

# Chapter I

## A Conceptual Exploration of Social Capital in Education

### 1.1 Introduction

Education is an essential agent of social change. It translates a nation's philosophical vision into reality by creating socially, economically, spiritually, and psychologically balanced individuals. In other words, education is one of the key catalyst of human capital, social mobility, self-actualization, and development. An individual develops in various ways, which affects his overall personality. Socialization is one such facet where an individual learns to behave as per the norms and functions of society. Elkin and Handel (1972) elaborate that socialization not only leads to developmental change in the individual but also nurtures relationships that result in improved communication within a social group. Thus, to understand the dynamics of socialization, it is essential to contextualize it with respect to communities, families, peers, and school.

Children spend a substantial share of their lives in school, making it the first source of socialization outside the family. Schools are one of the important agencies of socialization that develop from ties that are impersonal to them. They provide a space to students, where they learn to interact with their peers, leading to the development of their social support networks. In other words, a school is the first agency that inculcates sentiments in students that go beyond their families.

In addition to this, by utilizing school support, Stanton-Salazar (2001) opines that students can counter the social inequalities that emerge during their interaction with family and community. Therefore, schools help their students to become an integral part of the community (Hanifan, 1916), and foster parental participation (Coleman, 1988), which leads to the broadening of students' prospects (Morgan and Sorensen, 1999). Consequently, one may notice the intuitive appeal of the notion that educational outcomes are contingent on social interactions.

The 778 AD Jain scripture named *Kuvalayamala* documents the importance of caste and gotras in the social hierarchy in erstwhile Rajputana (now Rajasthan). Jodhka (2016) contends that in present times castes and caste-like structures still implicitly dominate

the sociological fabric of Rajasthan. Rajput, Jat, Brahman, Gujar, Bhil, Mina, Sahariya, Mahajan, Qaimkhaini, and Mangniyar are the major communities that form the backbone of the social structure of the state. Thus, any attempt to examine them, by defining differences between castes, regions, religions, and social classes is a colossal task.

The Government of Rajasthan along with the Government of India through educational intervention programs such as *Shiksha Karmi Project*, *Lok Jumbish Pariyojna*, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), and *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) have either emerged as a path-breaker or have successfully executed them. Despite the efforts of both the Centre and State governments, the Census 2011 reported a low literacy rate (66.11%) in the state as compared to the national (74.04%). Thus, Rajasthan remains one of the states that have a high multidimensional poverty index score of 29.46 (NITI Ayog, 2023), a skewed sex ratio of 928 females per 1000 males as compared to the national sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males (Census 2011), caste-based hierarchy (Saigal and Shrivastava, 2021), and high infant mortality rate of 32 deaths per 1000 lives as compared to the national infant mortality rate of 28 deaths per 1000 lives in 2020 (SRS Bulletin, 2022).

Dash (2007) suggests that efforts to increase the effectiveness of government intervention should be meticulously planned and executed by increasing the participation and accountability of stakeholders at the grassroots level. Social capital emerges as a concept that focuses on benefits that can be reaped from social interactions and relationships. The first formal conception of social capital is attributed to Pierre Bourdieu (1986) who conceived it on the principles of social structuralism. Bourdieu (1986) deliberates that social activities take place in socially constructed interactive fields. He categorises capital into three forms, viz., economic, cultural, and social. Coleman's (1988, 1994) notion of social capital is founded on the economic sociology tradition. Coleman (1988) views social structures as the outcome of diverse social relationships forged by the effective actions of actors. In his view, shared values and norms, multidimensional social relationships, and effective social control are the three elements of social capital that constitute the collective. The foundation of Putnam's concept of social capital is based on community participation in a democracy. Putnam (1993) views social capital as a public good rather than an individually owned one. He

opines that the extent of the creation of social capital is contingent on the degree of engagement of the individuals. In totality, social capital is 3Rs viz. relationships, resources, and readiness as per Chattopadhyay (2014); forming the basis of developing a conceptual framework for the present investigation.

The conceptual framework is divided into six sections. The first section focuses on the historical development of capital and its various forms including social capital. The second section elaborates on the three important conceptual threads on social capital by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, who presented their understanding of social capital in different social settings. The third section discusses the significance of social capital with a major focus on elementary education. The fourth section provides a glimpse of the perspectives of policy on social capital, their implementation, and their efficacy with special reference to Rajasthan. The fifth section is a comprehensive understanding of the historical background and the status of elementary education in Rajasthan. Lastly, the final section deliberates on the role of schools in engendering social capital.

## **1.2 Capital: A Prologue**

The idea of wealth has been analysed and understood from different aspects viz. sociological, political, and economic. Yet, the question that is sustained throughout is- what is capital? Merriam-Webster dictionary defines capital, as “*an accumulated good devoted to the production of other goods*”; in Collins dictionary, capital means either “*wealth, in whatever form, used or capable of being used to produce more wealth*” or “*an accumulated stock of such wealth or its value*”. Capital, therefore, can be perceived as the resources that are utilized, invested, accumulated, and mobilized in pursuit of producing other resources or providing momentum to achieve goals.

The classical concept of capital was extensively deliberated by Karl Marx in his seminal book, *Das Kapital*, in 1890. According to Marx (1890), the commodity is the germplasm of capital. A commodity, for Marx (1890), is an object which has the potential to satisfy human needs. This usefulness of a commodity creates its “use-value,” which is expressed qualitatively. Marx (1890) adds that commodities when looked at from the lens of quantitative perception have a certain “exchange value”. The exchange value is different for different commodities. However, the utility of an object is independent of the exchange value. An object with no use-value, thus, has no exchange-value; resulting in the labour contained in it as a waste.

A commodity's utility and exchange value are also contingent upon human labour. Marx (1890) asserts that the product of human labour satisfies social desires, which may be perceptible or imperceptible, indicating a social tint in human labour. Fukuyama (1996) agrees that there is hardly any form of economic activity that does not require social collaboration. This provides a humane aspect to the seemingly mechanical economic arenas. Lin (2008) points out that capital in any situation is processed twice. First, as the resources that are being produced or altered as investments. Second, as investments offered in the marketplace for profit. Hence, the first step of the process is where capital becomes an outcome of production; in step two, the capital will act as a causal factor of a production process.

As an economist, Loury (1976, 1981), perceives social capital in situations involving an individual's social status and family background and its effect on individual earning prospects. He observes that the economic structure was tightly woven into the social structure. He identifies family as the first socializing agent in a child's life where parents allocate resources not to survive but to ensure that their child is trained well to develop a certain set of skills. Loury (1976, 1981) sees this allocation of resources towards their child's welfare as an act of altruism on the parents' part. Since each family has access and possession to a certain set of resources, there is a difference in the extent to which the investment towards the child is being made; affecting the rate of return of their children. Within a family, if there is an unequal distribution of resources between offspring, it can result in the low performance of one offspring compared to another. Based on these observations, Loury (1976, 1981) defines social capital as a set of resources that exist in family relationships and community associations by being valuable for a child's cognitive and social progress.

