NEP 2020 AND GIRL EDUCATION: A PATHWAY TO A VIKSIT BHARAT BY 2047

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The purpose of Education is to make better human beings with skill and expertise. Enlightened human beings can be made by teachers. - APJ Abdul Kalam

Abstract

NEP 2020 is a visionary document prepared with the objective of transforming Indian education by deriving its strength from its rich cultural ethos. It has identified inclusive growth as the real meaning of holistic development and centered its principles of focusing on SEDG and gender equality. This paper aims to explore NEP-2020 policy document in terms of girl education focusing on provisions whereby sensitize all stakeholders, about the direction, opportunities, challenges, and alternatively encouraging to devise means to invest, explore and address issues of girl education effectively. With the vision of rapid growth, girl education is acknowledged and prioritised as the means of India being Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Keywords: Gender inclusiveness, SEDGs, girl education, NEP-2020

Introduction

In Indian society, gender disparity in schooling is a recurring issue, particularly for girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas. India has made progress in the last several decades in implementing policies to reduce educational disparities related to gender and Socially Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDG) as well as inching towards universal school enrollment. NEP 2020 being a visionary document, has brought out vibrant changes in the way students expect to gain from their 14 years of schooling and 3 to 5 years of college education and equal focus on girl education and SEDG. This article endeavors to delve into the intricacies of NEP 2020 through the lens of girl education, scrutinizing each provision with a keen focus on its implications for gender equality. This article aims to emphasize the significance NEP 2020 places on girl education. This exploration of girl education within the ambit of NEP 2020, aims

to contribute to the discourse surrounding gender equality in education, fostering greater awareness, advocacy, and action towards realizing the full potential of every girl in India.

Educational Reform in India

In the context of India's massive educational expansion, efforts are being made to raise girls' educational attainment. In the latter part of the 20th century, India achieved significant progress in enhancing its infrastructure for education (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992) and in the beginning of 21st century focused on improving primary education through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The push for universal primary education by the year 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals programme and the United Nations Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Education for All programme are also reflected in India's educational expansion (Govinda 2002; United Nations 2010). Moreover, the 1986 National Policy on Education and India's Constitution, which requires universal education for those under the age of fourteen, serve as guidelines for the extension of educational opportunities. Some of the specific policies that have been put into place include increased funding for education, free educational supplies like textbooks and uniforms, a rise in the number of female teachers, the establishment of local schools, single-sex schools, and special facilities (including informally) for girls and unenrolled students (Government of India (GOI) 2000; Govinda 2002; Kingdon 2007; Nayar 2002; Rao, Cheng, and Narain 2003).

The primary outcome of this increased emphasis on learning and education has been a large increase in the level of literacy among the Indian population, which rose from 18% to 65% over a fifty-year span ending in 2001. Yet, according to the GOI, there was still a sizable gender difference of around 16%. (2011). The continuance of educational disparities may not be surprising given the historical prevalence of gender inequality in a patriarchal Indian society (Desai et al. 2010). Nonetheless, given the difference with a worldwide trend of lesser disparities between sexes in education, educational differences in India remain significant. Although there is a high level of awareness about education and its advantages, a huge portion of the population is not convinced about the learning outcomes, and the rising expense of school is not drawing or keeping students, especially females from low-income families.

Social Background Factors

The educational research literature has primarily concentrated on the associated impacts of social backdrop and school settings on learning and achievement in school. One of the first studies in the US to demonstrate the impact of students' familial histories on their academic achievement was the Coleman study from 1966 (Coleman et al. 1966). Even in India, where access to education has improved over the past few decades, learning results are still observed to be

correlated with social background. Many Indian children struggle with historical injustices such as those based on caste and gender in primary school, and there are often achievement discrepancies based on gender, location, and other socioeconomic background variables (Desai et al. 2010; Rao, Cheng, and Narain 2003; Probe Team 1999). First-generation students and those from low-income families may also enter school less prepared to study (Kaul 2002). There are also significant geographical inequalities in educational attainment within India, with rural women and people in poverty in urban areas making up the majority of those who are illiterate and out of school (Nayar 2002).

Girl Education

Indian girls historically enrolled in school at a lower rate than Indian boys, and when they did, they tended to "enter late and dropout earlier," according to the Government of India (GOI) (Nayar 2002: 38). Furthermore, girls did not advance or enroll in higher secondary education at the same rate as boys. Major barriers to their continued advancement included the lack of a nearby school, cultural views of women's education, and being diverted to domestic and childrearing duties that might have financial benefits for the family (GOI 2000; Probe Team 1999). Despite multiple efforts to bridge the gap, girls still lag behind boys overall at secondary level 5 (UNESCO, 2011).

