

# INTEGRATING CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES IN DELHI GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS: A CAPABILITIES-BASED STUDY OF CLASSROOM INEQUALITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*Delhi, as India's capital, serves as both the country's political hub and a center of education, attracting a diverse student population from across the nation that reflects the country's varied demographics. Understanding how these differences intersect and influence Delhi's schools is essential. The primary objective of this study is to examine how constitutional values are incorporated into classroom practices in Delhi's government schools from teachers' perspectives. The Delhi government schools were selected through purposive sampling to represent the lower tier of the stratified system. The study mainly employs a qualitative, case study methodology. The primary participants were teachers, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The sample comprised ten elementary school teachers. Extensive classroom observations were conducted over the course of a year. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic, narrative approach. The findings indicated that teachers and classrooms face issues of inequality, social stratification, unequal access to quality education based on gender and disability, disparities in teacher attention, limited access to learning resources, and challenges in including children with disabilities. These results are vital for policymakers, educators, and other education stakeholders, as the study advocates adopting inclusive, responsive teaching methods that address the needs of all students and embedding constitutional values into curricula and everyday practices.*

**Keywords:** *Constitutional Values, Classroom Practices, Gender, Equality, Democratic Values, Inclusive Classroom.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Delhi government has introduced numerous policies and programs, such as the Dsh bhakti curriculum, aimed at fostering fair classroom practices, promoting inclusion, equity, and civic awareness. However, persistent inequalities hinder children's access to quality education and learning opportunities, leading to the marginalization of underprivileged students (Kaur, 2012). As educational institutions, schools play a vital role in nurturing these values and have the potential to become spaces where children from diverse backgrounds collaboratively challenge barriers such as discrimination, stereotypes, prejudice, and other societal issues that still exist. Yet, nationwide evidence shows that discrimination, exclusion, and unequal treatment are common in the daily lives of children in schools and colleges. Their lives are impacted by both obvious and subtle forms of discrimination (Burke & Whitty, 2018). An increasing trend of mocking peers based on socio-economic status, disabilities, or parental jobs—particularly among marginalized groups—highlights a growing concern (Sahu, 2022). In the digital era, this problem is exacerbated as biased, misleading, and hateful content spreads widely through media and technology. Such misinformation distorts young people's views and encourages violence and aggression (Sahu, 2022). Furthermore, many young people believe that success depends solely on competition, passion, and technical skills. This misconception needs to be challenged by promoting values such as compassion, peace, harmony, humanity, dignity, rights, coexistence, sustainability, cooperation, honesty, patriotism, equality, liberty, justice, and fraternity. These values are essential for guiding behavior in schools. With rising crime rates, fostering constitutional values has become more urgent. Therefore, classrooms should serve not only as places for academic and skill development but also as centers for nurturing these crucial values. While existing research has examined systemic inequalities, effectively addressing these disparities requires analyzing classroom environments, teaching methods, teacher training, and overall school culture to foster equality and inclusiveness. There is a notable lack of focused research on how these inequalities influence classroom interactions and teachers' abilities to manage them. This gap particularly impacts children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often leading to exclusion and marginalization (Balgopalan, 2014). Herz & Knott (2005) observe that daily teaching practices frequently neglect marginalized students, reinforcing inequalities and leading to low success rates.

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Traditionally, fairness has not been a central focus in classroom practices, thereby limiting systemic reform efforts (Heirzig, 2005). Achieving quality education demands analysis of hierarchical structures, teaching strategies, and the intersections of language, culture, gender, and ethnicity (Unterhalter, 2007). The constitutional principles of equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity are highly relevant in this context. To realize these ideals, teachers must not only understand these concepts but also embody and apply them equitably. Additionally, teachers are vital in advancing social justice by supporting diversity and ensuring fair access to resources, enabling all students to fulfill their potential and succeed. This study examines inequalities in Delhi government school classrooms, focusing on teachers' perceptions and responses to these disparities. It employs a capabilities-based framework to investigate how learning resources and school conditions influence efforts to mitigate inequities. The research employed a qualitative case study design, incorporating semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations to gather insights to inform educational policy, teacher training, and inclusive teaching practices (National Education Policy, 2020). Comprehension and practices of Constitutional values, such as equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity, are essential in this regard. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution embodies these core principles and serves as the foundation of its legal and political system (Kashyap, 1995). Constitutional Values are vital for promoting unity in diversity, respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals (National Education Policy, 2020). As the Secondary Education Commission (1952) noted, schools play a crucial role in fostering values and can become places where children from diverse backgrounds collaborate to challenge and address societal issues.