Hence, social capital can be observed as a supplementary form of capital that facilitates the role of other existing capital, such as economic, human, and cultural capital. One of the distinctive features as compared to other forms is that social capital can only be obtained through interpersonal relationships. Fukuyama (1996) adds that the gains are realized because social capital reduces transaction costs, facilitates the coordinated actions of individuals, and subsequently increases the society's efficiency and effectiveness.

### **1.3 Theorizing Social Capital**

The theoretical examination of social capital has emerged from different schools of thought. Khattar (2019) conceptualises social capital as a malleable term due to a plethora of studies in the field of politics, economics, and social welfare that points out the “goodness” it brings to a social situation. Therefore, it is important to understand the ideas put forth by the proponents of social capital. In the upcoming sub-sections, a thorough conception of social capital by three major proponents has been presented:

#### **1.3.1 Pierre Bourdieu’s Notion of Social Capital**

#### **1.3.2 James Coleman’s Conception of Social Capital**

#### **1.3.3 Robert Putnam’s Insights on Social Capital**

The observations and reflections presented by these three pioneers have helped to develop basic knowledge about the concept of social capital, its types, forms, and the elements that affect it.

##### ***1.3.1 Pierre Bourdieu’s Notion of Social Capital***

Bourdieu (1987, 1988) views the social world as a collection of historical events, as opposed to a series of mechanical interactions between individuals. Bourdieu (1987, 1988) defines capital as an accumulated endeavour in manifested or embodied form, which when appropriated either privately or exclusively by an agent or group of agents, empowers them to apposite social energy as a material or living labour. He adds that capital can exist in multiple forms; any form takes time and energy to accumulate and show the result in the form of a profit or positive production. So, its supply cannot be said to be even across and within all the levels of a social structure. Thus, making it a sporadic resource.

Bourdieu (1988) posits that capital exists primarily in three forms, which are economic, cultural, and social capital. As per Bourdieu (1986), social capital is “*the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.*” Woolcock (2001) points out the sociological foundations in Bourdieu’s (1988) conception of social capital. Woolcock (2001) further concurs that members of society are dependent on various networks of assets. Some of these assets may not be accessible

through other forms such as economic or cultural capital but are observed to be accessible due to their acquaintances and recognitions that individuals develop as a member of a group. This indicates that social relations have the potential to increase access to different resources, including education. Bourdieu (1986,1988) adds that when an individual faces a problem or undergoes a struggle, social relationships have the capability to help an individual to solve and get by it. Therefore, making the social relationship a resource by transforming it into social capital.

Furthermore, a person is expected to follow certain socially driven and relevant norms and values to attain an affiliation with a group. The volume of social capital possessed by the individual(s) is dependent on the scope of networks he/she can efficaciously arrange as well as the amount of capital that each of those to whom he/she is associated owns in their personal right. This means that individuals would have to come together and expedite their time, energy, and resources in the form of obligations and reciprocations to develop and acquire social capital. Hence, Bourdieu (1988) attributes social capital to be 'socially given' rather than 'naturally acquired'.

Bourdieu (1988) believes that our relationships do not develop in a vacuum. Instead, many tangibles and intangibles 'investment' strategies are used such as respect, gifts, friendship, words of praise, slaves, etc. This is also characterized by direct exchange, subjective commitment, and complementation (temporary or lasting), resulting in the development and transformation of relationships at the workplace, kinship, or, neighbourhood. This may even lead to setting up boundaries of the group in such a way that any form of exchange, trade, or even marriage outside the group cannot take place. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of each member of the group to act as its custodian and check for unwanted attempts of entry into the group. This is an important underpinning of the manifestation and sustenance of social capital according to Bourdieu (1988).

Bourdieu (1988) mentions that social capital can be created through economic and cultural, capital and vice versa. Bourdieu (1988) using an analogy of the Law of Conservation explains that energy is known to change its form, similarly, any form of capital can transform into another form of capital. For instance, in a school setting, the economic capital in the form of school fees allows a child to access the school, classroom, and books. This results in the development of a certain set of skills, thus

enhancing the human capital of the child. As a student, one learns values, inculcates knowledge about the past, and acquires different aspects of culture, thereby implying the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital. A school is also a place where children first learn to socialize and develop friendships and mutual respect for others who are beyond the scope of their family. This is indicative of the conversion of economic capital to social capital.

In conclusion, social capital is majorly dependent upon the effort that is being put into developing sociability and its constant affirmation and reaffirmation. The individuals in the group try to subserve their goals over the collective good. However, they keep on working to ensure that the totality of social capital is limited to the group rather than being easily accessible to a non-member.

### ***1.3.2 Coleman's Conception of Social Capital***

The basis of James Coleman's idea about social capital lies in the sociological theory of action and the theory of rational choice. These two theories view individuals as actors who are purposeful, goal-oriented, and rational; guided by interests and incentives in a social environment. These purposive, rational choice-driven actions take place in a social context of the actors, which culminates in social organization.

Coleman (1988) defines social capital by its "function" wherein social capital is not a "single entity" but rather "a collection of different entities." These different entities have two things in common- firstly, "social structure" and secondly, "actors to take actions." Lin (2008) elaborates that to understand any aspect of a structure and to qualify as capital, one must see if it adds some value for actors. Coleman (1990) contends that social capital essentially resides in the relationship between the actors. This implies that social capital is not individualistic in nature and is rather driven by purposive actors who are part of a purposive organization.

Coleman (1988) acknowledges that, unlike economic capital, social capital is intangible since it exists within relationships. It functions toward effectiveness and has the potential to enhance the productivity of a group, given it has high social capital. This means that the group in which members trust each other extensively can accomplish more as compared to the one that does not. He further propounds that social capital adds an important value to the existing functions between actors of a social structure that

could help them achieve their goals. At the same time, social capital aids in transitions such as micro to macro without causing much disruption to the social structure. This allows for the facilitation of resources, the combining of resources, at different levels, and for different individuals.

Coleman (1988) illustrates an example of a South Korean radical student study circle, which acted as a basic organizational unit for protests and demonstrations. He further quotes the trading practices of merchants in New York and Cairo and a mother of six children who moved to Detroit from Jerusalem. In the case of merchants of New York and Cairo, Coleman (1988) observes that these trading circles are very close, and therefore when the merchants are presented with some connections to the group, the trading and transactions become smooth without many or no terms and conditions. On the other hand, the mother of six children faces a normative shift of supervision of children by people around Jerusalem which she found missing in the United States of America (USA). Through these instances, Coleman (1988, 1994) draws dimensions such as reciprocation of obligations, maintaining relations within the family and outside, trustworthiness, and norms.