Cultural Attitudes Regarding the Education of Girls

The relationship between cultural attitudes and academic success is well established in the research literature. The attitudes of the community and families towards the education of girls are linked to gender inequalities in educational outcomes. Due to these beliefs, which are rooted in cultural conventions and impacted by marriage and kinship patterns, parents may decide to spend more money and emotional energy teaching their sons than their daughters (Desai et al. 2010). In the north of India, where parents have historically had lesser hopes for the education of women than sons, the need of preparing females for marriage is more prominent (Probe Team 1999). Positive sentiments regarding girls' education are negatively impacted by a number of things. One issue is dowry savings, which may limit the amount of money parents can spend on the education of their girls or inspire worry that having educated daughters may lead to needing to pay bigger wedding cost and dowry. Additionally, if parents rely on a son for support in their later years, there might be differences in the educational investment made in the child who would ultimately be responsible for the parents' financial security (Desai et al. 2010; Probe Team 1999).

NEP 2020 Policy Document, and Promotion of Gender Equality & Empowerment

All pupils, regardless of where they live, must have access to a high-quality education system under the new education policy, with an emphasis on historically underrepresented, underprivileged, and marginalized groups.

Reducing dropout rates and promoting equal access to educational opportunities at all levels

Section 3.2 outlines two significant initiatives that will be put into place to encourage children who have dropped out of school to return and to discourage other children from doing the same. The first is creating an adequate and effective infrastructure to enable all children, from preschool to grade 12, to have access to a safe and engaging education. Restoring the credibility of government schools is necessary to ensure that every kid has the chance to learn at the right level and attend a high-quality school. This will be accomplished by modernising and growing the current educational institutions, constructing new, high-quality educational facilities in places where none currently exist, and offering safe, useful transit and/or dormitories, particularly for young girls. In order to guarantee the reintegration of children of migrant workers and other dropouts into mainstream education, creative and alternative education facilities will be built in association with civic society.

As was indicated in *Section 3.4*, sustaining quality will be essential to keeping students registered and inspired to learn once infrastructure and participation are established. This is particularly valid for students who identify as girls and those from other socioeconomically marginalised groups. This will require changing the curriculum to make it more interesting and beneficial, as well as putting in place an incentive mechanism that will send teachers who speak the local tongue well to areas where dropout rates are high.

Section 4 discusses the teaching methods and curriculum in schools: Learning should be holistic, unified, enjoyable, and engaging

Gender sensitivity is mentioned in Section 4.23 of the policy's texts under the heading Curricular Integration of Core subjects, skills, and abilities. "Students must have a great deal of flexibility in curricula that includes gender awareness," it is claimed. Children are raised in a manner that fosters greater responsibility, respect, and understanding of other genders. Children need to be appropriately informed on how to resist patriarchal norms and grow up with system-related challenges.

According to *Section 4.28*, "Students will be given a rational framework for making ethical decisions and will be taught the necessity of "doing what's right" at a young age. All fundamental human values, such as variety, pluralism, righteous behaviour, honoring elders, and gender

sensitivity, will be cultivated in all students as a result of such fundamental ethical reasoning. It is recommended that creative stories, entertaining fables, and motivational tales from Indian tradition be used to teach these ideals, including constitutional and traditional Indian values, as well as how they have influenced literature around the world. Children will be raised in a positive environment free from any superstitious beliefs or values if this is done.

Section 5 of NEP 2020 is dedicated exclusively to Teachers

The primary criterion in this regard will be to guarantee respectable and joyful service conditions at schools, pursuant to Section 5.9, which discusses service environment and culture. "Resources will be provided to all schools to guarantee that instructors and students, including children of all genders, get a safe, inclusive, and effective learning environment and are at ease and encouraged to teach and study in their schools," it said in its wording. In this way, the policy opens the path for the development of appropriate resources and ecology in the classroom that will inspire respect for gender equality among teachers and students at every level.

Section 6 of NEP 2020 elaborates on equitable and inclusive education: Learning for all

Section 6.2 recognises the work made and objectives attained in changing how society views gender-related issues. However, it is acknowledged that despite attempts, gender and social category discrepancies persist in all levels of school education. Gender identities, particularly those of women and transgender persons, are a socially and economically disadvantaged minority. Also, it notes that from kindergarten through grade 12, school enrollment often decreases significantly. This trend is more noticeable among female students, particularly as they progress into higher education.

