

# **Empowering Women Education in the perspectives of NPE-2020**

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## **Abstract**

*The female population of any nation plays a very significant role in bringing about welfare and development of the society. It is necessary to provide meaningful and equal education to all girls so that they can make positive contributions to the society for the betterment of all. Despite of several policy efforts made in the field of education to educate girls, yet the dropout rate is still very high for them at different stages of education in the present day. The National Policy of Education 2020 envisages the need of women education in order to empower them in various aspects of their life. The new policy prescribes several measures that tend to promote quality and equitable women education in the country. Based on secondary sources of data, the present paper attempts to explore the importance of empowering women through education in the light of NPE 2020 along with its special initiatives particularly being taken up for holistic and progressive women education in India.*

**Keywords:** *Women Education, NPE 2020, Special Initiatives, Implications, Suggestions.*

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## **I. Introduction**

An individual's quality of life and well-being is governed by the quality and opportunities of education. The main objectives of education are to transmit meaningful knowledge and desirable skills necessary for the development of proper understanding and personality of the individuals. It is through the proper education system that the uniform development of any nation can be achieved by removing certain social evils and inequalities prevailing in the society. Education aims at enhancing confidence and improving personal growth of all individuals so that they can make positive contributions for the welfare of the society and nation as a whole. Hence, it is necessary to educate all individuals regardless of their gender and socio-cultural backgrounds. It can be observed through various studies that the contributions of women in transforming the nation into a better and advanced one are notable. The role of women in bringing economic development of any country is very significant. Therefore, by imparting necessary quality education to women, a country can prosper easily and will be able to establish a fair and just society.

By receiving quality and equal educational opportunities, women can be empowered in various aspects of their life. Empowered women will be able to make her own decisions, participate in various productive economic activities and political affairs, actively get involved in socio-cultural activities and thereby can raise their standard of living in the society. Women education helps to promote self-respect among the women that enhances their subjective well-being also.

Both the central as well as state government initiated several schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Girl Child Protection Scheme etc in order to promote women education in the country. The government also provide different educational aids to encourage girl students to pursue proper education. Despite of several efforts taken by the government and other educational stakeholders, however, the problem related to low enrolment, high drop out and poor retention rate of mainly girl students are still existing in the present day also. Therefore, it is an urgent need to empower women population of the country by imparting quality and equal education.

The New Education Policy 2020 emphasizes upon holistic as well as multidisciplinary development of all learners. The new policy aims to achieve universalisation of education in the country having GER 100% of girls for school education by the year 2030 and GER 50% for higher education by the year 2035. The new policy

envisages to achieve gender equality in the field of education and thereby prescribes various developmental measures for promoting women education in the country.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the the importance of empowering women through education in the light of NPE 2020.
2. To study the special initiatives of NEP 2020 particularly being taken up for holistic and progressive women education in India.
3. To study the implications of NEP 2020 for promoting women education in India.
4. To provide suggestions for proper implementation of the recommendations of NEP 2020 towards women education.

### **Women Education**

Women education of any country acts as an important indicator of economic and social development. It is necessary to address the problems of gender inequality and other social evils that hamper smooth progress of any society. By promoting quality education to women, a country can achieve high-level of literacy rate and at the same time can increase economic productivity to a great extent. Women education increases awareness among the women about their social, economic, and political rights so that they can enjoy it with their full potentiality.

Women education is very much needed to empower women in different aspects of their life. Educated women can contribute immensely for the welfare of family as well as for the advancement of any the society. Therefore, it is imperative to promote women education with adequate educational resources. In order to patronize quality and equitable women education in the country, the government has amended various policies and programmes so that the female population can access barrier-free educational opportunities and pursue their higher studies accordingly.

### **Special Initiatives on Women Education by NEP 2020**

The National Education Policy 2020 designed by K Kasturirangan Committee approved on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2020 envisages the importance of equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for all students. However, it has laid special emphasis upon girls those belong to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The special initiatives provided by NEP 2020 towards promotion of women education are discussed below.