The first form of social capital exists in the form of obligation, expectation, and trustworthiness of structure. During interactions, the multiple exchanges of material and immaterial objects result in the creation of 'credit slips' between actors. The underlying idea is that the obligation reaped will be repaid, thereby indicating the trustworthiness of the milieu and the definite degree to which an obligation is being kept. The validity of 'credit slips,' consequently depends on the actors and the hierarchy of the social structure in which 'credit slips' are generated.

The second form of social capital as per Coleman (1988, 1994) is the information channels. When actors in a social setting receive an input in the form of knowledge or fact, that stimulus is said to be the information. A piece of information, hence, is the most valued possession that an individual could possess. When scarce in supply, the possessor becomes an important resource to have and hence affects social capital. This information can be beyond the scope of other forms of capital but accessible through social relationships and social connections.

Coleman (1988, 1994) identifies effective and prescriptive norms as the third vital form of social capital. According to him, effective norms are beneficial in the school system as they cater to the needs of those who are at risk. On the other hand, the prescriptive norms implore focus on collective goals over self-goals. Coleman (1988, 1990) believes that a community with strong norms can aid young people to avoid any act of truancy.

Coleman (1988,1990) believes that intergenerational closure is one of the important agents of social capital and a subset of effective norms. He defines intergenerational closure as “*a relationship between parents and child and relations outside the family.*” In a school, when parents of children not only know the names of other students but also share an acquaintance with their parents, it makes the imposition of the norms and sanctioning the desirable behaviours more effective. Intergenerational closure, according to Coleman (1986, 1990), is critical as it gives collective support to the members by helping them to efficiently levy norms.

Coleman (1988, 1990) explains that we exist in more than one social context, hence, our hierarchy in one social structure would be different from that in another. This may influence access to the resources including their appropriation through social capital. For instance, when Parent A discusses issues pertaining to his/her child in school with Parent B. The suggestions and support given by Parent B to Parent A show that one actor thought of exercising their relationship to come up with a solution that not only helps the other but also generates a ‘credit slip’, starting an endless cycle of reciprocation and obligation.

In an educational setting, Coleman (1988, 1990) opines that parental social capital directly impacts a child’s educational outcomes. Coleman (1988, 1990) explains that the children of the parents who frequently change their place of residence lead to changing schools many times. This may possibly increase the chances of failure in the child to develop healthy relationships and friendships in school. He further posits that a high social capital among the members of the school leads to a decrease in drop-outs from school. Coleman (1988, 1990) credits the inter-generational closure among the parents behind the reduced drop-out rate.

To summarise, social capital exists as a public good that resides in the form of relationships within the social structures or social organizations and between the actors

in that structure. It enables people to come together and form a group through consensus over norms. In a school setting, social capital is not merely limited to the participation in Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or other social organizations but through participation stakeholders across all the strata of education also reap benefits. Social capital clarifies the intention and norm of the group, therefore, helping an individual to become decisive and make a difference in their quality of life.

### ***1.3.3 Putnam's Insights on Social Capital***

Coleman's thought on social capital is expounded by Putnam (1993) in his pivotal work, "Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy." According to Putnam (1993), community networks are beneficial to individuals as their ulterior motive is to generate relationships and networks that serve their own interests. Social contacts influence the physical and human capital in terms of the productivity of individuals and groups. While human capital is a distinctive feature of an individual, social capital is deeply entrenched in relationships. Putnam (2000) later attempts to establish a relationship between social capital, civic virtue, and political engagement. He iterates that while political participation requires relationships with a political institution, social capital is dependent on interpersonal relationships. Hence, Putnam (1993) believes that social capital is essential for the strength of government and development in terms of economic, physical, and human capital.

For Putnam (1993), elements such as trust, associations between civil societies, and norms not only instils conviction within a group but also reduces transaction costs and facilitates cooperation. Putnam (1993) identifies reciprocity as a defining characteristic of norms, which balances the exchange of goods of equal value or generalises where there is an imbalance in the exchange of goods. This happens when people help without expecting anything in return.

For Putnam (1993) social capital is more of a public good instead of a privately owned good, which often results in its underinvestment in its production and maintenance. He views social capital as a byproduct of activities that a person performs to attain their objectives. This investment in social capital is constrained by the individual's needs. Putnam (2000) notes that the organization of social capital could either be formal such as PTAs or informal like meeting friends in a public space. The social capital within the relationship with family members, for Putnam (2000) is dense, monotonous, thorough, and

multi-stranded. On the other hand, the social capital may also be thinly woven, nearly invisible, sporadic, single-stranded, and unspecified like the relationship one has with a friend.

Putnam and Goss (2001) ponder that there are three forms of social capital based on the level of networks it takes place: bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding is a form of network that exists within a network of people with similar social and cultural backgrounds. Bridging, on the other hand, exists within a network of people with different social and cultural backgrounds. Lastly, linking is a network that exists between an individual and a powerful individual(s) or institution.

To sum up, social capital is inherent to the connections that exist between and within social networks. A person's or a group's network of relationships has a profound impact on the utilization of resources embedded in the system or within the group. Lane and Lubatkin (1998) note that through close and intimate interactions, the depth, breadth, and efficiency of mutual service and knowledge exchanges can be enhanced. The quality of social relationships is the essence of social capital. Hence, when viewed through the lens of social capital, the quality of relationships reveals its capacity to influence the people who come together to solve a common problem and achieve mutual goals. Consequently, social capital is a resource for collective action, which can result in a variety of outcomes with varying social degrees.

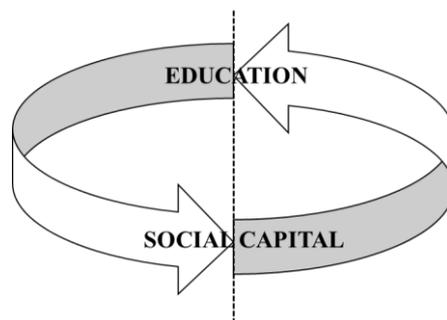
#### **1.4 Social Capital in Elementary Education: A Panoramic View**

Being rooted in the principles of sociology and economics, the academic community has been working to understand social capital in the area of education globally. Dewey (1900) is the first person to use the term 'social capital' in his deliberation on the integration of psychological principles in the field of education. The ideas of Dewey (1900) view social capital as an undercurrent of society.

In his study on the social issues in rural school communities in the United States of America (USA), Hanifan (1916), contends that social capital involves “*substances namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social association among the individuals and families who make up a social unit and count for most in the daily lives of people.*” Hanifan (1916) adds that when an individual interacts with his neighbour and that

neighbour interacts with other neighbours, each of them will accumulate social capital, and consequently, the community will bear benefits because of the cooperation.

Papapolyrodou (2011) establishes the relationship between social capital and the educational outcomes of individual students, as both a generator and product of education, as shown in Figure 1. This is reminiscent of Dewey's (1900) writing in his seminal work "The School and Society," in which he believes that social capital is an instrument developed by society for its intellectual pursuits. These intellectual pursuits are the key to helping children access the wealth of social capital that lies beyond their limited individual experience.



