

Manuscript ID:
IJEBAMPSR-2026-030113

Volume: 3

Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-9140

Submitted: 10- Jan.-2026
Revised: 15 -Jan.-2026
Accepted: 20 - Feb.-2026
Published: 28-Feb.-2026

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Devanand Kashinathji
Mandavdhare
Associate Professor, Department
of Economics, M.S.G. Arts,
Science and Commerce College
(Autonomous), Malegaon Camp,
Dist. Nashik.
Email: dkmeco1982@gmail.com

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18811035](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18811035)

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18811035>



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work noncommercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

How to Cite this Article:

Mandavdhare, D. K. (2026). Inequality and Access to Quality Education in Maharashtra. *International Journal of Economic, Business, Accounting, Agriculture and Management Towards Paradigm Shift in Research*, 3(1), 71–78. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18811035>

Inequality and Access to Quality Education in Maharashtra

Dr. Devanand Kashinathji Mandavdhare

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, M.S.G. Arts, Science and Commerce College (Autonomous), Malegaon Camp, Dist. Nashik.

Abstract

Educational inequality in Maharashtra is deep-rooted and multifaceted, and it is a constraint on the availability of quality education and long-term human development. Despite being one of the largest and most economically advanced states in India, Maharashtra still experiences significant disparities in school infrastructure, learning outcomes, gender parity, and access to digital tools. These disparities are particularly evident between urban and rural areas, as well as among socio-economically disadvantaged groups such as low-income families, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and marginalized rural communities. These disparities are exacerbated by disparities in public spending, disparities in teacher recruitment, differences between private and government schools, and gaps in the availability of digital resources.

This research paper attempts to study the structural causes of educational inequality in Maharashtra. For this, data on educational financing, institutional capacity, quality of infrastructure, availability of teachers, and availability of digital learning materials have been analysed. It also assesses the effectiveness of state and national policy initiatives, including the implementation of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and the National Education Policy 2020, in reducing regional and social disparities.

The study, using secondary data from government reports, national surveys and reference literature, reveals that persistent funding gaps, disparities in school quality, challenges of the digital divide and socio-economic barriers reinforce disparities. In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) and in keeping with the socio-economic context of Maharashtra, an equity-focused strategy is proposed to promote inclusive and equitable quality education. This includes targeted resource allocation, teacher reallocation policies, robust digital infrastructure, public participation and information-based regulation.

Keywords: Maharashtra, educational inequality, access, quality education, digital divide, human development.

Introduction;

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of an individual's life chances as well as broader socio-economic development. According to human capital theory, investment in education increases productivity, lifetime earnings and intergenerational mobility, which in turn accelerates economic growth and social equity. In India, successive reform measures such as the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) and the National Education Policy 2020 have sought to achieve universalization of school enrolment and improvement in quality. Maharashtra, with a population of over 120 million and a literacy rate above the national average, is grappling with deep structural inequalities despite achieving substantial expansion in schooling.

Although primary education enrolment is nearly universal, aggregate figures often conceal disparities across districts, gender, caste and rural-urban sectors. Qualitative and district-level assessments reveal uneven distribution of infrastructure, variations in student-teacher ratios, differences in the quality of education and significant variations in basic learning outcomes. Rural and tribal districts in particular face persistent challenges related to resource scarcity and retention at the secondary education level. The rapid expansion of digital learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed disparities in internet access, device availability, and digital literacy, which have disproportionately affected students from low-income and marginalized backgrounds.

Against this backdrop, this paper analyses the multidimensional nature of educational inequality in Maharashtra. It examines the causes of socio-economic, geographical, and institutional disparities, assesses the effectiveness of existing policy interventions, and proposes evidence-based equity-focused policies to promote inclusive and quality education across the state.

Educational Inequality:

Educational inequality is the systematic difference between individuals and social groups in educational access, participation and learning outcomes, shaped by socio-economic status, gender, caste and geographical location. This inequality is reflected in many dimensions of the education system.

