



“NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AND GENDER, WOMEN’S EDUCATION”

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Abstract

Education is the basic ingredient for achieving full human potential. Women education is a long-standing worldwide issue as no nation can talk of development when half of its population is disabled. Time and again, the issue of women education is put forth so that nation’s human resource irrespective of gender can be harnessed and attend gender balance. The National Policy on Education 1986 recognizes ‘Education’ as the major tools that can help liberate the country from backwardness and lead it onwards to progressive developed nation. “Free and Compulsory Education for All” was initiated but the implementation aspect is yet to be realized in practice. After 34 years, there is a change in the education policy in India with the introduction of the New Education Policy 2020 (NEP). This new policy aims at universalization of education in India with 100% gross enrolment ratio by 2030 for school education and 50% by 2035 for higher education. The first such move as the formation of a Gender Inclusion Fund toward equitable education for girls who are underprivileged and creating Special Education Zones is included in the provision. Within the goal, it also intends to improve women leadership capacity through positive civil dialogues with women leaders involved in the education system. If implemented, this will bring a record participation rate in higher education, decrease gender gaps at all levels and ensure the practice of gender equity and inclusion in society. In this study, an attempt has been made to study the New Education Policy 2020 on women education.

Keywords: NEP, Women Education, Gender, Gender inclusion fund, Special Education Zone,

Introduction .

Women play a vital role in a nation’s development. They play a very significant role in the society- a wife, a mother, a sister, a caretaker, a nurse, etc. No nation can sustain its development if it underutilizes its woman, who constitutes almost half the population. A famous anonymous African proverb states the importance of education for women in society- “If you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you

educate a nation". Education is a weapon that carves a progressive path for women and their families in the society. An educated woman can weigh the importance of female education to that of male counterpart. Education is a powerful tool that builds confident and ambitious women through which they become aware of their rights and raise their voice against exploitation, discrimination or any form of injustice meted out to them. A nation loses its goal of integral and sustainable developments when women remain uneducated and unempowered. Education is necessary for the growth of any nation. Women education is a long-standing necessity. The need of women education goes back to times of independence where the female literacy rate was at a meager 8.6% only. Women are often stereotypically viewed as the caretakers of the house. However, in the modern age, women's rights are being recognized. The most important being their right to receive education. Women need to be given equal opportunities as men, especially when it comes to education. The 2011 census shows, the overall literacy rate in India is 73% but female literacy rate is only 65.5%. There is a gender gap of around 16% between male and female literacy rate. This gender split is higher in rural areas. The rural female literacy rate is only 57% while the rural male literacy rate is higher at 77%. However, according to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2018-19, the gender gap in the country narrowed as compared to the previous years after several new policy interventions by current government. The female students constituted almost half of the total enrolment in higher education. Nevertheless, there is a long way to go.

Women's education will help to eradicate the discrimination and stigma that women face today through realization of their rights. The education of women will help to eliminate social evils as female infanticide, dowry, child marriage, harassment, etc. This will not just help the women of today but of the future generations who can live in a world where gender equality exists. Educated women can contribute to family's economy, social advancement of society and raise the standard of living. They can add to the workforce which in turn can contribute and reflect on the country's economy. Empowering women helps in the development of the nation. The government, over the years has introduced many schemes to promote women's education in India such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Mahila Shakti Kendra, etc. The central and the state governments should join hand and seek the cooperation of different organizations for the expansion of girls' education which should be considered on a priority programme in education. The right to education is granted to every Indian Citizen. We need to ensure that learning is available for all and not just for the privileged few.

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a frame work designed by Kasturirangan Committee. After 34 long years, there is a change in the education policy in India that aims at universalization of education in India and also of making 'India a global knowledge superpower'. The policy prescribed to approach gender as a cross-cutting priority to achieve gender equality in education with the partnership of states and local community organizations. This broader goal has been broken down and visualized in term of ensuring 100% enrolment for girls in schooling by 2030 and 50% enrolment in higher education by 2035, decrease gender gaps at all levels, practice gender equity and inclusion in society, and improve the leadership capacity of girls through positive civil dialogues. The policy proposes various steps to increase access of women into schools, which includes gender inclusion fund, formula based and discretion funding of gender inclusionary projects in school levels,

creating of special education zone, the targeted scholarships and within the goal, it also intends to improve women leadership capacity through positive civil dialogues with women leading institutions, including principals, teachers, wardens, physical instructors and other staffs. NEP 2020 recommends setting up of a “Gender Inclusion Fund” to build the nation’s capacity to provide equitable quality education for girl students. Apart from ensuring 100 percent participation of girls in the schooling system the fund, according to the policy draft, would aim to close gender gaps in educational attainment at all levels. Expounding on the fund, the policy stated that it will authorize two funding streams- formula and discretionary grants. Formula grants will be available to states to implement priorities determined by the central government and critical for assisting women and girls in gaining access to education such as the provision of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc. The second component- Discretionary funds will enable states to support and scale effective community based interventions that address localized and context-specific barriers to girls’ access to and participation in quality education. NEP 2020 recommended “Special Education Zones” to ensure education for the socially and economically disadvantaged groups which include gender, socio-cultural and geographical identities and disabilities. It is recommended that regions of the country with large populations from educationally-disadvantaged should be declared as ‘Special Education Zones’. The policy proposes the ‘Targeted Scholarships’ to be made available to students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), inclusive of gender, that will be coordinated and announced by a single agency and website to ensure that all students are aware of, and may apply in a simplified manner on such a ‘single window system’. The policy also emphasizes on fostering women’s participation and leadership in education and such women could in turn act as strong role models for the girls to attend school regularly. 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 crèche facilities for women educators. By focusing on leadership development, incentive programmes, teacher education, recruitment and retention efforts, these initiatives will ensure women play a leading role in children’s education. To decrease the gender balance among the teachers especially in some rural areas, alternative pathways will be introduced for recruitment for female teacher without compromising on merit and qualification, both education and qualification.

For addressing the issue we need a comprehensive, well-concerted and very pragmatic approach nationwide. Against such a backdrop the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP 2020) was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, which outlines the vision of new education system of India. The National Education Policy -2020 has been designed by the K Kasturirangan Committee to deal with various issues aggravating educational scenario across India and to curb the menace of women illiteracy. The policy envisions equitable and inclusive education for all, with special focus on children and youth, especially girls, from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The policy, which has come to the fore recently, is expected to usher in a new era in women education. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. It is pointed out that the policy does not pronounce much on the gender issues, yet certain proposals made in the policy may be expected to bring about remarkable changes into the bleak scenario.

NEP 2020 provides for setting up a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. The NEP states that the "Gender Inclusion Fund" will be available to states to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education (such as the provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc.). The policy further says, "This fund will also enable states to support and scale effective community-based interventions that address local context- specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to and participation in education".

Conclusion.

NEP would transform the education sector in the country as it focuses on making education accessible, equitable and inclusive. The vision laid in the New Education Policy is to build the education system into high-spirited on acquiring key 21st century skill. New Education Policy has laid many favorable provisions to foster gender equity and to do away with gender stereotype which plays a crucial role in consideration for the layout will not work efficiently instead of actions.

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