**Figure 1. Relationship between social capital and education (Source: Papapolydorou, 2011)**

In the context of educational research, Mikiewicz (2021) asserts that the incorrect notion of social capital can be dispelled if one recognises that there are two significant factors on which evaluations can be based. Firstly, the individual characteristics of actors in education, such as students' values, attitudes, aspirations, and habits; and secondly, the structural factors in education, such as educational structures, processes of selection and allocation, educational performance, and status attainment.

Schools are an essential socializing force for social development and transformation. Chattopadhyay (2014) sees schools as structural sites for the development of social capital among students or Bourdieu's (1986) field. Within its physical space, a school simultaneously converges a variety of individuals who carry their social connections from neighbourhoods, sports clubs, friends, families, and employment. Simultaneously, the school provides avenues for competition for the distribution of various forms of capital which may affect the experiences of a child who makes efforts to develop not only his cognition but to adapt and have access to different forms of capital. Arriaza and Rocha (2016) concur that classrooms are an important place in children's lives since the

activities that are organised and conducted are meaningful, systematic, and intentionally curricular in nature, to provide a wide variety of cognitive experiences to the children.

According to Piaget (1967), a child enters the elementary stage with predominantly concrete operational mental processes. At this stage, Carney et al. (2011) reaffirms that a child begins to think logically about the real world yet remains somewhere rooted in concrete circumstances. There are both logical and arithmetic operations, along with the operations in the space and time dimensions. These operations are performed only on objects involving concrete situations. This, as per Mikiewicz (2021) leads to struggles within a child to generalize from one situation to another. Hazler and Carney (2002) add that behaviours such as school violence and teen suicide are connected to the environment, characterised by the reduced fostering of trust, faith, and a sense of helplessness relative to society.

In elementary school years, friends and groups of peers are known to take on central importance in a child's social life. Ding and Wu (2023) point out that this can lead to situations, where a child may be forced to opt for behaviour approved by their peers. Bourdieu (1986) views this as habitus, which is a series of dispositions, that influence a person's expectations of social life. Reay et al. (2005) consider habitus as a social norm, which steers the thinking or behaviour of people and is created through a social process. Habitus, therefore, is said to be generated through social mechanisms, leading to movable, which can transform after some duration according to social context.

In conclusion, the study of social capital in the educational realm is a complex web of theoretical perspectives and implications. It is critical to examine the extent to which historical notions prevail in the present landscape of education. Social capital is a palpable resource, accrued through our interactions and relationships. Hence, the role of schools as the incubators of social capital is apparent. It is in school, that a child understands the social norms and role of social processes in shaping them as productive, abiding individuals of the society. The elementary school years are critically characterised by the influence of peers and the manifestation of habitus on a child's behavioural attributes. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the insights that will emerge by scrutinizing social capital in education, in the light of dynamic educational paradigms.

### **1.5 Policies Insights on Social Capital and Initiatives with a Special Focus on Elementary Education in Rajasthan**

Laxmikanth (2020) highlights that during the meetings of the Constituent Assembly, the importance of the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) was felt. Thus, when the Constitution came into effect in 1950, Article 45 obligated the States “to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years”. Naik (1966) believes that this timeline was not feasible given the circumstances of the time the country was in during that time. In 1951, as per Verma (1986), the total number of primary schools in Rajasthan was 3,195; only 331 primary schools were for girls.

It was in 1964, that a commission was established to comprehensively study, and reframe the entire education system including the consideration of the needs of the masses. This commission was headed by Dr. D. S. Kothari known as the Education Commission and published its report in 1966 titled “Education and National Development.” Though the commission did not employ the term “social capital,” it shed light on the importance of community involvement and participation in education. The commission points out that a dream of creating an egalitarian society is not possible until the country has a strong underpinning of values and high social interconnection (p.2).

The transformation of a traditional society, such as India, into a modern society, according to Robert Heilbroner (1963), requires an inner social transformation that involves a massive reorientation of value as well as time, status, money, and work (p.4). This is possible through education due to its potential for wide dissemination. As a result, stakeholders should not view education as merely a means to an end, such as knowledge acquisition, but should recognize and appreciate education for what it can contribute to society. To do so, the schools need to recognize themselves as a part of the community and be committed to the cause of nation-building over divisive loyalties. The commission also notes that the division exists even in the education system with respect to schools, on various criteria such as location, fees, etc. This perpetuates more segregation and hierarchy in Indian society. Therefore, stakeholders- parents, teachers, administration, community, and government- must work to create an equitable and conducive education system. Furthermore, the schools need to focus on promoting

cohesion and developing a sense of shared identity right from the elementary stage (p.12).

The implementation of recommendations made by the Education Commission (1964-66) was executed through a policy that focuses not only on the education system but also on social, democratic, and constitutional values. Thus, the first National Policy on Education (NPE) of independent India was released in 1968. This policy views elementary education as a powerful tool to strengthen the agrarian foundations of the country. The policy did not explicitly use the term 'social capital.' It recognises the importance of social cohesion and national integration by developing a sense of common citizenship (p.39). They agreed with the Education Commission (1966) that education is a harbinger of social transformation. It forebodes that strong efforts need to be made so that educational institutions and communities can collaborate and work in consonance with national development (p.41). Little (2010) laments that the process of implementing the measures suggested by the policy was slowed down primarily due to the war in 1971 and the subsequent 1975 Emergency.

Little (2010) views the National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE 1986) as an important turning point for education in India because of its conception, idea, and potential to transform the country. This became one of the many reasons for the respect that NPE 1986, has garnered for nearly three decades within the academic circles. The major challenge of the policy was to ensure that coherent, interdependent, and multiple goals are developed, implemented, and achieved by keeping in mind the social, economic, cultural, political, and individual development of the stakeholders.

NPE 1986 also did not overtly use the term 'social capital'. It accepts the acculturating role of education along with its promising effect on national integration (p.2) and conformity to secular norms and constitutional values (p.3). It highlights that education can herald the essence of equality of educational opportunities to all by dissipating any sort of prejudices that exist in our society. Therefore, it has the power to mobilize people and bring social transformation to the country (p.4).

Little (2010) believes that one of the immediate effects of NPE 1986 was the initiation of the Operation Blackboard (OBB) program in 1987 across India. The focal point of this centrally sponsored scheme was to provide students studying in elementary schools with the necessary institutional equipment and instructional material to facilitate their

education. The major drawback of this project was that the Union Government often made decisions without any consultation with the States, Little (2010) says.

