste-based disparities (literacy gaps, employment challenges, and societal biases), and barriers to educational access (financial limitations, discrimination, and inadequate infrastructure) were the main themes that emerged. Evidence from coded texts was included to better develop these ideas. For instance, passages addressing the high dropout rates among SC/ST students and the dearth of dormitory amenities were used to support the subject "Barriers to Educational Access."

To systematically analyze patterns across various sources, a thematic synthesis matrix was developed alongside (May, 2011; Silverman, 2013). This approach involved categorizing and comparing findings from multiple studies to identify recurring themes and draw conclusions based on existing literature (Fink, 2009). Significant ideas were taken from every source, especially those related to social inequality, policy efficacy, and educational access. The results were then categorised into overarching categories, including biases, infrastructure difficulties, and financial challenges. To find out if multiple researchers came to the identical results, a cross-comparison of studies was carried out, revealing recurring patterns in educational disparity. This systematic approach enabled that the theme analysis was supported by data rather than subjective opinions (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.8 Ethical Considerations, Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study adhered to ethical research principles, as Bowen (2009) highlights in document analysis approaches, by correctly crediting all sources and refraining from selective or misleading data reporting. The selection of published research projects and journal articles guarantees academic integrity and rigour through a number of processes, including peer reviewed journals as source literature that have already followed the set research guidelines. An essential part of maintaining the legitimacy and dependability of scholarly sources is the peer-review procedure. In order to ensure that ethical considerations are strong, articles submitted to journals are evaluated by subject-matter experts who carefully examine the procedures, data gathering, and analysis for accuracy and integrity. By selecting such sources of literature, the study ensures that the research findings are based on solid evidence and sound methodologies. According to Fink (2009), “A literature review should include sources that have undergone rigorous scrutiny, ensuring that the findings and interpretations presented meet high academic standards”.

The inclusion of articles from reputable publishers like Springer, SAGE, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley, who uphold stringent editorial standards to guarantee the quality of the research they publish, further enhances the legitimacy of this study. Research published in indexed journals, including those in ProQuest and ERIC, must adhere to strict citation and research requirements. As Silverman (2013) states, “Peer-reviewed journals are essential to academic knowledge production because they maintain rigorous standards and allow only those studies that contribute meaningful insights to be published”.

The study makes sure that the literature review is reliable and methodologically sound by utilising a wide variety of academic sources, such as books, government papers, and peer-reviewed journal articles increasing the study’s validity. According to May (2011), “by cross-verifying facts and interpretations, triangulation through multiple sources strengthens research credibility”. This method thus guarantees that the literature evaluation is thorough and based on reputable scholarly research.

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explained the methodology and the process of data analysis by which the effects of India's educational policies on social justice for underprivileged groups were evaluated. The study found important themes and gaps in the execution of the educational policies by examining the literature from academic journals, official documents, and newspaper articles. The purpose of the study was to investigate how effectively policies support social justice for the underprivileged section of the society. The results of the analysis will be presented in the following chapter, which will also look at how effectively these policies contribute to promote social justice.

Chapter 4- Analysis and Interpretations

The research methodology was described in the preceding chapter, along with the theoretical frameworks of social exclusion and social justice that served as the study's compass., the qualitative content analysis strategy, and the selection of literature sources. The analysis and interpretation of the data gathered are presented in this chapter, which also looks at whether India's educational policies have effectively addressed social justice, equity, and inclusivity for marginalised populations.

This chapter analyses the policies' intended objectives and actual impacts by using a critical conceptual framework. Tracing the historical development of policy initiatives and assessing their efficacy in mitigating educational gaps based on caste, gender, socioeconomic position, and geographical differences, the findings are arranged thematically. The chapter also examines the opinions of stakeholders, especially

legislators and educators, regarding how the policies affect the development of an equitable educational system.

The main tool of analysis has been a systematic review of the published literature from the last decade (2014 – 20124). The analysis aims to reveal patterns, discrepancies, and gaps in the implementation of the policies, thereby addressing the research questions. It also explores the opinions of the stakeholders regarding the policy implementation, thereby influencing the broader social justice landscape.

4.1 Source Literature and the Analysis

The literature sources identified for the study includes research and scholarly articles, academic literature, national newspaper articles, and government publications. The research and scholarly articles include papers that use diverse methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative. These diverse literature sources have provided a deeper and meaningful scope of analysis for the study. By examining the diverse sources, it was possible to identify recurrent themes and capture the complex socioeconomic realities of the marginalised groups, in relation to the education policies and their implementation.