1. **Setting up of Gender Inclusion Fund:** In the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, there is a provision for setting up of Gender Inclusive Fund for mainly girls and transgender students. The policy aims to build the country's capacity for ensuring equitable quality education for such students through proper allocation of educational resources.
2. **Ensuring equitable quality education:** The National Education Policy 2020 laid emphasis upon the equitable quality education so that each student irrespective of their diverse backgrounds may enjoy equal opportunities, and other services in terms of various educational aspects. Thus, it may enable to prevent anti-social behaviour and thereby to establish a more cohesive learning environment for all.
3. **Addressing context-specific local hindrances:** The new policy aims to develop innovative strategies so that it may address the context-specific local problems that hinder the educational opportunity, access to educational institution, proper enrolment, and retention of underrepresented and socially disadvantaged students. By identifying the local hindrances such as physical and socio-economic barriers, cultural barriers, gender stereotyping, it may be possible for the educational stakeholders to devise unique teaching and learning methods, to ensure proper allocation of the necessary resources and tools for imparting quality education to all students.
4. **Provision for proper toilet facilities:** The new policy has given stress upon the provision for proper and hygienic toilet facilities within the educational institutions specially for the female students. It was observed from various surveys and studies that the absence of necessary toilet facilities in institutions had a negative impact upon the enrolment and retention of mainly female students. Hence, in order to increase the gross enrolment ratio of the female students, it is necessary to provide proper toilet facilities in both the rural and urban educational institutions.
5. **Provision for hostel facilities:** Another special initiative adopted by the new policy is providing hostel facilities free of cost for girl students from socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds. This may benefit a good number of students who are required to travel a long distance to reach their schools and institutions.
6. **Enhancing leadership capacity of all girls:** The National education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises on various aspects that may enhance the leadership capacity of girl students. It has given adequate stress on the development of proper communication and interaction skills, decision making power, logical reasoning skills, right attitude, positive character of all girls. All these qualities may enable them to increase their work efficiency and other productivity, adjustment, patience, tolerance, and collaboration capabilities and thereby empower them in different spheres of the society.

7. **Ensuring GER 100% of girls for school education:** One of the main aims of the new policy is to achieve GER 100% of girl students for school education across the country by 2030. For this to happen, various special initiatives have been adopted to increase the enrolment ratio of girls and to reduce their dropout rates. Hence, the policy makes a serious effort to facilitate universal access, enrolment and retention for the girl students and ensure affordable learning opportunities to them.

8. **Providing bi-cycles to girl students:** The new policy has taken several major initiatives to eradicate any sorts of gender inequality and social stereotypes. One such step is the provision of bicycles to the girl students free of cost to attend their educational institutions safely and smoothly. This may enable them to continue their education by overcoming the various physical and social barriers effectively because absence of proper transportation facilities forces them to discontinue their education at a very early stage.

9. **Increasing the number of females on leading positions of any institutions:** Such measures may encourage as well as motivate the girl students to enhance their creativity and other life-skills. Indeed, this may empower them to perform any task independently and efficiently, help to reduce various forms of gender stereotypes and may ensure economic empowerment of women to a huge extent. The policy intends to improve **women leadership capacity** through civil dialogues with women leading institutions, including principals, teachers, wardens, physical instructors and other staffs. The amended maternity benefit act will be implemented to provide creche facilities for women educators. By focusing leadership development, incentive programmes, teacher education, recruitment and retention efforts, these initiatives will ensure women to play a leading role in children's education.

10. **Addressing issues related to gender equity in recruitment process mainly for rural areas:** The new policy aims to address issues related to gender inequity in recruitment process mainly for rural areas. According to the policy, the recruitment of the teachers would take place purely on ITEP from the year 2030 onwards where merit as well as qualification would be given equal importance. In addition to this, it also aims to provide adequate forum for the recruitment of specially women teachers.

11. **Envisions the necessity of female facilitators for counselling:** It has been underlined in the new policy about the necessity of proper training for teachers and female facilitators such as Anganwadi workers of the school. Such training is required so that they may efficiently counsel the families of the girl students regarding their education in order to ensure that every school-going girl child is properly attending as well as learning at the school. This may help to bridge the gap between the educated student and their uneducated family members.

12. **Special Education Zones:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recommends for "Special Education Zones" so that education for the socially and economically disadvantaged groups can be ensured. This strategy intends to incorporate children with disabilities for participating fully in mainstream education in a regular school from the foundational stage to higher education. with proper support and accommodations in every region of the country. Such region will become more effective in promoting equitable and quality education by undergoing some special intervention programs. Through regional and concerted collaborative efforts, optimal implementation of educational schemes may be ensured gradually in these regions. This may facilitate appropriate flow of resources and utilisation of fund according to the needs and demands of the concerned region. Thus, such special economic zones may help to bring holistic educational development for all.

13. **Ensures total safety as well as security of girl student:** The new policy intends to adopt measures that would ensure total safety and security of mainly the school-going girl students within the school campus as well as outside of the campus. Hence, the policy has underlined a set of guidelines to be followed by the schools to prevent any form of harassment, menace, prejudice and to increase the overall attendance of the girl students. Therefore, the schools must adopt proper and effective strategies to provide healthy, conducive, and supportive environment for the students to grow and develop. Such initiative may enable to achieve the universalisation of education at both the elementary and secondary stage in the country.