In 1987, apart from an abysmally low literacy rate of 30.11%, teacher absenteeism emerged as a major challenge in the state of Rajasthan. To tackle this problem, a collaboration between the Government of Rajasthan, the Government of India, and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) led to the launch of the *Shiksha Karmi* project. The core idea behind the *Shiksha Karmi* project was that when there is an absence of a qualified and willing teacher, the primary education of the cohort is arranged by involving members of the community who are educated and willing to serve the community. The *Shiksha Karmi* project was more of a de-bureaucratized program, that encourages the participation of the local communities comprised of people who are not government employees but a member of that community.

In 1988, *Lok Jumbish Pariyojana*, or People's Movement was drafted. The leaders of *Lok Jumbish* sought to transform the education system through building and interaction with three components- the quality of learning, community participation, and management of education. According to the *Lok Jumbish Joint Assessment Report* (1998), this project is an important catalyst to metamorphose the education system. It drew ideas from the *Shiksha Karmi* project and was another collaboration between the Government of Rajasthan, the Government of India, and SIDA, along with a non-government agency, *Lok Jumbish Parishad*. This is a massive community intervention program in education that includes public debates and household surveys to identify out-of-school children and the reasons for their absence. The prominence of the project is evident in the Programme of Action (POA) 1992, which advises coordinated action between state and union governments when implementing a program of national importance.

The Acharya Ramamurti Committee in 1990 endorses the idea that social transformation can happen only when education is deeply rooted within its social context (p.19). Even though, the report did not contain the word 'social capital,' it implicitly highlights its interventional role in promoting social cohesion and national integration (p.19). Therefore, for a nation, a school has the potential to emerge as an important site to create an egalitarian society (p.23). Hence, it urges schools to shift their focus from cognitive to communitarian (p.26). The committee emphasises the need to non-formalize the

formal schools as per the comfort of the students, by changing the school timings and adjusting the school calendars as per the agricultural season; according to Govinda and Mathew (2018), this will allow children, especially dropouts and girls who work to support their families to drop in the school anytime they want and extend the benefit of drop-in to the migrant children.

According to the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) (1999), the recommendations by the Acharya Ramamurti Committee (1990) are seen in the 1992 *Marushala* Project by Urmul Trust in Western Rajasthan. This project is seen as a model of an alternative school in areas where there are no schools due to desert geography. The project was conceived when pupil absenteeism during a particular season of harvesting was brought to notice. By collaborating with *Digantar*, another non-government organization (NGO), the syllabus, training program of teachers, and usage of teaching aid is made into a reality.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was introduced in ten districts of Rajasthan in 1999 to reduce the percentage difference between enrolment and drop-out by up to 5%. The program supports textbook development and publication, planning, management, evaluation, and research. Planning activities are decentralized to the district level to encourage people's participation and ownership and are managed by the village education committees, which are composed of the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat and representatives of the local community, including disadvantaged groups. Hence, community participation is an important premise of DPEP, which translates into the empowerment of communities to choose what and how they want to do with respect to various issues including elementary education.

A UEE revolution took place in 2001 when *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), or Education For All (EFA) was launched. It was launched by the Government of India to achieve UEE by 2015 as per the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG). This is a politically-willed effort to attain UEE. The political discourse of this program has a mammoth impact on the landscape of elementary education. In 2009, after the Eighty-Sixth Constitutional Amendment Act, elementary education acquired the status of a right. Article 21(A) declares that "the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the state may determine." To date, SSA has evolved into one of the most ambitious and successful

projects towards UEE. However, in Rajasthan, the 2011 Census declared that the literacy rate was 66.11%, still lower than the national average of 74.04%.

In 2020, the National Education Policy (NEP) was released during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the major differences between NEP 2020 from its predecessor is its attempt to find a way back to its roots. Despite envisioning a society that is rooted in the Indian ethos and in global citizenship (p.6), social capital did not explicitly find its place in NEP (2020). The policy views education as a public service (p.6) that aims to develop human beings as rational as well as compassionate beings whose every action has a purpose (p.3). The policy understands that merely cognitively efficient individuals cannot make India a *Vishwa guru*, hence social, emotional, ethical (p.7), and spiritual development of learners should be in focus as well (p.4). Therefore, to engage productively in a pluralistic society such as ours, the policy points out that it is important to provide a conducive, empathetic, and caring environment to the learners where they can voice their opinions, ideas, and thoughts without any fear or doubt (p.5). A conducive environment increases the level of collaboration (p.15) between parents, teachers, and other stakeholders (p.21) and cooperation which is indicative of a high level of trust, open communication (p.5), and absence of bias between people in that context (p.5). It encourages ways to facilitate community participation and philanthropy in the education system (p.6) to monitor and deter dropouts (p.10) and engage in public-philanthropic partnerships (p. 11).

Drawing from the philosophy of NEP 2020, the newly released National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023 emphasizes developing a conducive learning environment in schools. It accepts that schools often ignore the importance of relationships, usage of symbols, and participation in activities such as morning assembly (p. 558), sports, and culture (p.547). The encouragement to participate and develop healthy relationships (p.547) influences the school culture, affecting the creation of a fear-free and effective learning environment and value dispositions among its students (p.548). The relationships, therefore, should be founded on mutual trust, open communication, care, empathy, and responsibility (p. 553) between students-students, students-teachers, teachers-teachers, students-administration, teachers-administration, and schools-parents. Thus, there should be strategies and plans from the school's end to

engage and involve the community in their school activities to the fullest and reap the benefits of social interconnectedness.

To sum up, the policies, committees, and commissions have not explicitly used the term ‘social capital’ in their idea about the holistic growth of both individuals and society. As the country is at a critical juncture enlightened with technological advancements and the rise of human capital, we cannot afford to ignore social inequalities that hide beneath the shadows of advancement and prosperity. The implicit presence of social capital in the form of community participation, social cohesion, and national integration shows that social capital remains an underappreciated tool in the flourishing society of our country. Bourdieu (1986) opines that since social capital inheres in social relationships, it would take time to build, accumulate, and degrade due to its non-usage. Therefore, it is necessary as per Shan et al. (2012) to acknowledge the contributions of social capital to the success of any education-based intervention program. This notion could lead to the drawing of insights by policymakers to plan, execute, and monitor the country’s vision to the social contexts by harnessing the power of social capital.

### **1.6 Elementary Education in Rajasthan**

Before Rajasthan came into existence, it was known as Rajputana which constitutes many small princely states such as Jodhpur, Ajmer, Bikaner, and Jaipur among others. Until 1818, public education in Rajasthan was provided through Pathshalas and Chatshalas, Makhtabs, and Upasaras in vernacular medium. These provisions varied from principalities, kings, and communities. Verma (1986) explains that English education was first introduced through missionary schools in 1819 by Dr. Jewaj Kerry in Ajmer and Pushkar. In 1836, through the efforts of the United Presbyterian Mission, a government-funded school was opened in Ajmer, where free education was provided up to class VI.