The analysis used a thematic synthesis matrix and QDA Miner for systematic text categorisation. Coding frequency and co-occurrence analysis were used to identify the key themes emerging out of the literature sources.

4.2 Analytical Tools and Methods

The study presented a comprehensive analysis of how Indian educational policies address social justice issues and the gaps therein by using QDA Miner- a qualitative data analysis software, for qualitative coding, and frequency analysis. Alongside the themes presented by the QDA Miner, the study used an empirically derived synthesis matrix of the source literature to arrive at the themes generated. The use of QDA Miner ensures reliability and trustworthiness of the research in analysis of the data (Creswell & Poth, (2018). Empirical thematic synthesis of the literature was undertaken alongside for triangulation and reviewing purposes to find out meaningful themes and insights (Bowen, 2009, Scott, 1990).

The methodology followed-

Open coding was the first stage of the literature analysis using QDA Miner. Once the selected sources of literature were uploaded in the software project, each source was read and labeled with descriptive codes. These codes captured ideas like the gaps in the policy, financial support to the lower castes, lack of access to higher education, stakeholder opinions, etc. These initial codes were then refined and merged and similar codes assimilated into themes. QDA Miner's frequency analysis feature was then used to calculate the number of times each code appeared in the sources. This helped in quantifying the most pertinent themes and issues. The coding frequency was then visualised and presented through the graph, and emerging patterns were established. For example, the frequent mention of discrimination in employment and education suggested its importance among the issues. The co-occurrence analysis involved examining how different codes appeared together, showing the issues that are being discussed in unison.

The empirical thematic synthesis was conducted alongside. Reading and highlighting key excerpts was the first step. A matrix was created to categorise and compare the findings across the sources. This helped in structuring the analysis and identifying the emerging themes and research gaps. Each theme was expanded with supporting evidence from text extracts. Finally, the relationships between different themes were explored to provide a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of India's educational policies in promoting social justice. This process helped in creating themes that were grounded in the source literature rather than isolated interpretations. This helped in ensuring validity of the extraction of the themes and remove research bias.

4.3 Findings and Emerging Themes

The theoretical ideas emerging from the analysis of the source literature helped to identify the overarching themes. It is expected that highlighting these concepts would help serve the ongoing research in educational reforms, curricular interventions, and in restructuring the policies to align better with the notions of social justice and removing fundamental barriers to the access and successful inclusion of the marginalised groups (Ball, 1994). The coding frequency table below shows the various themes outlined by the source literature