14. **Mandates educational institutions to conduct several awareness programmes:** In order to improve different aspects of education of all students, NEP 2020 mandates all educational institutions to conduct relevant awareness programmes and extension activities. Therefore, such programmes may help to build confidence, self-esteem, enhance academic skills for the holistic development of the students and achieving their full potentialities in a viable manner. At the same time, this would also enable to improve the overall school retention of specially girl students.

15. **Stresses on removal of gender gap in literacy rates:** The new policy intends to create Gender Inclusive Fund that would focus on removal of gender gaps at different levels of education and thus to ensure 100% gross enrolment ratio of girl students at school level. The National education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to envision gender-inclusive society by practicing gender equity, removing stereotyping, and enhancing the capacity of the nation to promote quality education for all.

16. **Introduction of gender-responsive curriculum in education:** The National education Policy (NEP) 2020 has outlined the formulation and implementation of gender-responsive curriculum in education at various stages of education. By this, the policy aims to eradicate any sort of violence, and disparities in terms of access,

participation and opportunities to education faced by the girl students at various corners of the country. Hence, the new policy emphasised on the training of the teachers in gender-responsive teaching methods. This may enable the teachers to become aware about the differential learning needs of both male and female students so that they may adopt appropriate strategies to educate them properly.

### **Implication of NEP-2020 on Women Education**

1. **Increased GER of girl students:** the National Education Policy aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio of girl students at all stages of education in a sustained manner. The NEP 2020 has aimed at doubling the GER in higher education to 50% by the year 2035 as compared to the current GER of 26.3%.

2. **Low Drop Out Rate:** As per the new policy, reducing the dropout rate of girl students at various educational levels to a great extent may be possible if increased options may be given to the students belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged groups. These include creation of Special education Zones, Gender Inclusive fund, better access for open as well as distance learning.

3. **Minimizing Gender-Stereotyping:** The National Education Policy has laid down several relevant strategies for addressing issues related to gender-stereotyping. By emphasizing equal educational opportunities for all students at various levels of education, the policy intends to reduce gender-stereotyping and other discrimination to promote universalization of education for all. The policy will identify social mores and gender stereotypes preventing girls from accessing education and causing regular dropouts.

4. **High literacy level:** The new policy aims to increase considerably the literacy rate of women in the country. For this to happen, several innovative and appropriate measures have been undertaken such as provision for Gender Inclusive Fund, other financial assistance, providing girl students with hostel facilities for proper accommodation, hygienic toilet facilities, transport facilities so that their gross enrollment ratio may be increased significantly and the students may feel motivated to come and participate in every educational activity.

5. **More Participation:** Encouraging more active participation of women in different spheres of education is another major objective of the new policy. Involvement may enable women to develop their full potentialities and other important skills and thus, empower them to perform in any productive activity.

6. **Encouraging more women empowerment:** Fostering women empowerment as an indicator of country's development is one of the significant aspects of the National education Policy (NEP) 2020. According to this new policy, women must be empowered through various skill development programmes and extension activities. This would enable them to become self-sufficient as well as self-reliant and help them to contribute positively for the progress of the nation. Education as a means of empowerment of women is capable to bring about a positive attitudinal change among the members of the society towards women.

7. **Provision for Quality Education:** Developing and restoring self-efficacy, self-respect, and self-confidence by imparting quality education among women is a major objective of NEP 2020. The policy adopts measures that may encourage teachers to utilize relevant and appropriate learning methods for bringing about fruitful learning outcome of the students and to achieve United Nated Sustainable Development Goal 4. Therefore, the new policy may facilitate equity, equality and inclusivity in education sphere, educational sustainability, supportive environment for enhancing personal accomplishment of the specially the girl students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

8. **Economic Development:** In order to promote economic development in the country, the new policy has given stress to offer internships for all students. this may enable the girl students to get equipped with the necessary practical knowledge and skills for thriving effectively in any professional atmosphere. NEP 2020 may positively impact upon the development of necessary skills for generating productive workforce who are able to fulfil the growing demands of the society.

9. **Enhancing potentialities of all students:** One of the major objectives of the National education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to enhance full human potentialities of all students. Thus, the new policy has underlined several innovative teaching-learning strategies that may facilitate students to upgrade their knowledge pool and other life-skills. This may enable the girl students to contribute effectively in the growing knowledge economy.