Singh And Rao (2020) write that although the kings and feudal lords of princely states of Rajputana- Alwar, Udaipur, Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, and Udaipur had an interest in English education, they abhorred Macaulay’s (1835) intent; producing “*a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.*” Therefore, from 1842 to 1885, several elementary schools were opened under their benefaction to provide free English education. Verma (1986) highlights that in 1844 Jaipur state became the foreground of modern education in Rajasthan for two

reasons. Firstly, Maharaja School for Boys was opened under the partisan of Maharaja of Jaipur, Sawai Shri Ram Singh II, and secondly, the Department of Public Instruction was established that focused on education and its subsequent expansion.

It was much later in the Education Despatch of Charles Wood (1854) it was realised that the primary duty of the government was to ensure that elementary education was imparted in the vernacular medium. But in its practice, it reaffirms Macaulay's (1835) recommendation that education after grade VI should be delivered through the "medium of English", and be Western-oriented in the teaching of science and literature. Based on the suggestions of Education Despatch of Charles Wood (1854), in 1867, a separate school for Rajput feudal lords and English people was opened in Jaipur.

Singh and Rao (2020) lament the conservative attitudes, social malpractices like sati and child marriage, and the absence of a separate school of girls, which Verma (1986) finds had a negative effect on girls' education. Thus, it was under the protection of the Maharaja of Jaipur, Sawai Shri Ram Singh II, Jaipur Central Girls School was opened in 1867. Verma (1986) points out that social movements, such as the Arya Samaj, placed education at the forefront of their agenda. Through the efforts of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, under Arya Samaj's sponsorship, Shri Mathura Prasad, Gulab Devi Arya Kanya Vidyalaya was opened in 1898 in Ajmer. In Jaipur, by the end of the nineteenth century, nine Arya Kanya Pathshala were opened.

The Elementary Education Bill or Gokhale's Bill in 1911 was introduced to establish compulsory elementary education as a state responsibility. Little (2010) points out that the provisions recommended were seen as an interference in the employment of children on the land by the princely states, which led to its subsequent rejection. On the other hand, despite repeated efforts to improve girls' education, the patriarchal stereotype was sustained and was evident even in the Education Chapter of The Jaipur Album (1933), which stated that the objective of girls' education is not to turn out merely educated ladies, but also good housewives who will adapt according to *dharma* and *karma*.

Soon, education became a national site for the struggle for Independence. In Rajasthan, education became a center for philanthropy, nationalism, and social reform. The increased number of charitable trusts, sponsored by members of the trading communities and pioneered by philanthropists like Raja Baldeodas Birla, resulted in the opening of private schools for rural children. Under the tutelage of Pandit Hiralal

Shashtri, Jivan Shiksha Kutir, in the village of Bantali was established in the year 1935 to provide education to girls. This is known as Banastali Vidyapith since 1943. In 1943, a school following the British Public-School pattern was established with only 23 girls by Maharani Gayatri Devi with the patronage of Maharaja Shri Sawai Man Singh II in Jaipur.

The Jaipur album (1933) mentions that, apart from 175 Chatshalas and Maktabas, there were 156 government primary schools, of which 11 were for girls; 254 private primary schools, of which 30 were for girls in Jaipur state. At the time of Independence, according to Verma (1986), there were 647 educational institutions, of which 510 were maintained by the princely states of Rajputana, 103 by influential community members, and 34 by missionaries. Of these, 545 were primary schools.

After Independence, when the princely states united to form the state of Rajasthan in 1956, the focus on elementary education was brought back. Since then, around half a dozen special schemes and programs to improve the quality of education and to reach the unreached and marginalized children have been running in the state. In 1959, much before the Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment Act, Rajasthan pioneered a decentralized approach to the management of schools by accepting the recommendations of the Balwantrao Mehta Committee and providing for the management of the primary school by Panchayat Samitis.

According to Pragati Pravedan (1999), there were 48,912 primary schools in Rajasthan (34,364 primary and 14,548 upper primary schools) in the year 1998-99. Yet, issues such as low enrolment, high dropout, and low achievement scores remained persistent as noted in the Lok Jumbish Phase-III Project Document (1999). A need for a better reach of the initiatives was felt to bring the universalization of education to fruition. The concern of civil societies and NGOs led to the development of innovative programs- *Lok Jumbish Pariyojna* and *Shiksha Karmi* Project; to address issues in education in the state. These programmes served as a model for national-level programmes such as DPEP and SSA. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 was enacted on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010 in Rajasthan, since then all elementary level schools have been in the preview of RTE rules. Despite the continuous efforts by the State and Union government, according to Census 2011, the overall literacy of Rajasthan state remained at 66.11%, whereas the all-India average was 74.04%.

According to U-DISE +, in 2014 there were 1,36,472 schools to cater school education up to class XII level in Rajasthan state. Out of these 62.97% of schools were government and the remaining 37.02% were private schools. The percentage of students in government and private schools who were enrolled was 52.76% and 47.23% respectively. According to the U-DISE+ data of 2021-2022, there were a total of 106240 schools in the state of Rajasthan. Out of these, 63.7% of schools were government schools and 36.3% were private schools. The percentage of students enrolled in the government school was 47.5%, whereas those enrolled in private schools were 52.5%.

In summary, the evolution of education in Rajasthan is an intricate interplay of social, political, and cultural dynamics. The transition from a regional, vernacular education system to English education under the tutelage of British, princely states, and even businessmen illustrate a struggle to progress as a modern society but did not let go of their culture, values, and beliefs. The initiatives towards girl education were promising but marked by patriarchal attitudes and conservative social practices. Post-Independence, after the unification of the princely states into the state of Rajasthan, efforts were made to accomplish UEE. However, despite the persistent effort and inclusion of the community, the achievement of UEE still seems to be a distant dream. As a state, Rajasthan has previously made attempts to rise through its issues of access, quality, and equity in education, which later became the cornerstone for the transformation of education. The earlier attempt to involve the community in the dissemination of education is suggestive of the promise of social capital in education. Hence, in the upcoming sub-section, an attempt has been made to understand how schools potentially foster social capital.

### **1.7 School as an Agent of Fostering Social Capital**

Social capital, from the previous sections, can be deduced to have a consequential outcome of the socialization process. Comer and Gates (2004) deliberate that schools thrive and work based on the community's engagement, thereby achieving the goals of society with ease. Thus, in a school context, social capital can be defined as the set of resources that arises from interpersonal behaviours that lead to the creation of an environment of trust, a sense of belonging, open communication channels, reciprocity, solidarity, and substantive engagement among the members.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) use network analysis to understand the manifestation of social capital towards the creation of intellectual capital within an organizational framework. The study discerns that social capital is an interplay of three dimensions, which are namely,

### **1.7.1 Structural dimension**

### **1.7.2 Cognitive dimension**

### **1.7.3 Relational dimension**

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) agree that these three dimensions are dynamic and interrelated; their conception, therefore, focuses individually on each dimension and its contribution towards social capital. The subsequent deliberation is embedded in the school and therefore will focus on how schools underwrite the generation of social capital.

