



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION & NEP 2020

KEY WORDS: NEP , Challenges: Disparity, Education, Women,

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to emphasize the significance of education in empowering women within families and communities. It discusses how education can reduce gender bias, promote women's rights, gender equality, and safety. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India has recognized the importance of women's education and provided recommendations. However, there are still challenges hindering effective implementation. This paper will shed light on NEP 2020's recommendations for women's education and explore potential measures to overcome implementation obstacles.

INTRODUCTION:

Education is indeed a powerful tool that can bring about positive changes in their lives and the communities they belong to. It's important to recognize that educating girls not only benefits them as individuals but also has a broader positive impact on society and future generations. Educated women tend to invest more in the education and well-being of their own children, leading to a positive cycle of progress and development. Thus, promoting girls' education is a crucial step towards achieving gender equality and sustainable development. India indeed has a rich history of influential and iconic women who have made significant contributions in various fields. Over the centuries, women like Rani Lakshmi Bai, Razia Sultana, Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Kalpana Chawla, and many others have played pivotal roles in governance, policymaking, defense, religion, and society. They have brought about positive changes and reforms in their respective areas of influence. However, it is essential to recognize that India's history has also been marked by periods of foreign invasions and colonial rule, which have had significant impacts on the country's cultural, moral, and educational fabric. During the Sultanate and Mughal periods, women's education was indeed discouraged or even suppressed in some cases. Similarly, under British colonial rule, the primary focus was on exploiting India's resources rather than fostering education and cultural development. The colonial period undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on various aspects of Indian society, including education and traditional knowledge. The British colonial administration did not prioritize the promotion of female literacy and often undermined indigenous educational practices, leading to a loss of traditional civilizational knowledge.

After India gained independence in 1947, the country had to rebuild itself and address the social, economic, and educational challenges left by centuries of colonial rule. The post-independence era saw various attempts to improve education and increase literacy rates, including policies with socialist or communist influences. While these efforts aimed to provide education for all, the focus on gender equality and female literacy was not always adequate. Today, India has made significant progress in improving female literacy rates and empowering women through education and various initiatives. The government and various organizations have undertaken campaigns to promote female education and bridge the gender gap in literacy.

Gender Disparity in Society: there have been historical trends in some parts of India where a son's education was prioritized over a daughter's schooling. However, it is essential to note that these trends have been changing gradually, and there have been significant efforts to address gender disparities in education across the country. That in many traditional Indian families, there has been a historical preference for sons' education over daughters'. This

preference has its roots in cultural and societal norms, and it has been changing gradually due to various factors, including increased awareness about gender equality and government initiatives to promote girls' education. However, it's important to note that India is a diverse country, and attitudes towards gender roles and education can vary significantly based on region, urban or rural settings, socioeconomic factors, and individual beliefs. Gender disparity in school curriculum in India has been a matter of concern and debate. While the Indian government has taken steps to address gender disparities in education, challenges still persist in achieving gender equality in the curriculum. Traditional gender stereotypes are often reinforced in textbooks and teaching materials, which can perpetuate harmful notions of what boys and girls, can or cannot do. This can lead to limited opportunities and aspirations for individuals based on their gender. Women's contributions to history, science, literature, and other fields have often been overlooked or underrepresented in the curriculum. The lack of female role models in educational materials can hinder girls' confidence and aspirations. Certain subjects are still perceived as being more suitable for one gender over the other. For instance, girls are sometimes discouraged from pursuing science and technology-related fields, while boys might be discouraged from studying arts or humanities. In some schools, gender disparities exist in physical education classes. For instance, girls might have fewer opportunities to participate in sports or may face cultural barriers in certain sports activities. Menstrual health education has been insufficient or sometimes neglected in the school curriculum, leading to a lack of awareness and perpetuation of myths and taboos surrounding menstruation. Here are some key points related to gender disparity in the labour market and higher education in India. female labor participation rate in India was 27% in 2017, showing a decline from 34% in 2001.

This indicates that fewer women are actively participating in the workforce. More than 50 million women in India are neither pursuing studies nor working, which implies a significant untapped potential in the labour force. The Monster Salary Survey from 2016 indicates that women in India earn 25% less than women in other parts of the world, highlighting a gender pay gap in the country. The manufacturing sector exhibits the highest gender pay gap, and there are considerable gaps in other fields as well, such as banking and IT. Although more women are entering the IT sector, a considerable number of them end up leaving the industry after a few years. Around 60% of women have work experience of 1-3 years, while only a small fraction (2.7%) have over 10 years of experience. Gender diversity is essential in workspaces across all sectors of the economy to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities. While female enrolment in engineering and medicine colleges is high, there is lower representation of women in elite institutions like IITs and postgraduate research programs. This may be influenced by parental biases in higher education

expenditure. The underrepresentation of women in the R&D sector and senior management levels suggests that barriers to career progression exist for women. Overall, these statistics demonstrate that there are significant challenges in achieving gender equality in the Indian workforce and higher education system.