## **2. POLICIES, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS RECOMMENDATION: INTEGRATING CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES IN SCHOOL EDUCATION**

The integration of constitutional values into school education has remained a key focus in India's educational policy since independence. Over the years, several prominent committees and commissions have emphasized promoting justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity by developing curriculum content and teaching methods. *The Secondary Education Commission (1952–53)*, also known as the Mudaliar Commission, was headed by Dr. A. Lakshman Swami Mudaliar. The commission highlighted the significance of education in shaping character and developing personality. It suggested fostering values like responsibility, cooperation, and active citizenship through both academic and extracurricular pursuits. The commission believed schools should serve as environments that prepare students for participation in a democratic society. This innovative approach recognized that education must instill moral and ethical awareness to sustain a democratic way of life. *The Shri Prakash Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction (1959)* suggested setting aside one to two periods per week for moral education at all school levels. It emphasized teaching universal ethical values, such as honesty, respect, empathy, and truthfulness, from a young age, regardless of religious background. A variety of teaching methods, including storytelling, discussion, and real-life examples, were promoted. These techniques laid the groundwork for subsequent initiatives aimed at fostering secular, inclusive, and democratic values education. *Education Commission (1964–66) – Kothari Commission* Led by Dr. DS Kothari, the commission identified the absence of social, moral, and spiritual education as a significant weakness in the Indian school system. It called for a nationwide education system that mirrors India's social fabric and encourages social unity, national cohesion, and ethical growth. The commission recommended setting aside specific time in the curriculum for value-based education and highlighted the importance of democratic principles. It strongly supported embedding constitutional values across all levels of education to cultivate responsible and morally conscious citizens. *The National Policy on Education (1968)*, building on the insights of the Kothari Commission, introduced a curriculum framework aimed at reducing inequalities related to language, religion, caste, and region. The policy aimed to strengthen Indian cultural heritage, promote unity, ensure social justice, and encourage scientific and economic growth. It recognized education as a vital tool for fostering core constitutional values such as equality, fraternity, and justice. *National Education Policy (2020)* marked a significant step towards aligning education objectives with constitutional ideals. It emphasized not only intellectual development but also the nurturing of ethical, emotional, and social intelligence. The policy aims to produce well-rounded individuals who demonstrate empathy, accountability, democratic thinking, cleanliness, and a scientific outlook. Paragraph 1.2 of the policy document emphasized the importance of social-

emotional learning, ethical behavior, collaboration, and hygiene, while Paragraph 4.4 focused on character development and overall personal growth. To achieve these aims, NEP 2020 recommended a comprehensive overhaul of curricula and teaching practices from early childhood to higher education. It advocated integrating critical skills and values through participatory and interactive teaching methods. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was responsible for developing the National Curriculum Frameworks (NCFs), which integrate constitutional values across subjects and educational levels. These policy documents, commissions, and committees' reports consistently underscore the importance of embedding constitutional values into the educational experience. They portray schools not just as places for academic learning but as environments where democratic citizenship and ethical thinking are nurtured. This study builds upon that policy tradition by examining how such values are understood and enacted in public school classrooms in Delhi. The capabilities-based framework employed here aligns with the enduring educational aim of guiding students toward lives marked by dignity, liberty, and equality, fundamental values enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The capabilities approach is a valuable tool for analyzing social justice in education. It examines how schools both perpetuate inequalities and provide resources to address and reduce them. This perspective emphasizes not only the outcomes of inequality but also the potential for schools to be transformative spaces that promote social justice (Unterhalter, 2009). Educational theorists have investigated how it can address issues related to gender and social inequality, which is essential for developing fairer policies and practices. Amartya Sen's capabilities approach (1993) offers a normative framework focused on human dignity, gender equality, and social justice. It assesses social structures, well-being, and policies aimed at societal change. Sen (1993) underscores that poverty, cultural norms, and limited civil liberties constrain individual freedom. The approach emphasises functionality and capabilities, highlighting the significance of establishing conditions that facilitate individuals in reaching their potential. This framework is also employed to comprehend how educational institutions both perpetuate inequalities and serve as transformative environments for social justice, addressing both the manifestations and underlying causes of inequality (Walker, 2006).