Figure 1
Distribution of Codes from Source Literatures

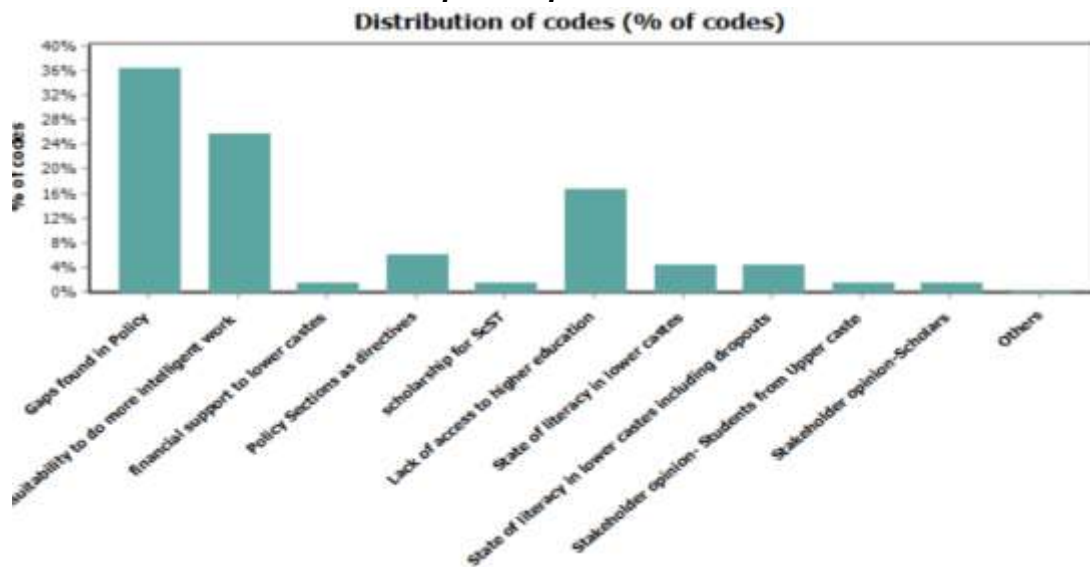


Figure 2
Word Cloud based on the coded texts



The analysis synthesized the findings from the synthesis matrix (Table 1), the coding frequency (Figure 1), and the word cloud (Figure 2) in order to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the Indian educational policies in achieving the social justice. The thematic approach of analysis directly relates to the three research questions pertaining to the policy effectiveness, stakeholder perspectives, and the questions of equity, access, and inclusion in education systems as devised by the policies.

Major themes-

Policy Effectiveness and Gaps

The most frequently coded categories found were the gaps found in the policy and inability to do intelligent work, indicating significant concerns about the structural foundations of the school system and higher education in the policies. The synthesis matrix (Table 1) also points out the similar discussions on the limitations of outreach of affirmative actions and reservation policies, establishment of institutions in areas where the marginalised groups are most present compared to the general population. The major gap identified in the synthesis matrix lies in implementation of the policy directives, bureaucratic inefficiencies and attitude, and a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the affirmative actions including fund dispersal, tracking of the success, resource allocation and utilization. The word cloud (Figure 2) shows that while policy framework is existing, their effectiveness in providing social justice is still a prominent debatable issue.

Social and Economic Barriers

Another prominent theme emerging from the analysis was the lack of access to higher education due to the structural socioeconomic barriers faced by the marginalised groups. As the Figure 1 highlights, financial support to the lower castes remains a key issue. This shows concern, that significant structural barrier remains for the marginalised groups to have access to the education at every stage of formal education and more so in the higher education sector. Alongside this, the state of literacy in lower castes emerging in the coding frequency shows that there is still an economic barrier to accessing formal education for these groups. The labels like scholarship, inability to attend college emerge in synthesis matrix corroborating the idea that there still exists systemic exclusion of the marginalised groups from mainstream formal education system. This is further highlighted by the phrases like “Dropout Rates”, “Quota System”, and “Educational Development” in the word cloud (Figure 2).

Stakeholder Perspectives

The coding frequency (Figure 1) and the word cloud (Figure 2) mention the viewpoints of students and teachers on the reservation policy. Figure 2 further highlights the strong divisive social terrain where both the “Upper Caste”, and “SC Students” find a similar phrasing status showing that such caste-based attitude is still prominent and inclusivity of the marginalised groups are yet to be completely amalgamated in social fabric of India. The synthesis matrix highlights the differing views on affirmative actions as well where some teachers emphasize the need for such reservation policies to continue, while others show scepticism in their effectiveness, debating on equal opportunities, intellectual abilities.

Thus, using the QDA Miner for qualitative coding and the empirical synthesis matrix for structuring the literature provided a rigorous thematic analysis of the source literature (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The analysis clearly brought out the fact that although policy directives aim at providing social justice and mitigating structural barriers, the gaps in the implementation, continued pathological rigidity of the caste

system prevalent in the socioeconomic power structure continue to create an unequal playing field for the marginalised groups in accessing the education system in India.

4.5 Interpretations

The current study aimed at providing some insight into the effectiveness of Indian educational policies in the advancement of social justice in terms of equity, access, success, and inclusion of marginalised groups in mainstream socioeconomic fabric of the country. The focus of the study was on meaning-making-interpreting the educational policies in their practical reality and assess their impact on the marginalised groups. It allowed for a constructivist approach, leading to a contextual understanding of the policies being implemented, interpreted, and experienced (Bruner, 1990).

The three broad concepts that were examined by the research questions were: implementation gaps, socioeconomic barriers, and stakeholder perceptions. The results show enduring policy misalignment, insufficient resources, and ingrained socio-cultural biases that impede true inclusion in education, even in the face of affirmative action measures like reservation quotas and financial aid programs. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social reproduction, which holds that institutionalised forms of capital, such as education, are responsible for maintaining structural inequalities.