In accordance with *Section 6.7* of the policy document, women make up roughly half of all SEDGs, cutting across all underrepresented groups. Regrettably, the inequality and exclusion that SEDGs experience are further made worse for the women who work on these SEDGs. The best way to raise the bar for education in order to achieve these SEDGs is to provide high-quality education for girls, as the policy also acknowledges the unique and significant role that women play in society and in the formation of societal mores. This will benefit both present and future generations.. As a result, the policy advises that policies and programmes intended to include students from SEDGs should specifically target girls in these SEDGs.

According to *Section 6.8* of the policy, "to enhance the nation's capacity to deliver equitable quality education for all females as well as transgender children," the Government of India would establish a "gender-inclusion fund." Additionally, the funding will enable States to expand and support effective community-based initiatives that target context-specific local obstacles

preventing female and transgender children from participating in and accessing school. States may use the fund to implement programs (such as bicycles, conditional cash transfers, sanitation and toilets) that the federal government determines are critical to assisting girls and transgender children in receiving an education. It will be necessary to create other "Inclusion Fund" programs in order to handle comparable access concerns for other SEDGs. Essentially, the goal of this policy is to close any remaining gaps that may prevent children of any gender from receiving an education, including vocational education.

In schools where students may have to travel a considerable distance, it encourages the construction of free boarding facilities that adhere to Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya standards. This involves protections for the safety of all children, especially girls, and is especially true for pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged households. Girls from low-income households would be more likely to enroll in elite schools (up to Grade 12) if Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas were strengthened and expanded. To increase access to high-quality education, more Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas would be constructed around the nation, particularly in Special Education Zones, aspirational districts, and underprivileged areas.

Section 6.14 focuses on increasing knowledge and understanding of how to teach students who have specific disabilities, like learning disabilities, as well as promoting gender awareness and sensitization towards all underrepresented groups in order to counteract the underrepresentation of underrepresented groups. These subjects will be covered in all curricula for teacher education.

Section 6.20 further emphasises that the new school atmosphere will increase students' awareness of the need for an inclusive curriculum. Schools' curricula should begin with instruction on human values such as empathy, tolerance, respect for all people, gender equality, human rights, nonviolence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equity. It would also include more in-depth knowledge about numerous cultures, beliefs, languages, gender identities, and so on in order to foster tolerance and awareness of variety. Less information that is irrelevant or unrelated to any community will be included in the curriculum, and any biases and stereotypes will be eliminated.

Standard-setting and Accreditation for School Education

Since they are the target audience for the educational system, children and adolescents enrolled in schools are given special attention under *Section 8.11*. Their safety and rights, especially those of girls, must be given careful consideration, as well as the range of challenging issues that teenagers face, such as drug and/or substance abuse, as well as various forms of harassment and discrimination, including violence. Any infringement of children's or teenagers' rights or safety must be reported through clear, secure, and effective means, with due process ensured. The

development of such timely, effective, and well-known solutions for all pupils will be given top attention.

Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

According to Section 14.1, attending a high-quality institution can lead to a variety of options that can assist communities and individuals in breaking the cycle of poverty. Making high-quality higher education alternatives available to everyone should therefore be among the top priorities. With an emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals, this strategy seeks to ensure that all students have equitable access to high-quality education.

There are several characteristics of exclusion in section 14.3 that are exclusive to higher education, or that are markedly more severe. Issues that must be properly addressed include, but are not limited to, a lack of knowledge about opportunities for higher education, the expense of getting one, monetary limitations, the low job prospects the potential of many programs at colleges and universities, and an inadequate network of appropriate student support organizations. To address these issues, the policy has determined a few essential standards, which are outlined in *Section 14.4.*

All governments and higher education institutions must implement the additional measures listed in *Section 14.4* that are unique to higher education.
14.4.1. Governments Should Improve gender parity in HEI admissions

Conclusion

NEP 2020 stands as a visionary blueprint designed to revolutionize Indian education, drawing strength from its rich cultural heritage. In order to achieve a considerable reduction in gender imbalance with regard to enrollment, retention, and avoiding stagnation and promotion for girls and women, NEP 2020 focuses on ensuring universal access to school education at all levels as well as higher education. This paper has delved into the NEP-2020 policy document, particularly focusing on its provisions for girl education, and has highlighted the importance of sensitizing all stakeholders to the challenges and issues surrounding it. It acknowledges the significance of encouraging girl education and other SEDG realizing their importance towards achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047. It had anticipated placing a lot of emphasis on inclusivity in this regard. This work recognised and elaborated on some of the key features.

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