### **4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Investigator found that Several studies have highlighted the important role of teachers in resisting inequalities. Batra (2017) found that teachers' perceptions of children from poor families often reflect a dominant school ethos, viewing these children as non-epistemic individuals associated with stigmatized identities. Batra argues that classroom circumstances that foster capability deprivation in conventional schooling contexts exclude economically disadvantaged children from the learning process. Dalal (2014) conducted an ethnographic study in primary schools, revealing that teachers and other school staff consistently mistreated students based on their assigned identities. Students were ridiculed for their identities, differences, and family backgrounds, which negatively affected their academic performance and led to increased dropout rates and lower attendance. Dala's study revealed a systematic bias in how teachers' discriminatory behavior affects students' academic achievement and success. At the same time, Batra focused on systemic bias in pedagogy. Herzig (2005) also examined the necessity of diversifying teaching methods and approaches to foster inclusivity within mathematics classrooms, illustrating that an absence of culturally responsive pedagogy compromises equitable participation. These studies collectively suggest that pedagogical inequities are not coincidental but are intricately embedded in how educators perceive students' abilities and value. Rampal (2012) explored children's views on justice and fairness in classrooms, focusing on 11- to 12-year-olds from working-class, lower socio-economic backgrounds. The study highlighted students' voices, demonstrating their motivation and agency to exert more effort, which was affected by the school environment. Students felt that unfair treatment by teachers was unjust, leading them to question teachers' motives. Scholars have emphasised the importance of detailed research to understand students' experiences better, guide curriculum reforms, and inform educational policies, teacher training, and intervention programs. (Balgopalan, 2011; Kumar, 2016; Batra, 2017). Balgopalan (2011) also investigated the persistent existence of "multiple childhoods" within classroom settings. These investigations demonstrate that the

effectiveness of classroom reform relies not solely on policy modifications or teacher training but also on actively engaging students' viewpoints as they co-create the classroom environment. Brown (2017) found that gender discrimination is widespread and blatant among peers, affecting young children by associating perceptually noticeable traits, existing stereotypes, and social status. Farooqui (2012) assessed that religious identity is becoming the basis of exclusion in classrooms. Her study in the Jamia Nagar locality school revealed how Muslim boys and girls perceive religious diversity, revealing that curriculum design, teaching strategies, and daily rituals sometimes marginalize Muslim children. Conducted in prominent private schools. The study found that teachers often depicted Muslim students as problematic. The results indicated a need for students in Jamia Nagar schools to better understand the diversity of individual and community identities. Children also reported that teachers' biases often targeted them due to their Muslim identity. Additionally, many studies have reported on gendered experiences in the classroom. Girls from Disadvantaged communities frequently bear the dual burden of domestic duties and low expectations from teachers. (Rampal, 2012; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012). These studies highlight how intersecting identities such as gender, religion, caste, and disability further compound exclusion and require intersectional responses.

The capabilities approach, first introduced by Sen (1993) and later expanded upon by Unterhalter (2009) within the context of education, offers a valuable perspective for examining these inequalities. Research by Cin and Ciftci (2016) and Walker (2006) demonstrates how educational systems frequently fail to support the functionings and freedoms essential for all students to succeed. These studies provide a normative framework that not only explains educational disparities but also outlines a pathway for transformation rooted in justice, dignity, and human development. The capabilities approach, first introduced by Sen (1993) and later expanded upon by Unterhalter (2009) within the context of education, offers a valuable perspective for examining these inequalities. Research by Cin and Ciftci (2016) and Walker (2006) demonstrates how educational systems frequently fail to support the functioning and freedoms essential for all students to succeed. These studies provide a normative framework that not only explains educational disparities but also outlines a pathway for transformation rooted in justice, dignity, and human development. The constitutional principles of equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity are highly relevant here. To realize these ideals, teachers must not only understand these concepts but also embody and apply them justly. Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in promoting social justice by supporting diversity and ensuring equitable access to resources, thereby enabling all students to reach their full potential and succeed.