There is a gap between policy goals and practical implementation highlighted by the financial aid provided to the SC and ST in the coding frequency (Figure 1), and access to education beyond the primary level remains a challenge in rural India, particularly in the pockets of higher lower caste population (Jandhyala, 2021). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes inclusivity but faces executional challenges where the state budgetary allocations do not meet the requirement of resources to facilitate that. This theme underscores that the formulation of inclusive policies does not automatically translate into equitable outcomes for marginalized communities. Structural barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited government expenditure, shortage of teacher recruitment in such areas continue to restrict access to the formal education system (Kulal et al, 2024). One of the recurrent themes emerging from the synthesis matrix discusses the structural inequality and systemic hurdles is the discovery of persistent disparities in literacy rates, dropout rates, and employment opportunities due to socioeconomic status, gender, and caste. This textual evidence from the synthesis matrix reinforces the coding frequency data on high dropout rates among SC children and the empirical evidence suggesting discrimination in various socio-economic spheres. Additionally, the coding table (Table 2) points out that "As the State Governments are unable to meet the huge committed liability, educational development schemes especially like Post-Matric Scholarships and Pre-Matric Scholarships get adversely affected, leaving SC/ST students to face hardships due to non-payment of scholarships under these schemes". These instances demonstrate how inadequate policies and poor implementation impede the desired outcomes of reaching the vulnerable and marginalised student population.

Another significant theme is the persistent social and economic barriers that impede access to and success in education for marginalized communities. Figure 1 shows the third most prominent theme emerging from the sources as lack of access to higher education due to the structural socioeconomic barriers faced by the marginalised groups. Along with this, financial support to the lower castes, and the state of literacy in lower castes have been emerging in the coding frequency (Figure 1), showing that there lies significant economic barrier to access formal education by these groups. This socioeconomic barrier spills into the social mobility and occupational mobility, thereby reducing the achievement of the social justice, which is aimed for in the educational policies. This continued socioeconomic barrier in accessing quality education translates into constraints in employment, wages, credit, and general inclusion in the mainstream

socioeconomic fabric of the country. This disparity in resources results in limited educational opportunities for children from the marginalised communities perpetuating the cycle of poverty and social exclusion... and subsequent skill development, individuals from these communities often face barriers in securing decent and well-paying jobs (Kandula et al, 2022).

The other significant theme reveals the different and conflicting perspectives of the stakeholders, particularly regarding the reservation or Quota system on the grounds of intellect and meritocracy. Caste-based rift and underlying tension is quite prominent, especially in the higher education institutions. The synthesis matrix points out the "alienation between policymakers' perception of meritocracy and the reality of chronic discrimination experienced by marginalised students and staff". The coding frequency (Figure 1) also highlights this as suitability to do more intelligent work, corroborating the underlying perception that the marginalised population do not have the merit for the subjects like the Sciences and the associated fields. As Kandula (2022) points out, this discrimination manifests in various forms, including prejudice from teachers and peers, social segregation, and limited access to support services. Similarly, Dhawan (2023) shows how the gaps in recruitment leads to an established power structure in the higher education institutions, where even though the marginalised students gain access due to the affirmative action policy, face barrier in becoming successful in the chosen fields. The teachers and professors from the marginalised population are still short in adequate percentage making them a "minority" and "victim" of established historical power structure. One cited study found that academics from the General category often "misinterpret or deny the discrimination faced by marginalized colleagues, viewing caste-based gaps in student assessment results as 'politicized fictions' rather than realities" (Dhawan et al, 2023). The coding table (Table 2) highlights such ingrained prejudices. According to one STEM associate professor, for instance, the quota system was "damping the quality because they are not at par with the General category students," and she was thus "completely against it." "Most of the faculty members, they work with this kind of an elitist mindset" and were "reluctant to guide the students from the marginal communities, especially the first-generation students," according to a professor in the SC category. These divergent perspectives highlight the ingrained prejudices and difficulties in establishing the lofty aims of the educational policies in eradicating the social evils of caste system and historical and structural discriminations.

The study clearly brought out the insights into the realities of the educational policies. While the educational policies aim at promoting social justice, through many affirmative directives, the significant gaps in their implementation, authentic monitoring and evaluation continue to mar their effectiveness. The caste-based prejudices, a legacy of many thousand years have translated into a lopsided power structure that has led to chronic ineffectual policies. All in all, Indian educational policies need a much sought after injection of resources, monetary allocations, strong mindset at every level to eradicate the social evils and create a level playing field for the marginalised groups.