1. **Access inequality:** This inequality arises when there are disparities in enrolment, attendance, retention and level transition rates across primary, secondary and higher education levels. Disadvantaged groups enter school late, drop out early or experience barriers to higher grades.
2. **Input inequality:** This inequality is related to the unequal distribution of educational resources such as school infrastructure, qualified teachers, teaching and learning materials, digital facilities and financial investment. Schools in rural or disadvantaged areas often operate in conditions with high student-teacher ratios and poor facilities.
3. **Process inequality:** This inequality includes differences in classroom teaching methods, academic quality, teacher effectiveness, media of instruction, and institutional support systems, etc., which directly impact the learning experience.
4. **Outcome inequality:** This inequality is evident in differences in academic achievement, skill acquisition, examination performance, and long-term employability.

Together, these four dimensions demonstrate that educational inequality is not limited to differences in enrolment or access, but affects the entire education cycle, from access to learning outcomes and socio-economic mobility.

Quality Education:

Quality education is not limited to enrolment levels, but focuses on meaningful learning and equitable outcomes. This includes effective teaching methods, age-appropriate learning outcomes aligned with curriculum standards, adequate infrastructure, trained and motivated teachers, and the availability of learning materials and digital resources. A supportive and inclusive environment that is sensitive to gender, socio-economic background, and disability is essential for all students to have the opportunity to participate in learning and succeed.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations (UN) emphasize inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The framework promoted by UNESCO highlights that quality access, equity, and measurable learning outcomes are essential to promote long-term human development.

Literature Review:

Various studies on educational inequality in India consistently show that socio-economic status, gender, caste and geographical location have a significant impact on educational access and educational outcomes. Children from low-income families are forced to attend government schools with limited infrastructure and high student-teacher ratios, which leads to low academic achievement and high dropout rates.

B. G. Tilak (2018) argues in his book *Education and Development in India* that the deficit in public investment in education and the unequal distribution of resources reinforce inequality in the education system.

Similarly, Geeta Gandhi Kingdon (2007) in her book *The Progress of School Education in India* highlights the disparities in school quality and outcomes across socio-economic groups in India. She argues that caste-based exclusion exacerbates inequality.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) explained in his book *The Forms of Capital* that, according to the theory of cultural capital, social stratification repeats educational disadvantage across generations. In the context of India, communities such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes face structural barriers including poverty, limited parental education, and geographical isolation.

Karthik Muraleedharan (2013) in his research report *Priorities for Primary Education Policy* has highlighted educational inequality, stating that the gap between teacher accountability and school effectiveness disproportionately affects the marginalized. Gender disparities are linked to caste and income. This research shows that girls in rural and tribal areas face additional constraints such as early marriage and household work responsibilities, which limit their educational achievement.

UNESCO in its *Global Education Monitoring Report (2022)* has noted that while disparities between states are significant, disparities between regions can be equally serious. The findings on educational inequality in India are consistent with national surveys and policy analyses cited in this report.

Post-COVID research suggests that the digital literacy gap has exacerbated existing inequalities. According to a World Bank report (2021), school closures have increased learning poverty, particularly among students from low-

income and rural households who lack access to the internet and devices.

Thus, educational inequality in India is multidimensional and structural, and its management requires equity-focused reforms rather than a uniform expansion of schooling.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the present research paper are as follows.

1. To study the regional, socio-economic and institutional educational disparities in Maharashtra.
2. To explore how factors such as funding, infrastructure and teacher availability contribute to the disparities.
3. To compare educational access and learning outcomes between rural-urban and government-private schools.
4. To examine the effectiveness of educational interventions with special focus on the National Education Policy 2020.
5. To assess the impact of unequal digital resource availability on student learning.
6. To recommend equity-focused policy interventions consistent with SDG 4 for inclusive education.

Methodology:

This study has adopted a qualitative research design based on secondary data analysis to examine educational disparities in Maharashtra. Data has been collected from official sources such as Maharashtra Government Educational Statistics,

National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), National Statistical Office (NSSO) reports, and UDISE+ published by the Ministry of Education. Books, research articles, and policy documents of the state and central governments have also been reviewed.

This research methodology conducts descriptive statistical analysis comparing indicators such as literacy, enrolment, school dropout rate, infrastructure, and digital resource availability, and links this study with a qualitative assessment of key reform policies such as the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act and the National Education Policy 2020. This integrated approach is capable of comprehensively assessing structural disparities and policy effectiveness in addressing educational disparities.