Challenges of women Education Girls' education, especially in marginalized communities, faces numerous challenges due to the deeply entrenched patriarchy and gender biases in society. These challenges often prevent girls from accessing quality education and hinder their overall development. There is a need for targeted efforts to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education and to empower girls to overcome these obstacles. Girls face various challenges and issues in the education system in India, particularly related to gender-based violence, discrimination, and access to quality education. Let's break down some of the key points mentioned:

Gender-Based Violence: Girls face various forms of violence, such as bullying, physical abuse, sexual harassment, and cyber bullying, both within and outside of school. This violence is often rooted in entrenched patriarchal norms and unequal power relations.

Safety Concerns: Girls encounter safety concerns while traveling to school, and the shortage of secondary schools forces them to travel long distances, increasing the risk of violence and abduction. This discourages parents from sending their girls to school.

Marginalization of Certain Communities: Girls from Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), or Muslim communities experience multiple forms of marginalization. Patriarchy amplifies discriminatory practices against these communities, further affecting girls' education.

Gender Stereotypes in School: Stereotypical gender roles are assigned in schools, reinforcing gender discrimination. Discriminatory practices based on caste, tribe, or religion are also prevalent in schools.

Girls with Disabilities and LGBTQ+ Community: Girls with disabilities and those belonging to the LGBTQ+ community face additional challenges. Teachers may not be sensitized to their needs and might even contribute to their harassment.

Systemic Factors: Lack of infrastructure, poor quality of education, lack of women teachers, and non-gender-responsive curriculum contribute to girls leaving school or failing to attain desired learning competencies.

Menstrual Health and Sanitation: Inadequate menstrual knowledge, lack of proper infrastructure (e.g., separate toilets), and lack of sanitary products lead to absenteeism among girls.

Inadequate Education Budget: Education budget cuts over the years have impacted the quality of education and access to resources for girls.

Digital Divide: The shift to online education has further disadvantaged girls due to limited access to computers and the internet, particularly in rural areas.

Impact of Emergencies: Natural disasters, pandemics, and civil strife disproportionately affect girls' education, leading to disruptions, increased gender.

NEP 2020 on Women Education: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India is designed to promote equitable and inclusive education for all, with a special focus on

children and youth, especially girls, from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Despite efforts to educate women, the dropout rate for girls remains high after secondary education, and the enrolment ratio also decreases at the secondary and higher secondary levels. The policy recognizes that issues such as the onset of menstruation and the lack of hygienic toilets are among the reasons why girls leave school prematurely. The NEP 2020 aims to identify specific social causes, such as gender stereotyping and customs and beliefs that contribute to the unequal treatment of girls, particularly regarding their education. By addressing these issues, the policy seeks to prevent the dilution of concerns specific to girl students and other marginalized genders after being co-opted within Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). One of the key aspects of addressing gender inequity in education is the recruitment of teachers, particularly in rural areas. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the adoption of new methods that consider merit and qualifications while ensuring that women teachers are provided with appropriate forums for recruitment. This step can help in promoting a diverse and inclusive teaching workforce. Sound teacher training is also seen as imperative for ensuring quality education. The policy recognizes the importance of properly training teachers and facilitators, including anganwadi workers, to effectively counsel the families of girl students. Involving the family in counselling is significant because the gap between an educated girl child and her uneducated family can lead to a different set of problems, including resistance to continuing education or making decisions that may not be in the best interest of the girl's education. To achieve these goals, the NEP 2020 proposes various steps and initiatives:

1. **Gender Inclusion Fund:** The establishment of a "Gender Inclusion Fund" to provide equitable quality education for girls. The fund will have formula-based and discretionary grants, with formula grants focusing on priorities determined by the central government to assist women and girls in gaining access to education.
2. **Special Education Zones:** Regions with large populations from educationally-disadvantaged groups, including gender, socio-cultural, and geographical identities, will be declared as "Special Education Zones" to ensure education for these groups.
3. **Targeted Scholarships:** Scholarships will be made available to students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, including gender, through a single agency and website to simplify the application process.
4. **Women's Leadership in Education:** The policy aims to foster women's participation and leadership in education, recognizing that female educators can serve as strong role models for girls attending school.
5. **Gender-Neutral Curriculum:** The NEP 2020 advocates for a gender-neutral curriculum to break stereotyped gender roles and promote equal treatment of genders in the education system.
6. **Safety and Security Measures:** The policy emphasizes the safety and security of school-going girls both inside and outside the campus. Educational institutions will be required to conduct awareness sessions on gender issues and provide a harassment-free environment.
7. **Gender-Sensitive Classroom Management:** The NEP 2020 will include awareness of relevant laws, such as the Child Marriage Act, Maternity Benefit Act, POCSO Act, and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, to create a gender-sensitive and inclusive classroom environment.

Overall, the NEP 2020 is a comprehensive approach to address gender inequity in education by identifying specific challenges and implementing targeted strategies to ensure that all students, especially girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to quality education and can pursue their academic goals without facing unnecessary obstacles.

Challenges on the recommendations made by NEP 2020:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a bold and ambitious document that seeks to transform the Indian education system. However, there are a number of challenges that will need to be addressed in order to successfully implement the recommendations made in the NEP.

Lack of financial resources. The NEP calls for a significant increase in public spending on education, but it is unclear how this will be funded. The Indian government is already facing a number of financial challenges, and it is not clear whether they will be able to make the necessary investments in education.

Bureaucracy. The Indian education system is highly bureaucratic, and this will make it difficult to implement the reforms proposed in the NEP. There will need to be a significant devolution of power from the central government to the states, and there will need to be a culture change within the education bureaucracy.

Lack of capacity. The Indian education system is not well-equipped to implement the reforms proposed in the NEP. There is a shortage of qualified teachers, and there is a lack of infrastructure in many schools. There will need to be significant investments in teacher training and school infrastructure in order to make the reforms a success.

Resistance to change. There is likely to be resistance to change from some stakeholders in the education system. Some teachers may be reluctant to adopt new teaching methods, and some parents may be concerned about the changes to the curriculum. There will need to be a concerted effort to build support for the reforms among all stakeholders.

Despite these challenges, the NEP 2020 offers a real opportunity to transform the Indian education system. If the challenges can be addressed, the NEP has the potential to make a significant difference in the lives of millions of Indians. Here are some of the best practices that can be used to address the challenges of implementing NEP 2020:

Build consensus and ownership: The success of the NEP depends on the support of all stakeholders, including the government, teachers, parents, and students. It is important to build consensus and ownership of the reforms at all levels.

Focus on capacity building: The Indian education system needs to be strengthened in order to implement the reforms proposed in the NEP. This includes investing in teacher training, school infrastructure, and curriculum development.

Embrace technology: Technology can be a powerful tool for transforming education. The NEP calls for the use of technology to improve access, quality, and equity in education.

Measure progress and make adjustments: It is important to measure progress and make adjustments as needed. The NEP is a long-term vision, and there will need to be flexibility in order to adapt to changing circumstances.

The challenges of implementing NEP 2020 are significant, but they are not insurmountable. With careful planning and execution, the NEP has the potential to transform the Indian education system and improve the lives of millions of Indians.

CONCLUSION:

It is essential to acknowledge both the historical contributions of Indian women and the challenges posed by colonization and post-independence struggles. Building an inclusive and empowered society requires continuous efforts to provide equal educational opportunities and support for women to thrive and contribute to the nation's progress. By

recognizing and learning from history, India can continue to promote gender equality and celebrate the achievements of its iconic women. It's encouraging to hear that there has been a positive transformation in girls' education in India in recent years. The decrease in the dropout rate among female students, particularly at the secondary level, signifies progress in addressing the challenges of prejudice and inequality faced by girls in pursuing education. Reducing the dropout rate is a critical step in ensuring that girls have better access to education and can pursue their academic goals. By enabling more girls to complete their secondary education, India can harness their potential to bring about social and economic improvements in the country. The NEP 2020 has the potential to make a significant contribution to women's empowerment and education in India. However, it is important to note that the success of the NEP will depend on how it is implemented. The government will need to ensure that there are adequate resources available to support the implementation of the NEP, and that the policies and practices that are put in place are actually effective in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Overall, the NEP 2020 is a positive step towards women's empowerment and education in India. However, it is important to note that the success of the NEP will depend on how it is implemented. The government will need to ensure that there are adequate resources available to support the implementation of the NEP, and that the policies and practices that are put in place are actually effective in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

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