10. **Scholarship Benefits:** The provision for scholarships to the girl students a mentioned in the National education policy (NEP) 2020 may help them to pursue better educational opportunities, to afford the educational expenses and thereby encourage them to improve their academic achievement to a desired level. Such financial assistance may help the girl students to mitigate any opportunity costs incurred during the period of any course or educational programmes. A girl winning Scholarships help to develop a keen interest in studies among the girl students and thereby motivate them to achieve their desired performance. As a result, they may excel academically as well as professionally.

11. **Reducing various sorts of discriminations and biasness:** Despite the Constitutional provisions, the girls remain vulnerable to atrocious forces. The girl student must be made aware of their legal rights and legal literacy must be mandatorily incorporated to the curriculum.



12. **Maintaining safety and security for all girl students:** In order to increase the attendance of girl students in schools, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasised upon the safety and security of all girl students inside as well as outside of the campus. According to the policy, it is necessary to identify the prevailing social mores that hinder girls from availing equal opportunities of education.

### **Suggestions for Improving Women Education in the context of NPE 2020**

1. Improving **access** to education through proper implementation of **grassroot level government intervention**. This strategy may ensure universalization of education for all at both the primary and secondary level of education in the country.

2. Effective **means of regulation** are needed to analyse the existing condition of women education in the country. So that essential measures may be adopted for promoting women education in a sustainable manner.

3. Necessitating a certain percentage of women participation across various levels for ensuring **fair representation**. This may help to contribute in the overall development of the nation.

4. Improving **attitude** towards girl child and establishing **appropriate linkages** between government schemes and educational opportunities are extremely necessary to improve women education in both rural and urban areas.

5. Encouraging **segment approach** for tackling the problem of women education by addressing the needs of the concerned region. For this to happen, all the educational stakeholders must play a significant role in the formation of Special Economic Zones in those concerned regions in order to make such regions economically, culturally and educationally viable.

6. **Introduction of Self-defence learning** for girls as a part of the curriculum must be given adequate emphasis. This may enable the girl students to learn the mechanism and purpose for their self-defence from the very early stage so that they may look after their own safety and security in the society.

7. **Inculcation of gender sensitive concerns and issues** must be mainstreamed in education at different levels of education in order to eradicate any form of gender discrimination in institutions. This may also help to develop a deep sense of democratic ideals such as equality and fraternity among the students. Gender sensitive issues are needed to be mainstreamed in education at both primary and secondary stages. This may enable the teachers to inculcate a deep sense of gender equality among both male and female students from a very early stage. so that children grow up with a sense of equality.

8. As per the **recommendations of the Women and Child Development Ministry**, educational institutions must take proper measures to ensure **quality education and nutrition for the girl students**. Sufficient nutrition may enable them to stay physically and mentally fit for participating in any productive activities.

9. Schools at various levels of education must take **appropriate initiatives for career counselling** especially for the girl students. This may help them to become aware about the various possible avenues according to their interests and aptitudes. Such programme provides them an ample scope to learn about certain profession of their choice.

10. Providing adequate **access to information and communication technology**, distribution of digital gadgets at free of cost, proper internet access for promoting quality women education in the country. This may help girl students to study better and have more access to relevant knowledge. Hence, by providing cost-friendly digital gadgets and free access to internet, inclusivity of girl students in quality education digitally may be achieved.

11. **Providing proper nutrition** may help to keep the girls well-focused in their studies. Proper and adequate nutrition may enable them to participate actively in various educational activities. A draft has been prepared on the National Policy for Women Empowerment by the Women and Child Development Ministry which mainly focuses on provision for quality education and good nutrition for girl students.

12. **Inclusion of Girl in sports in all level of education:** - Compulsory sports participation by girl in primary and higher education for healthy physical and mental development can make difference in girls' education.

## **II. Conclusion**

Women education plays a very crucial role in the national development. It acted as a potent factor that help a country to progress economically, socially, and culturally. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 may be a remarkable step taken by the government in the country for spreading awareness about the importance of women education. The policy acts as a positive intervention in the field of women education and women empowerment. The policy prescribed several favourable provisions and developmental approaches to achieve gender equality as well as equity in education. It has prioritized the collaborative efforts of the states and local community organizations in restructuring the present education system. Therefore, all the special initiatives outlined by the new policy may facilitate in the promotion of education of the girl students and at the same time may reduce gender disparities prevalent in different spheres of life to a large extent. The present study may help to identify the major hindrances that deteriorate the quality of education for women as well as to understand the

basic essential requirements for enhancing the quality of their education. Moreover, the study is beneficial for acquiring necessary information to impart equal, accessible, and quality education to girls so that they may be empowered and may enjoy equal footing in every sphere of the society.

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