Educational Inequality in Maharashtra:

Educational inequality in Maharashtra has been analysed on the basis of rural-urban disparity, economic inequality, caste and social exclusion, gender inequality, digital divide, and continuity in education and the quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

• Rural–Urban Disparities:

While urban Maharashtra has comparatively better school infrastructure and teacher availability, rural areas, especially in regions like Vidarbha and Marathwada, have a lower level of diverse educational facilities. This disparity affects the learning environment and makes it difficult to retain students in school.

Table 1: Rural-Urban Gap

Indicator	Urban Maharashtra	Rural Maharashtra	Rural–Urban Gap
Literacy Rate (%)	89–91	77–79	12–14
Female Literacy (%)	86–88	70–73	15–17
Secondary GER (%)	92–95	80–83	10–12
Secondary Dropout Rate (%)	6–8	14–16	8–10
Pupil–Teacher Ratio (PTR)	23–25	30–32	6–8
Schools with Electricity (%)	98–100	82–85	13–18
Schools with Internet (%)	65–75	35–40	30–35
Households with Internet Access (%)	65–70	25–30	35–40

Source: Ministry of Education, UDISE+ 2022–23 (GER, dropout rate, PTR, infrastructure indicators); National Statistical Office, NSS 75th Round (household internet access and expenditure); National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, literacy and gender indicators); and Government of Maharashtra, Economic Survey 2023–24.

The above table highlights the clear and multifaceted rural-urban divide in Maharashtra's education system. Urban areas perform better than rural areas in literacy, enrolment, retention, teacher availability and infrastructure. The rural-urban gap in literacy is 12–14 percentage points and the gap is even larger in female literacy at 15–17 percentage points. This analysis highlights the rural and gender-related disparities together.

The secondary school dropout rate in rural areas is 14–16 percentage points, almost double

that of urban areas, indicating that retention is a significant challenge in rural areas. Institutional differences are also evident; rural schools tend to have higher student-teacher ratios and poorer infrastructure compared to urban ones.

The biggest gap is in the availability of digital resources, with rural schools and home internet connectivity lagging far behind urban areas. Overall, the data shows that rural-urban disparity in Maharashtra is not limited to educational access but extends to educational

quality, infrastructure, and digital resource availability.

- **Economic Inequality**

Family income has a major impact on educational access. Children from low-income families are more likely to attend government

schools with limited resources, while higher-income families can afford private schools and supplementary tuition. This divide in school experiences directly creates inequalities in learning outcomes.

Table 2: Economic Inequality

District	Private School Enrolment (%)	Avg. Household Monthly Education Expenditure (₹)
Mumbai Suburban	68	3,500–4,000
Pune	60	2,800–3,200
Nagpur	48	2,200–2,600
Nashik	42	1,800–2,200
Aurangabad	38	1,600–2,000
Nandurbar	20	900–1,200
Gadchiroli	22	1,000–1,400
Hingoli	30	1,400–1,800
Chandrapur	35	1,700–2,100

Source: National Statistical Office, NSS 75th Round (2017–18), Household Social Consumption: Education.

The above table shows a positive correlation between private school enrolment and household educational expenditure across various districts in Maharashtra. Metropolitan districts like Mumbai Suburban (68%) and Pune (60%) have higher enrolment in private schools and higher monthly educational expenditure (₹2,800–4,000), which clearly indicates strong purchasing power and greater access to private institutions.

In contrast, economically weaker districts like Nandurbar (20%) and Gadchiroli (22%) have lower enrolment in private schools and much lower monthly expenditure (₹900–1,400), reflecting income constraints and dependence on government

schools. Overall, this suggests that the availability of private schooling is linked to household income, thereby widening socio-economic disparities in educational opportunities.

- **Caste and Social Exclusion**

The enrolment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes students in Maharashtra in quality learning environments is low and dropout rates are high, especially at the secondary and higher secondary levels. As social stratification is linked to economic constraints, social backwardness exacerbates educational inclusivity.