## **5. RESEARCH GAP**

Although prior research has addressed systemic issues such as access and dropout rates, few studies have focused on classroom interactions and daily teaching practices, and none have been conducted from a capability-based approach. This research is vital as it fills an important gap by exploring classroom practices in Delhi's government schools and their connection to constitutional principles. Using the Capabilities-based Approach, it investigates educational experiences that either broaden or limit students' fundamental freedoms and opportunities. This study concentrates on teachers' perspectives and classroom observations, offering detailed, qualitative insights into both subtle and overt forms of exclusion encountered in everyday schooling. Additionally, it suggests policy reforms in teacher training, curriculum design, inclusive teaching methods, and oversight systems, all aimed at promoting fairness and justice in education. After reviewing the extensive existing literature, the researcher identified several gaps in the existing knowledge. First, there is a notable lack of research on the integration of constitutional values into classroom practices, particularly in the Delhi region. Delhi, as the capital of India, caters to a diverse range of students from across the nation, representing variation in religions and cultures. Understanding the intersection of these variations and their impact on Delhi's schools is crucial. The Right to Education Act (2009) and the National Education Policy (2020) suggest that inequalities in school environments and classroom practices significantly affect learning outcomes. These inequalities challenge the constitutional values of equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity. Delhi's government schools serve children from marginalized communities and are expected to promote equitable education. However, there is limited practical understanding of how these constitutional values

are implemented or ignored within classrooms. Although previous studies have addressed systemic issues such as access and dropout rates, few have focused on classroom interactions and teaching methods. However, Delhi government schools have remained unexplored in terms of identifying constitutional values and inequalities from a capability-based approach from the teachers' perspective. This study addresses an important gap in classroom practices in government schools and their connection to constitutional values, utilizing the Capabilities-based Approach. It examines educational experiences that either expand or restrict students' fundamental freedoms and opportunities. The present study primarily focuses on teachers' views and classroom observations, offering detailed, qualitative insights into both subtle and overt forms of inequalities encountered in daily schooling. Furthermore, it proposes policy reforms in teacher training, curriculum development, inclusive teaching strategies, and oversight systems, aimed at fostering fairness and justice in education.

## **6. OBJECTIVES**

The basic objective of the study is that to examine disparities in classroom practices from teachers' perspectives. And also, to examine the integration of constitutional values in Delhi government schools and analyze their relationship with classroom inequalities through a capabilities-based framework on the basis of some research questions such as What types of inequality do teachers face in their classroom practice in the Government Schools of Delhi? How do teachers respond to and address these inequalities?

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

The research employed a qualitative case study design, incorporating semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations. It investigates inequalities in classroom practices by examining different disparities within the class. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) mention, "The case study design allows for the exploration, investigation, and explanation of multiple phenomena." Teachers were interviewed in an unstructured manner and observed to examine complex and evolving issues.

This study employed purposive sampling to select participants, with a sample of ten elementary school teachers working in a Delhi government school being included. The study focused only on teachers working in government schools who had faced inequalities related to disability, gender, and socio-economic status. The research involved ten elementary school teachers to provide a broad view of the disparities observed in their classrooms. These participants held lower positions within the government school system, which is characterised by limited resources and infrastructure, and they taught students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **8. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND PROCEDURE**

The study began with classroom observations conducted over an academic year to examine inequalities in the educational environment. These observations focused on interactions between teachers and students, as well as among students, to identify specific areas of disparity. The main data collection involved semi-structured interviews with ten educators, exploring their perceptions and understanding of inequality and its indicators in their classrooms. To ensure validity and reliability, the observations and interviews were triangulated, cross-checked by experts, and then transcribed and sent to participants for confirmation. Following their verification, a thematic analysis was conducted. Transparency was maintained throughout by providing detailed information on the research design, participant profiles, data analysis methods, and data collection tools. Additionally, themes derived from the narratives formed the basis for a literature review, facilitating comparisons with other studies on classroom inequalities. To improve reliability, the researcher included extracts that captured the core themes, providing a clear view of classroom dynamics. This approach demonstrated the accuracy and consistency of the findings.

## **9. ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The interviews were written and recorded. Transcripts from the interviews and observations were analysed using NVivo, and codes were assigned, which generated themes leading to the identification of five initial codes: classroom environment, pedagogical methods, gender differences, learning

materials, and unequal opportunities. Further analysis revealed thematic overlaps, resulting in seven key themes: access to learning materials, teacher accessibility, democratic classroom environments, effective pedagogical strategies, gender equity, inclusivity, and equitable opportunities. These themes are crucial for fostering equality and ensuring all students engage in meaningful learning experiences.