4.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter aimed at presenting the analysis and interpretation of the literature sources to evaluate the effectiveness of the Indian educational policies in promoting social justice for the marginalised population. The chapter summed up the three key findings- gaps in policy implementation reducing the effectiveness of the many affirmative directives and the ideals present in all the policies. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of monitoring and evaluation, lack of resource allocations are the main hindrances in the way of actualization of the policy goals. The historic structural barriers like lack of financial constraints and access to the funds and scholarships and access to higher education, lack of skill development and

willingness of all government machinery to upskill the youth from marginalised groups, systemic exclusion from training and inclusive higher education institutions, less number of equality in the percentage of teachers and faculty representation from marginalised groups have continued to reinforce the socioeconomic disparities. The present policies have therefore, can only be said to have caused superficial patchwork of promoting the social justice. This is glaringly evident in the third finding- the stakeholder perspectives. Opinions on reservation policies and efforts to include the marginalised groups into mainstream formal educational system revealed such divergent viewpoints, that reflects the deep-seated social bias, historical entitlement, and unwillingness on the part of the professors and teachers to foster equitable access to education.

The conclusions drawn in this chapter emphasise the crucial importance of efficient resource distribution, rigorous monitoring, and structural reforms to close the gap between the goals of policies and their actual application.

Chapter 5- Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the findings from the data derived from the systematic review of literature, aimed at examining how India's educational policies have addressed the goals of equity, inclusion, and social justice, with the emphasis on the lived realities of marginalized populations including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other underrepresented groups. The research questions— (1) To what extent do Indian educational policies reflect the principles of equality and human rights? (2) How have these policies influenced student achievement and participation among marginalized groups? (3) How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of these policies? —helped in framing the analytical lens through which literature was reviewed and thematically coded. The data analysis employed open and frequency coding via QDA Miner Lite, supported by a manually curated synthesis matrix, to identify themes directly related to policy impact, structural challenges, and stakeholder perspectives. A thorough yet targeted analysis of the literature was ensured by these analytical methods and allowed the research to sieve through 37 selected sources—ranging from peer-reviewed articles and books to government reports and national newspaper articles—to ensure a broad yet focused examination of the topic.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to fill a crucial gap in understanding how well educational policies have delivered on their promise of providing social justice to the historically disadvantaged groups in India. The study provides an insight into whether the goals of social justice have been achieved or persistent disparities continue on the ground far away from the lofty ideals embodied in the policy documents.

5.1 Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate how well Indian educational systems serve underprivileged groups, including religious minorities, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). The study used a qualitative literature review technique, grounded in a critical interpretivist paradigm and informed by the theoretical frameworks of social exclusion (Wilson, 1987), social justice (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 1992), and Bourdieu's idea of habitus (1977). The data provided compelling insights into the fundamental concerns emphasised in Chapters 1 and 2, and thematic synthesis and qualitative coding using QDA Miner and a synthesis matrix reaffirmed the necessity for further thorough empirical research in the areas of social transformation and policy management. The findings and conclusions based on the findings congruent to each of the research questions is outlined below.

Research question 1- To what extent do Indian educational policies reflect the principles of equality and human rights?

The study found that although human rights and equality are mentioned clearly in all the educational policies, there is still a considerable lack of operationalisation of these concepts. Aspirational language used in documents like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which pledges to achieve objectives including raising gross enrolment ratios and guaranteeing inclusion, however, are not accompanied by sufficient funding, methodical oversight, or institutional changes. The results support observations in the literature (Varghese et al., 2018; Tilak, 2020) that emphasise how the educational policies frequently reflect the political ideal rather than as tools of the constitutionally enforceable statements. As noted in Chapter 1, the persistent exclusion of marginalised groups stems from embedded social stratification, especially caste systems, that have plagued the Indian society since historical times, and the educational reforms have not been able to structurally eliminate them due to the continued inadequate will of the policy implementers leading to poor or superficial execution.

Research Question 2: How have student achievement and participation rates among marginalized communities been affected by the policies?

Results from the thematic coding and the synthesis matrix revealed notable differences in dropout rates and educational performance amongst SC, ST, and OBC pupils. Marginalised students continue to be under-represented in professional and higher education programs, especially in STEM disciplines, despite decades of financial assistance and affirmative action programs. These populations continue to have strikingly high dropout rates, and the literature frequently identifies infrastructure, hindrance in pursuing research and scholarly academic work, and restricted access to good-quality schooling as primary constraints (Kandula et al., 2022; Kulal et al., 2024).