#### ***1.7.1 Structural Dimension***

The structural dimension, as per Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), is the relationships, engagements, and connections shared by the members of an organization. In the context of the school, the members include students, teachers, administration, parents, and the community at large. The structural dimension highlights the contribution of relationships, engagements, and connections toward the functioning of the school that leads to school effectiveness and success.

In connection with the school, the structural dimension not only focuses on various physical aspects like infrastructure, playgrounds, digital systems, sanitation, and water supply but it also includes school policy, ethos, school culture, and overall school climate. These elements as per Gouda et al. (2013) not only facilitate learning and co-curricular activities but also have a considerable impact on a student's achievement and enthusiasm for attending school.

Phelan et al. (1991) confer that the roles played by the individuals, and the behaviours which are expected out of these roles make the classrooms an extension of the school. This means that classrooms are not only a reflection of the school culture and climate but also point to its intricate connection to the community at large. So, it is imperative to align the goals, objectives, and actions taken in the classroom with the demands of the school, families, and society. A school just like society can be considered as a machine, that functions through connections between many gears and cogs. Thus, the rules, structure of

the school and the classroom, assignment of roles to students, teachers, and administrators, and the establishment of expectations from the role that each member plays act like a cog of the machine with which the school essentially functions. This can be extended to the roles and expectations of families, educational researchers, policymakers, textbook developers, and legislation, which affects the functioning of schools. Furthermore, this resultant interdependence leads to a seamless flow where every action taken toward the achievement of goals and objectives contributes to the success of the entire system.

The implementation of the school policy, rules, and regulations is done through the administration of the school. The leadership of the school according to Deal (1985) provides the opportunity to embrace diversity in the form of values and beliefs and create a ripple in the organizational fabric by making decisions that are important for the members of the school. Being empathetic, open to communication, and valuing the needs and concerns of the teachers, students, and even families make leadership a pivotal factor in creating an environment that generates and nurtures social capital within the school. This fosters reciprocation among the members of the school, which ultimately will create an environment of trust and solidarity. This underlying ethos of trust, unity, and care creates a cascade of reciprocity and positive outcomes that affect the success of the members of the school. Having said that, the quality of being an effective leader in school is not limited to the principal but is extended to the teachers and students who ensure that the discipline and norms of the school and classroom are followed.

If seen from the lens of social capital, effective leadership not only shapes the functioning of the school but moulds the aspirations and overall educational experiences of the members of the school. Therefore, while educational objectives deal with the academic milestones of the teaching-learning process, the tangible form of aspirations motivates the teacher and the students to pursue higher levels of learning and personal growth.

Therefore, by feeling supported by the school, the students can feel confident about the school activities and their level of attainment. However, when an individual chooses to subserve own goal over the collective good is what Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) believe to form the cognitive dimension.

### ***1.7.2 Cognitive Dimension***

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) elaborates cognitive dimension as a shared understanding, and usage of common language, beliefs, and interpretive frameworks that allow members of an organization to collectively come together, understand each other's ideas, and thereby communicate effectively. This involves creating a cognitive framework wherein people with different expertise and insights come together to achieve a common goal.

In a school, individuals with different backgrounds come together with the primary goal of teaching and learning. Therefore, an alignment of expectations, motives, and roles is of the essence at the individual level. Comer and Gates (2004) believe that this affects the access to the resources that are intellectual in nature such as the teaching-learning material, knowledge sharing, and the benefits that stem from the relationships, engagements, and connections within a school community. By understanding the role of individual values and beliefs one may be able to decipher the extent to which there is an open and easy exchange of information in the form of ideas and expertise. This is imperative in a classroom culture where the teacher's aim is to inculcate the practice of dialectics among the students.

When a child first enters school, the interactions and connections form acquaintances, friends, and even rivals. It may be of interest to observe that few of these forged connections last for an individual's lifetime. This means that a student's identity and interaction can have a profound effect that extends beyond the school gates. The transcendental roles and engagements in the schools, not only trickle into the classroom participation but are also evident from the participation in activities such as sports, book clubs, dance, and many others. Participation in these activities is vital and can create behavioural shifts that rest on a critical balance.

These seemingly inconsequential interactions between individuals can have a great effect on group dynamics. This means that the interaction between the school and the child as a student is also dependent upon the influence of families, neighbourhood, and other affiliation that falls out of the purview of the interactions within the school. Aslandogan and Cetin (2007) emphasize the potential impact of multilateral relationships involving educators, parents, and the community on the growth of social capital within educational contexts. This means that social capital flourishes when there is a confluence of parental expectations, community networks, and shared obligations. Thus, by illuminating the

interplay between the students, teachers, administration, and parents one may understand how cultural norms and values are shaped.

Therefore, by understanding the individuals within an educational context, Comer (2004) opines that one can observe the extent to which a conducive environment is created within the school. These individual dimensions through the interplay of social influences craft behaviours, shape aspirations and ultimately mould an individual's trajectory within the educational landscape.

### ***1.7.3 Relational Dimension***

The relational dimension of social capital for Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) talks about the quality that relationships, engagements, and connections which are possessed within an organization. This means that positive interaction and interpersonal relationships can be a driver of Fukuyama's (1996) trust and Goodnow and Grady's (1993) sense of belonging, which are potential precursors of creating an inclusive and supportive environment. In school, the relational dimension delves into the interpersonal interactions between teachers, students, principals, among peers in the classroom and staffroom, the communication between administration and staff, between administration and parents, and between the school and community. The interactions that take place in school are purposeful with the focus on the inculcation and transmission of knowledge, values, morals, and beliefs, that lead to the development of skills and attitudes.

The teaching-learning process is characterised as deliberate and meaningful actions that occur through several formal and informal interactions, underpinned by a range of social processes and systems. Interpersonal interactions often play an important role in facilitating learning, participation, and engagement in school activities which can be seen in form the enthusiasm and academic achievement of children. These interactions are, thereby, essential to bind different pieces of education that are introduced through policies, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and professional development. Hence, the significance of paying adequate attention to the perpetuation, quality, and effect of interactions cannot be stressed enough when we talk about its impact on students' learning, growth, and collective school experience.

In conclusion, through understanding the role and contribution of structural dimension, cognitive dimension, and relational, Sandefur and Lauman (1998) posit that the benefits

of social capital can be reaped leading to strong group cohesion, a sense of belonging, solidarity, and fearlessness.

### **1.8 Rationale for the Study**

In education, social interactions play a critical role in refining our sensitivities and perceptions, leading to national cohesion, a scientific temper, and independence of mind and spirit. When a school is viewed as a social organization, our major focus remains on its internal structure. At the same time, it is important to remember that every school has its own culture and sub-cultures, filled with legends, heroes, stories, rituals, and ceremonies. Hence, the school is shaped through the interactions between the stakeholders and the school itself. This idea that outcomes in education are conditioned by social interactions has a titillating appeal.