## **10. FINDINGS TOP OF FORM**

The analysis of equality and justice should be grounded in moral pedagogical principles that ensure equitable learning opportunities (Cin & Çiftci, 2016). Consequently, data were collected through observations and interviews with teachers.

### **10.1 Capability to Access Learning Resources**

The majority of teachers reported that their schools face challenges due to insufficient teaching and learning resources, a finding corroborated by direct examination. One teacher stated:

*“The book distributed by the government is insufficient and not ideal for the student’s learning pace. As a teacher, I frequently find myself in need of supplementary materials to enhance my students’ understanding. However, due to the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of students, not everyone can afford these supplementary materials. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often go without additional notes and worksheets, which creates a divide in the classroom and a burden on both the teacher and students.”*

The interview reveals that government-issued textbooks are insufficient to meet students' diverse learning needs. Teachers often need extra materials to help students understand, but financial constraints stop many students from accessing these resources. This creates a significant gap in the classroom, especially for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, both teachers and students face more pressure and difficulty in the learning process. Tackling these inequalities is crucial for achieving fairer education. Another teacher pointed out the role of school administration in providing sufficient and equitable learning materials.

*“The government school I work at is notorious for receiving insufficient learning materials. Though the school administration tries to bridge the gap, the issue persists. Students from well-off families often buy their materials, leaving others at a disadvantage. This inequitable distribution of resources hinders equality in the classroom and perpetuates educational inequality.”*

Teachers shared that it is challenging to request extra learning materials from students due to their low-income backgrounds. As a result, teachers are forced to adjust their teaching quickly, which may cause them to overlook marginalized and slow learners. This study confirms these insights from teachers. This finding is supported by Bakış et al. (2009) and Alat & Alat (2011), who also found that *“The socio-economic background of students in government schools and their families plays a key role in access, retention, and continuation of education”*. Free education and financial support do not fully cover students' educational costs.

### **10.2 Capability to Access Teacher**

This theme highlighted a critical issue regarding how teachers allocate attention and time to students; the majority of teachers reported engaging with all students. One teacher shared their experience:

*“Students from wealthier backgrounds often find it easier to communicate with teachers outside class, in contrast, students from lower-income backgrounds often lack this privilege. They may be shy, lack confidence, or be unable to afford extra coaching sessions. As a teacher, I try to provide equal attention to all students. However, the reality is that some students get more opportunities to interact with teachers, which can lead to unequal learning outcomes”.*

The teacher revealed an important aspect regarding the time and attention they give to individual students. Interviews with teachers revealed that they interacted with all students; however, observations indicated that their interactions were primarily with more successful students, leaving introverted and less successful students with minimal engagement. Another teacher highlighted how gender can influence access to teachers:

*“In my experience, girls in the classroom often receive less attention from teachers compared to boys. This is partly due to societal norms that prioritise boys’ education over girls. Additionally, cultural and social conditioning can make girls less likely to approach teachers for help. This results in unequal access to teachers, negatively affecting girls’ academic performance and overall development.”*

The interview highlights a gender disparity in the attention teachers give to students. This imbalance sustains inequalities. Cultural and social conditioning also discourages girls from seeking help, which limits their access to educational resources. Addressing these biases is crucial for promoting gender equity in education. Rampal (2012) supports this; in her study, she found that *“The student-teacher relationship has a significant impact on the academic and social development of students.”*

### **10.3 Democratic Classroom Culture**

Most teachers claimed to be democratic, which observation confirmed, and the observations were found to be accurate. A teacher shared their approach to creating a democratic classroom environment:

*“In my classroom, I strive to create an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and respected. I encourage open discussions, allowing students to express their opinions and share their experiences. However, I have noticed that students from marginalised backgrounds often hesitate to participate, fearing being judged or ridiculed by their peers. To address this, I work to create a safe space for all students where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of discrimination. This requires continuous effort and sensitivity from the teacher, but it is essential for promoting equality in the classroom.”*

The interview underscores the educator's commitment to establishing an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel valued. Despite this, marginalized students often hesitate to engage due to concerns about judgment. The educator emphasizes the importance of creating a safe space for open dialogue to promote equality and inclusivity.