Table 3: Caste and Social Exclusion

District	% SC Population	% ST Population	Estimated Poverty Ratio (%)	Secondary Completion Rate (%)
Mumbai Suburban	11	1	6	92
Pune	10	4	8	88
Nagpur	13	9	12	85
Nashik	11	24	15	78
Aurangabad	14	7	18	75
Nandurbar	3	69	28	63
Gadchiroli	11	38	25	68
Hingoli	15	8	20	73
Chandrapur	19	18	17	77

Source: Ministry of Education, UDISE+ 2022–23; Government of Maharashtra, Economic Survey 2023–24; and Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Census 2011.

The above table analyses the situation from the perspective of caste and social exclusion. The districts with high Scheduled Tribe population and high poverty have the lowest secondary completion rates (63–68%). For example, Nandurbar (69% ST and 28% poverty) and Gadchiroli (38% ST, 25% poverty) suggest that the concentration of tribal population and economic deprivation pose significant constraints on educational progress.

Factors such as geographical isolation, limited school infrastructure, language barriers and intergenerational poverty are responsible for these outcomes. In contrast, districts like Mumbai Suburban and Pune, which have low Scheduled Tribe population and low poverty rates (6–8%), have very high secondary completion rates (88–92%). Districts with medium Scheduled Caste population and moderate poverty fall into the middle range of completion (73–77%).

Overall, these figures show that caste-based discrimination, especially in tribal areas, is linked to educational inequality at the secondary level in Maharashtra, with poverty.

Gender Inequality

While the gender gap in enrolment at the primary level is low in Maharashtra, it is higher at

Table 4: Gender Inequality

District	Overall Literacy	Male	Female	Gender Gap
Mumbai Suburban	90.9	93.3	88.1	5.2
Mumbai City	89.2	92.1	85.8	6.3
Pune	87.2	91.3	82.8	8.5
Nagpur	88.4	92.0	84.6	7.4
Nashik	82.3	88.5	75.5	13.0
Aurangabad	79.0	85.6	71.8	13.8
Nandurbar	64.4	72.0	56.0	16.0
Gadchiroli	74.4	82.5	65.7	16.8
Hingoli	78.2	85.0	70.5	14.5
Chandrapur	80.8	87.1	74.1	13.0

Source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India (Census 2011); updated district estimates compiled from Government of Maharashtra Economic Survey 2023–24.

This table shows a clear division between urban and rural/tribal districts in Maharashtra in terms of gender disparity. Urban districts like Mumbai Suburban and Mumbai City have higher overall literacy (around 89–91%) and relatively lower gender gap (5–6 percentage points), indicating almost parity in educational attainment. Although there is a slight disparity, Pune and Nagpur districts also perform relatively well.

In contrast, districts like Nashik, Aurangabad, Hingoli, Nandurbar and Gadchiroli have significant disparities of 13–17 percentage points. In particular, in Nandurbar (56%) and Gadchiroli (65.7%) districts, female literacy is significantly lower than male literacy, indicating a deep structural disadvantage.

Table 5: The Digital Resource Gap

District Type	Households with Internet (%)	Students with Personal Device (%)
Metro (Mumbai, Pune)	65–75	60
Semi-Urban (Nagpur, Nashik)	45–55	40
Rural Agrarian (Aurangabad, Hingoli)	30–40	28
Tribal (Nandurbar, Gadchiroli)	20–30	22

Source: National Statistical Office (NSS 75th Round, Education).

This table shows the clear disparity in technological access across districts in Maharashtra in terms of digital resource gap. Metropolitan areas like Mumbai and Pune have higher levels of household internet availability (65–75%) and device ownership (60%), which supports effective online and blended learning.

This availability is moderate or low in semi-urban districts, where 45–55% internet availability and around 40% device availability are available. This gap is significant in rural agricultural districts (30–40% internet; 28% devices) and tribal districts (20–30% internet; 22%

the secondary and higher secondary levels, especially in rural and socially backward areas. Concerns about girls' safety, early marriage and domestic responsibilities contribute to significant disparities in girls' school completion rates.

The above figures indicate that the gender disparity in education is higher in rural, tribal and economically weaker regions. Overall, the data shows that while urban Maharashtra is moving closer to gender equality, significant gender disparities persist in marginalized districts due to socio-economic and cultural constraints.

• Digital Divide and Learning Continuity

The shift to online learning due to school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the digital divide. The benefits of education are unevenly distributed among students from low-income families, rural areas, and marginalized communities due to limited access to devices and reliable internet connections, which has exacerbated the already existing gap.

devices), where disruptions in limited internet connectivity create serious constraints on the continuity of education.