These findings corroborate the assertion proposed in Chapter 1 that inclusive education's objectives have not been met, particularly in underprivileged and rural regions. This gap was also brought to light in Chapter 2, which cited a number of empirical studies on the failure of the state to provide even the least essential necessities for equitable learning. By providing a detailed knowledge of how institutional and socioeconomic exclusions persist in spite of policy initiatives, this work contributes to the academic discussion. It also supports Bourdieu's (1986) argument that, in the absence of structural change, education acts as a tool for the continuation of social inequality.

Research Question 3: How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the policies in attaining social justice?

A complicated and even contradicting image emerged from stakeholder perspectives, especially those of educators, students belonging to high castes, students belonging to marginalised groups, parents, and administrators. Many questioned the efficacy of affirmative action and inclusive policies, citing ideas of meritocracy and worries about the "dilution" of academic standards, even though several recognised their necessity. In prestigious universities, where academics from under-represented backgrounds continued to be terribly under-represented, this conflicting opinion was particularly noticeable. According to Dhawan et al. (2023), caste-based prejudice still exists in educational institutions in both covert and overt forms, which makes SC and ST teachers and students feel even more alienated.

This theme has a clear connection to Bourdieu's habitus theory, which holds that institutional cultures serve as barriers to social mobility. The findings of the study demonstrate that policies alone cannot promote change in the absence of ideological changes among educators and administrators, as was covered in Chapter 1, and that stakeholder participation is crucial to achieving the promise of social justice as

conveyed in the policies. This reinforces the study's core premise that merely altering the stated intent, and setting rules and organisations in the policies are not enough; it is equally essential to transform how these policies are interpreted and implemented within educational contexts through transparent monitoring and audit mechanism and holding persons accountable.

5.2 Implications

The study's implications go beyond theoretical analysis to provide practical advice for future research, practice, and policy. The study critically examines the discrepancy between policy rhetoric and educational reality in the present day caste-divided India. The implications are divided into three main categories: theoretical implications, which assess and improve the frameworks that underpin this study; practical implications, which describe how the findings are applied in the real world; and future implications, which offer ideas for future research and reform. The information and theoretical stances presented throughout this dissertation serve as the foundation for each section's findings.

The theoretical frameworks of social justice (Rawls, 1971), social exclusion (Wilson, 1987), Amartya Sen's capabilities approach (1992), and Bourdieu's (1977) idea of habitus served as the foundation for this investigation. The results validated the applicability of these frameworks while also providing important subtle aspects by exposing a continuous discrepancy between the self-assertive rhetoric of Indian educational policy and their actual implementation. The thematic analysis conducted in this study supports the assertion made in the literature review in Chapter 2 that policies are frequently carriers for political ideology rather than tools of structural transformation. The study supports Bourdieu's theory that, despite apparent efforts to promote inclusivity, institutional cultures maintain existing hierarchies, particularly in prestigious educational settings. The findings offer more detailed insights into the ingrained sociocultural biases that extend beyond policy structures, especially stakeholder ambivalence, teacher biases, and the deterioration of constitutional ideals in actual governance, in support of the predicted broad systemic challenges stated in the Chapter 2.

The study's methodology and approach is validated through the use of software-assisted thematic coding and triangulated document analysis across 37 academic, governmental, and media sources. One significant drawback, though, is the secondary character of the data in the literature reviewed; the inability to do direct fieldwork or primary interviews limited the capacity to document lived experiences in real time. Nonetheless, the scope of the evaluated literature and its congruence with the study objectives provide a solid and contextually rich grounding. By expanding the current framework through empirical literature synthesis, the theoretical contribution of this study demonstrates how caste, economic hardship, and institutional inertia continue to undermine the policy directives.

The study's conclusions have significant practical implication for professional practice, especially in the areas of teacher preparation, educational leadership, and policy development. The finding of the study brought out the need for multi-level, data driven approach to unearth the continued discrepancy in the policy statements and actual execution of those statements and directives. It has great value for the direct stakeholders like the Ministry of Education, School management and administration bodies- who can follow the findings' suggestions to include monitoring framework to reduce discrimination, diverse workforce, sustained funding for scholarships to the students from marginalised groups, and pedagogical workshops to improve the institutional culture. The current study also indicates that, despite their existence, financial assistance plans lack trustworthy monitoring and disbursement procedures, highlighting the necessity for auditing methods and student tracking that goes beyond enrolment figures.