Another teacher emphasized the importance of addressing cultural diversity in the classroom:

*“In a diverse classroom, it is vital to recognise and celebrate the cultural backgrounds of all students. This fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion for students from different cultural backgrounds. I incorporate culturally relevant teaching materials and activities in my lessons to ensure all students feel represented and valued. However, this requires a deep understanding of the cultural dynamics in the classroom, and teachers must be prepared to address any issues of cultural bias or discrimination that may arise.”*

Creating a democratic classroom environment is vital for promoting equality and social justice (Cin & Çiftci, 2016). Teachers play a crucial role in cultivating a classroom culture that promotes student engagement, critical thinking, and respect for diversity. The findings of this research support the views of scholars who have urged policymakers to recognize the existence of diverse and “multiple childhoods” typical of Indian society (Balagopalan, 2011; Saraswathi et al., 2017). This suggests that formal institutions, such as schools, have a responsibility to adjust their organizational structures to promote fairness and justice, thereby creating inclusive learning environments for all children, particularly if we aim to uphold education as a fundamental right.

### **10.4 Capability for Inclusion and Disability Support**

One Teacher said:

*“I always motivate children to participate in class and ask questions. Often, I realised these students feel separated from others. They hesitate to say their problems. These children require special care and attention. As teachers, we must care for all students in the class equally at a given time, which can be challenging for us. I think the special school concept is suitable for these children.”*

The field observation revealed that students with physical disabilities were present in the classroom; however, there was a lack of facilities to accommodate their needs. No special educator was available to support them. These students exhibited a lack of confidence and appeared reserved. They endeavored to engage in classroom activities. During lunchtime and sports periods, they frequently experienced weakness, and other students generally tended to avoid these children with disabilities.

### **10.5 Capability to Handle Peer Bullying**

The study revealed that, following the enforcement of the “no corporal punishment” legislation in educational institutions, instances of physical punishment were absent. Nevertheless, students were observed making sarcastic remarks, mocking one another, and participating in bullying based on physical characteristics, behaviors that teachers frequently overlooked. When questioned, educators stated:

*“They used to teach manners, but their home environment is so toxic, and they learn these behaviours from there only, and do not listen to us; we cannot punish them. These students are academically unsuccessful and often bully the top students by calling them different names.”*

The quotations from teachers underscore their inability to instill appropriate values, discipline, and a conducive learning environment. Labelling and suppressing problematic students instead of fostering their development constitutes a form of inequality and marginalization.

*“Voice can be exercised in the classroom through an interactive curriculum and a student-friendly, democratic, and critical pedagogy that challenges practices of silence” (Walker, 2006).*

### **10.6 Capability to Experience Equitable Pedagogy**

A majority of the teachers concur that their pedagogical approaches can inadvertently infringe upon the principle of equitable learning opportunities for students with slower learning paces. They justify this by asserting that *“The parents of these children take education for granted.”* It has been observed that the diverse learning requirements of students are frequently neglected during instructional sessions. There is minimal concern regarding classroom disparities, as evidenced by teachers' conduct, discussions, and remarks about students. Rote memorization techniques and power imbalances in teacher-student interactions are also apparent. Nonetheless, educators contend that such inequalities are often attributable to overcrowded classrooms, which hinder the ability to address each student's individual needs.

*“The multiple inequalities experienced by disadvantaged students outside the school environment are also observable within classrooms. Students who are marginalized and disadvantaged in society may frequently encounter ignorance and discrimination. The inequalities faced by marginalized groups in educational settings often intersect with socioeconomic factors, regional diversity, ethnic minority status, and various other forms of discrimination” (Unterhalter, 2009).*

### **10.7 The Capacity to Overcome Gendered Educational Barriers**

One respondent teacher shared,

*“Girls studying at our school bear the burden of domestic chores. Their parents, mostly daily wage earners, do not prioritise their daughters' education. They send their children to school mainly for scholarships, but the girls often lose interest and pay little attention in class. Due to the no-detention policy, they often pass up to Year Eight but tend to fail in Year Nine, leading parents to arrange their marriages afterwards, usually. Additionally, health issues and weaknesses affect their focus in class. Some parents even use scholarship funds to buy jewellery for their daughters' marriages instead of supporting their education. As teachers, how can we help them? We focus on assisting the girls who perform well academically”.*

This statement highlights how socio-cultural factors contribute to policy failures and perpetuate gender-based exclusion.