Overall, the data shows that digital resource access is closely related to regional development and that inadequate internet connectivity in rural as well as tribal areas is widening educational disparities.

• Quality of Instruction and Learning Outcomes

Standardized assessments reveal significant disparities in basic literacy and numeracy across districts. Learning outcomes are

poor in regions with weak administrative capacity and inadequate teacher training systems. In addition, the disparity in quality between public

and private schools also contributes to educational inequality.

Table 6: Learning Outcomes

District	Grade III Reading Grade II Text (%)	Grade V Reading Grade II Text (%)	Grade V Division (%)
Pune (Rural)	48	60	45
Nagpur (Rural)	45	55	42
Nashik (Rural)	42	52	38
Aurangabad (Rural)	38	50	35
Nandurbar	32	45	28
Gadchiroli	35	47	30
Hingoli	37	48	32
Chandrapur	40	51	36

Source: ASER Centre (2022). *Annual Status of Education Report (Rural Maharashtra)*.

This table reveals the wide disparity in basic literacy and numeracy across rural districts in Maharashtra, both in terms of teaching quality and learning outcomes. Even in relatively well-performing districts like Pune and Nagpur, only 45–48% of students in class III can read a standard 2 text and less than half of students in class V are able to divide. This suggests that many students are not achieving the expected skills for their grade even as they progress through the school system.

The situation is more worrisome in districts like Nandurbar and Gadchiroli, where reading proficiency drops to 32–35% in class III and division ability falls below 30% in class V. The consistently lower performance in numeracy compared to reading points to weaknesses in mathematics teaching and conceptual learning.

Overall, the data shows that disparities in teaching quality, teacher effectiveness, and available learning support are contributing significantly to unequal educational outcomes across districts.

Policy Landscape and State Initiatives:

- 1. Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:** This Act guarantees free and compulsory education to children in the age group of 6–14 and also sets minimum infrastructure standards. The implementation of RTE in Maharashtra has led to an increase in school enrolment, but adherence to quality standards is uneven, especially in remote areas.
- 2. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** NEP 2020 prioritizes basic literacy and numeracy, inclusive education, multilingual education and digital inclusion. State-specific implementation of this policy is required to effectively address regional disparities in Maharashtra.
- 3. State Education Programs:** Maharashtra is implementing several schemes such as expansion of school infrastructure, mid-day meal scheme, scholarship programme for disadvantaged groups and professional development of teachers. Evaluation suggests that while these initiatives are improving inputs, systemic disparities persist

in terms of quality of teaching and access to learning resources.

Discussion:

Educational disparities in Maharashtra are driven by structural and socio-economic conditions, rather than simply service delivery gaps. Although school enrolment has increased, disparities in infrastructure, teacher quality, family financial support and digital resource availability limit learning outcomes, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. Persistent rural disadvantage, socio-economic stratification and unequal distribution of public resources exacerbate systemic gaps in educational quality.

As a result, improvements in educational access alone do not guarantee equal learning success or retention. Achieving meaningful improvements requires integrated, equity-focused policies that strengthen learning environments, teacher empowerment and digital inclusion. Policy approaches aligned with the National Education Policy 2020 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal SDG 4 should prioritize quality, targeted investments and inclusive institutional design, to ensure equal educational outcomes across Maharashtra.

Recommendations:

- 1. Equity-Weighted Financing:** Prioritize budget allocation using district-level deprivation indicators to allocate more resources to rural, tribal, and educationally backward regions. Introduce outcome-linked financing to ensure that additional spending leads to measurable improvements in education and student retention.
- 2. Teacher Deployment and Training:** Provide financial incentives, housing assistance, and job promotion benefits for deploying teachers in disadvantaged areas. Strengthen continuous professional development through mentoring systems, digital training platforms, and subject-specific capacity development.