To create inclusive settings that help students not only academically but also socially and psychologically, educational institutions—especially those in higher education—need to reevaluate their staff diversity and institutional culture. The study's conclusions can guide the creation of contextualised curricula, more fair resource allocation plans, and participatory policymaking that effectively represents the views of marginalised groups.

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendations based on the study's findings, conclusions, and ramifications have been addressed in this section. These recommendations are intended to encourage policy improvements, guide future research, and improve efficiency in the actualisation of educational reforms aimed at promoting social justice in India. Each recommendation fills in the gaps found by the systematic literature review and is strongly related to the study's research questions and outcomes. This section also suggests possible future directions to further this area of research and enrich academic knowledge, particularly regarding the ways in which educational policies affect the lived realities of marginalised populations.

The study found a conspicuous disparity between the intended objectives of policies and their effective execution. It is advised that monitoring systems be established at the state and district levels to maintain checks on inclusion benchmarks, resource allocation, and real-time progress in order to close this gap. This suggestion is based on a finding that bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of assessment tools frequently prevent policy goals from being realised.

One of the main conclusions was that financial aid programs were ineffective because of irregular or delayed distributions and their lack of advertisement to the intended populations. For scholarship distribution, it is advised that governmental agencies and educational institutions use digital, traceable methods and conduct frequent audits to guarantee openness. In addition to addressing the systemic obstacles to access, this supports the objective of increasing student retention among OBC, SC, and ST students. Added to that, the government owned media like radio, Doordarshan etc should create awareness advertisements about these scholarships and the process of application in different regional languages so that all the sections of the marginalised groups can access them.

The review of the literature in this study revealed the continued systemic discrimination among the educators and parents of the student body. If the implementers of the policy directives are not motivated or enlightened enough on the plight and the deep-rooted prejudices, the social justice claims in the policy statements remain as ink blots on paper. Therefore, this study recommends that all teacher training programmes should revisit their curriculum and include inclusive pedagogy, ways and means to identify discrimination and mitigate social strife in the classrooms. Likewise, ongoing professional development for school leaders, professors and lecturers for inclusion and equity should be made mandatory and emphasized. This will, over time, reduce the historic ingrained prejudices and actions. This is consistent with the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's theory of social habitus which this study subscribed to.

The study revealed the conflicting perspectives of the different stakeholders. As such, it is recommended that the opinion and voice of the marginalised sections be incorporated in policy designs by ensuring the organization of advisory committee at district level education boards which would include representatives from the marginalised population.

The study's conclusions and gaps were used to inform the following research suggestions, which are intended to increase knowledge in the field of study and enhance social justice norms in the education sector of India and Indian educational policies.

One of the key areas of shortcoming in the study was its dependence on secondary data. To overcome that, future research should be more focussed on getting data from marginalised population via interviews and focus group discussions as well as local and regional scale quantitative surveys and statistics.

Analysing the ways in which various states or districts implement educational policy might help identify effective inclusion models that could be modified and expanded nationwide.

To monitor the long-term effects of educational reforms, longitudinal studies are desperately needed. A more comprehensive picture of the efficacy of policies would be provided by such research, which would assist in measuring results pertaining to access, retention, employment, and mobility across time, among the marginalised groups.

Future studies should place a strong emphasis on intersectional challenges to education. Studies that examine the ways in which caste intersects with gender, religion, or disability and impact the access, retention, employment and social mobility should be emphasized in the next few years if the aspirational directives of NEP 2020 are to be met.

A more thorough analysis of how digital education affects underprivileged students is necessary. Since online learning has become more popular since COVID, studies must examine the effects of differences in digital literacy, content delivery, and technological availability on learning outcomes in marginalised populations. Participatory research and collaborations with the government, academic institutions, and civil society should be prioritised in future studies to guarantee that the results are applicable and based on lived reality.

This study has examined critically the efficacy of Indian educational policies with regard to the attainment of social justices and eradication of the historic prejudices and discrimination against the marginalised communities. The study highlighted the notable gaps between the policy directives and aspirational goals and the reality of the same in practice through an extensive and critical review of literature. The study therefore underscores the urgent need for structural reforms, strategies and meaningful stakeholder participation to ensure that the future policy designs and existing educational policies become tools of social transformation rather than paper tigers.

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