## **11. DISCUSSION**

This study examined classroom inequalities by analysing teaching practices, the classroom environment, inclusive practices, access to learning resources, teacher-student interactions, peer interactions, and teachers' perspectives through observations and in-depth unstructured interviews. While the findings are based on data from 10 participants and may not be widely applicable, they provide valuable insights into the nature of inequalities present in government school classrooms, a previously under-explored topic. The study highlights the crucial role of policies, curricula, and teacher training programs in addressing these disparities. Inequalities in learning outcomes stem from inadequate resources, limited opportunities, insufficient teacher support, and inequitable curricula—all of which hinder students' academic progress. Equitable distribution of resources and the development of democratic classroom environments are vital to fostering student participation and the expression of diverse perspectives. Classroom-level factors, including teaching practices, pedagogical approaches, and students' social backgrounds, significantly influence academic results, underscoring the need for inclusive strategies that embrace diversity. Majumdar and Mooij (2011) emphasized that teachers' lack of confidence in or disregard for slow learners worsens disengagement and perpetuates inequality. Moreover, favoritism based on gender, class, or perceived intelligence worsens existing disparities. This particularly affects children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often leading to exclusion and marginalization (Balgopalan, 2014). Herz & Knott (2005) observed that daily teaching practices often overlook marginalized students, reinforcing inequalities and resulting in low success rates. Traditionally, fairness has not been a primary focus in classroom practices, hindering systemic reform efforts (Heirzig, 2005). Achieving quality education requires analyzing hierarchical structures, teaching strategies,

and intersections of language, culture, gender, and ethnicity (Unterhalter, 2007). Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms to ensure that pedagogical practices, teacher behaviors, curricula, infrastructure, textbooks, and educational policies do not sustain social inequalities but actively promote equity and inclusivity in education.

## 12. POLICY RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

The findings of this research paper have significant implications for educators, school administrators, policymakers, and the broader society. These implications underscore the necessity for systemic reforms and targeted actions to address ongoing inequalities in classroom practices and promote a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

- a) **Teacher Training:** Professional development programs should focus on culturally responsive teaching, gender sensitivity, and strategies for engaging diverse students to create inclusive classrooms.
- b) **Policy Interventions:** Policymakers must ensure equitable access to education by tackling financial barriers and promoting equal opportunities for all students.
- c) **Curriculum Design and Integration of Constitutional values:** Inclusive curricula should incorporate culturally relevant materials to represent diverse student identities and foster a sense of belonging. NCERT and SCERT should encourage the dialogue on constitutional values by integrating it into the educational content to create reflective classrooms.
- d) **School Leadership:** Administrators should support inclusive practices, provide necessary resources, and foster open communication among teachers, students, and parents.
- e) **Parental and Community Engagement:** Schools should collaborate with families and communities, particularly marginalized groups, to address their needs and challenges, primarily to raise awareness among parents about the importance of girls' education.
- f) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessment of classroom practices and student outcomes is vital for identifying inequalities and implementing targeted interventions.
- g) **Social Justice Advocacy:** Educators and policymakers should address systemic issues, such as poverty, gender discrimination, and cultural bias, to promote equity.
- h) **Student Outcomes:** Addressing inequalities enhances academic performance and development, closing achievement gaps and fostering success for marginalized students.
- i) **Disability Inclusion:** As mandated by the RTE Act (2009) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act (2016), special educators should be appointed appropriately for children with special needs.

## 13. CONCLUSION

This study highlights ongoing inequalities in classroom practices that impact students' access to learning resources, educators, and a democratic learning environment. These inequalities are often linked to socioeconomic status, gender, and cultural diversity. Teachers play a vital role in reducing these disparities and fostering equality within the classroom. However, achieving this goal requires collective efforts among teachers, school leaders, and policymakers to create an inclusive and fair learning environment for all students. The study emphasizes the importance of providing sufficient learning materials, fostering positive relationships between students and teachers, and creating a democratic atmosphere that recognizes and values diversity. By tackling these issues, educational institutions can make meaningful progress in reducing educational inequalities and promoting social justice within the classroom.

## 14. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before collecting data, approval was obtained from the appropriate academic authority. Participants were given informed consent forms outlining the study's aims, with a focus on their voluntary participation, and the freedom to withdraw at any point without consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality were preserved by using pseudonyms and securely storing all transcripts and observational notes. The

researcher took care to avoid causing harm or discomfort, conducting interviews in a respectful and non-intrusive manner. The data were strictly used for academic purposes.

## 15. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express profound gratitude to all participants for invaluable contributions and participation, which were essential to the completion of this research. Additionally, the authors extend their appreciation to the faculty members from different institutions for their expert guidance and suggestions.

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