3. **Digital Inclusion Strategy:** Expand reliable internet broadband infrastructure, subsidize devices for low-income students, and invest in digital content in regional languages. Promote blended learning ecosystems that combine classroom teaching with technology-based remedial and enrichment support.
4. **Learning Outcome Assessments:** Conduct periodic, region-specific institutional assessments aligned with competency-based curricula. Use real-time data dashboards to identify learning gaps early and implement targeted remedial programs at school and district levels.
5. **Community Engagement and Local Governance:** Strengthen school management committees and parent involvement to enhance accountability, oversight, and school planning improvements. Create community awareness on learning outcomes, attendance, and use of digital learning.
6. **Public-Private Collaboration with Equity Safeguards:** Promote public-private partnerships for infrastructure, digital innovation, and skill development, and implement regulatory frameworks on fees, access, and quality standards to prevent socio-economic stratification.
7. **Early Childhood and Foundational Learning Focus:** Expanding quality pre-primary education and prioritizing basic literacy and numeracy to narrow the learning gap at later stages to smooth progression through the school cycle.
8. **Targeted Support Mechanisms:** Introducing scholarships, transport assistance, hostel facilities and bridge courses for first-generation students, girls and marginalized groups, so as to improve retention rates in secondary and higher education.

Conclusion:

Maharashtra's education system shows significant progress in enrolment expansion, institutional capacity and policy innovations, yet persistent disparities shape educational outcomes unevenly. Variations across regions, social groups and school types highlight the multidimensional nature of educational inequality, including access, infrastructure, teaching quality, learning resources and digital inclusion.

Addressing these challenges requires strengthening the quality and equity of the learning environment, rather than relying solely on numerical expansion. Structural disparities in public financing, equitable distribution of teachers and digital connectivity need to be systematically addressed, so as to avoid the recurrence of socio-economic disadvantage in the education system.

Data-driven policy interventions, decentralized planning and targeted resource allocation can significantly reduce disparities. Also, aligning reforms like the National Education Policy 2020 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal SDG 4 will make quality education truly accessible, equitable and outcome-oriented for all students across Maharashtra, thereby promoting inclusive human development.

Acknowledgment

I express my sincere gratitude to M.S.G. Arts, Science and Commerce College (Autonomous), Malegaon Camp, Dist. Nashik, for providing the academic environment and institutional support necessary to complete this research work titled "*Inequality and Access to Quality Education in Maharashtra.*"

I am deeply thankful to the Department of Economics for its intellectual support, encouragement, and constructive academic discussions that enriched the quality of this study.

I also acknowledge with gratitude the valuable data and reports provided by the Ministry of Education, Government of Maharashtra, ASER Centre, UNESCO, and the World Bank, which formed the empirical foundation of this research.

I extend my sincere appreciation to fellow academicians, researchers, and policymakers whose scholarly contributions in the field of educational inequality provided valuable theoretical and analytical insights.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References:

1. Annual Status of Education Report Centre. (2023). Annual status of education report (Rural) 2022: Beyond basics. ASER Centre. New Delhi, India.
2. Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press. New York, NY, USA.
3. Coleman, J. S. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, DC, USA.
4. Desai, S., & Vanneman, R. (2018). India human development survey-II (IHDS-II), 2011–12: User guide. National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). New Delhi, India.
5. Government of India, Ministry of Education. (2020). National education policy 2020. Government of India. New Delhi, India.

6. Government of Maharashtra, School Education and Sports Department. (2023). Educational statistics of Maharashtra 2022–23. Government of Maharashtra. Mumbai, India.
7. Kingdon, G. G. (2007). The progress of school education in India. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 23(2), 168–195. Oxford University Press. Oxford, UK.
8. Muralidharan, K. (2013). Priorities for primary education policy in India's 12th Five-Year Plan. *India Policy Forum*, 9, 1–46. National Council of Applied Economic Research. New Delhi, India.
9. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2018). *Equity in education: Breaking down barriers to social mobility*. OECD Publishing. Paris, France.
10. Tilak, J. B. G. (2018). *Education and development in India: Critical issues in public policy and development*. Palgrave Macmillan. Singapore.
11. UNESCO. (2022). *Global education monitoring report 2022: Non-state actors in education*. UNESCO Publishing. Paris, France.
12. UNICEF. (2021). *Education and inequality: Global and South Asian perspectives*. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. Kathmandu, Nepal.
13. United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations. New York, NY, USA.
14. World Bank. (2021). *The state of global learning poverty: 2021 update*. World Bank Publications. Washington, DC, USA.