The schools play a critical role in providing a space for children to interact with their friends, teachers, and the administration, forming their own social support systems. Hanifan (1916), Coleman (1988), and Morgan and Sorensen (1999) respectively opine that schools employ social capital to enhance their interconnectedness with community life, nurture parental involvement, and expand the possibilities of students to achieve in both scholastic as well as non-scholastic activities. Furthermore, Ostrom (2000) notes that social capital aids in generating shared knowledge, understanding, norms, rules, and expectations within groups of individuals.

Social capital exists through our social relationships and the benefits that these social relationships have the potential to generate. This acts as a support for stakeholders to use their membership and networks to secure benefits in the school such as aspiration (Onyx and Bullen, 2000), academic achievement (Goodard, 2003; Huang, 2009), adjustment (Lee, 2007), safety (Vieno et al., 2010) and others. The proponents of social capital advocate values such as knowledge-sharing (Ekinici, 2012), empathy (Dolan, 2022), tolerance (Onyx and Bullen, 2000; Paxton, 2002), solidarity (Hakim et al., 2012; Shoji et al., 2014; Poltacan and Balci, 2019), and trust (Onyx and Bullen, 2000; Parcel and Dufur, 2001; Paxton, 2002; Goodard, 2003) among others as valuable and critical for people to be able to collaborate and accomplish together. Hence, in a school context, Qvortrup et al. (1994) point out, that social capital is potentially an asset that students, teachers, administration, and other stakeholders can draw on and benefit from.

The policies and committees have illuminated the importance and need to inculcate the spirit of socialism, secularism, and democracy as enshrined in our Constitution. While social capital was not mentioned in their deliberations definitively, it was talked about through the perpetual usage of cohesion and national integration. Lareau (2000) points out that schools are burdened with social and cultural expectations of parents of different socio-economic statuses; hence schools may perpetuate inequality due to their bias towards the elite. Schueller et al. (2000) opines that this limits the percolation ability of policies at all levels. The state of Rajasthan due to high poverty (Unnithan-Kumar, 1997), female foeticide (Aravamudan, 2007), child marriage (Nagi, 1993), and low literacy rate (Jindal and Pandey, 2012) became one of the BIMARU states in the late 1980s, a term coined by the Indian economist, Ashish Basu (Sharma, 2015). Despite the continuous efforts that have been made by the State government through collaboration with the Centre and other international and non-governmental organisations to improve the status of education, the average literacy level of the state is far behind the national literacy rate as per the Census 2011. Ramachandran (2004) sees this as the residual effect of the social disparities that were prevalent in the socio-cultural history of Rajasthan.

Social capital, as per Jack and Jordan (1999) is a powerful social equalizer as it potentially presents equality of opportunities right from the elementary level of the school. Hence, inculcating values, and social skills in a conducive school environment can enable students to form friendships that could ultimately help them during their time of need, thus generating social capital from their social relationships.

It was observed that most of the studies have relied upon surveys as a basis for understanding the effect of social capital on various curricular aspects. These studies follow a nomothetic approach to present a macro-level picture of social capital within the schools but have not focused on how and in what forms it comes to fruition, especially in the case of an Indian school. On the contrary, a microscopic study for an extended period will allow us to observe and understand the complexities of context, relationships, behaviour, and experience of the stakeholder within an elementary school. Hence, it is important to investigate how social capital is formed within an Indian school at the elementary level. Furthermore, it is of significance to examine the impact of social capital on circumstances associated with schools, namely parents, students, teachers, and

principals. This will help in reflecting the sustenance of social capital between the principal, teachers, students, and parents within an elementary school.

### **1.9 Research Questions**

- How is social capital constructed, enacted, and experienced by members of the school community within an elementary school?
- How does social capital influence the cognitive, social, and emotional engagement of members of the school community within an elementary school?
- What are the challenges to the formation and use of social capital within an elementary school?

### **1.10 Statement of the Problem**

The school experience is beyond the teaching-learning process. It involves interactions that shape the educational experiences and aspirations of students. Social capital has been identified as one of the vital factors, defined as an embedded resource in the social relationships that impact students' engagement, teachers' engagement, and the overall atmosphere of the school. Yet, we are limited by studies as to how social capital develops and maintains, particularly in specific instances. This thesis aimed to explore different dimensions of social capital that emerge in an elementary school community. The study also investigated the impact of social capital on the different stakeholders of the school, namely students, teachers, and principals.

### **1.11 Title of the Study**

Social Capital in an Elementary School: A Case Study

### **1.12 Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the factors that contribute towards generation and maintenance of social capital within the elementary school community.
2. To analyse the influence of the identified factors on generation and maintenance of social capital within the elementary school community.
3. To study the impact of school activities on the manifestation and sustenance of social capital within the elementary school community.
4. To assess the impact of school leadership in shaping the social capital within the elementary school community.

5. To understand the role of teachers in shaping social capital within the classrooms of the elementary school community.
6. To identify the challenges to the development and sustenance of social capital within the elementary school environment.

### **1.13 Explanation of the Term**

**Social Capital:** Social capital is characterized as the set of resources that are derived from interpersonal behaviours, fostering an environment of trust, a sense of belonging, open communication channels, reciprocity, solidarity, and substantive cognitive, emotional, and social engagement of the members.

**Elementary School Community:** The group includes students, teachers, principal, and parents who are connected and interact within the elementary school setting.

### **1.14 Delimitation of the Study**

The study is delimited to an Upper Primary Private Unaided School, affiliated to the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education (RBSE) in the city of Jaipur.

### **1.15 Scheme of Chapterisation**

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is a conceptual exploration of social capital in education, where historical notions and perspectives were been presented followed by a discussion of the policies, and evolution of elementary education in Rajasthan. This was followed by understanding the potential of schools as nurturers of social capital which raised a few questions in my mind which I intend to answer through this thesis.

Chapter II will explore the literature to understand the research trends of social capital in education with a focus on students' educational achievement, their educational attainment, and psychosocial attributes. Gaining an understanding of the conceptual and methodological implications of the reviewed literature helped me to develop a philosophical understanding that I have presented in the third chapter of methodology.

Chapter III of Methodology highlights the methodological standing of this thesis. The chapter presents information about the research design and sampling, which is followed by identifying the tools employed for collecting data and the consequent steps to analyse

the obtained data. This chapter has also presented information about the fieldwork that was done.

Chapter IV, talks about the context of the study in which it was conducted. This is a critical step as it is detailed information about the social, economic, educational, cultural, and historical perspective about the state of Rajasthan, about Jaipur district, Jaipur city, and the case study school.

Chapter V is the elaborate information in the form of analysis and interpretation of the data that was obtained through employing varied tools. The interpretations drawn pave the way for the findings, as Chapter VI, whose implication and potential in the body of knowledge about social capital research has been presented. The chapter ends with recommendations for further study in this area.