

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH INDIA'S NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY: MATHEMATICAL AND VOCATIONAL PATHWAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of empowering women through education, recognizing its crucial role in achieving sustainable development goals. This research paper explores the mathematical and vocational education pathways outlined in the NEP, aimed at fostering gender equality and promoting economic self-reliance for women. By analyzing statistical data and policy framework, this study highlights the potential impact of the NEP in bridging the gender gap in education and enabling women to contribute to a sustainable future.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for empowering individuals, particularly women, who have historically faced numerous socio-economic and cultural barriers. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant stride towards addressing gender disparities in education and promoting inclusive growth. This policy recognizes the pivotal role of women's education in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of mathematical and vocational education pathways as means to equip women with the necessary skills and competencies for securing gainful employment and contributing to the nation's economic development. This research paper delves into the specific provisions and strategies outlined in the NEP, supported by relevant statistical data, to assess their potential impact on empowering women and fostering a sustainable future.

Mathematical Education for Women

Mathematical literacy is a fundamental component of the NEP 2020, recognizing its significance in various fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for women in higher education stood at 27.3%, compared to 26.9% for men. However, the gender disparity becomes more pronounced in STEM fields, with only 42.7% of female students pursuing these disciplines (AISHE, 2019-20).

The NEP 2020 aims to address this disparity by introducing a comprehensive and integrated approach to mathematics education from an early age. The policy emphasizes the development of mathematical thinking, problem-solving skills, and computational abilities, which are essential for success in various careers and contribute to the nation's technological advancement.

Furthermore, the policy advocates for the creation of specialized mathematics programs, particularly at the secondary and higher education levels, to nurture talented female students and encourage their participation in STEM fields. By providing equal opportunities and tailored support, the NEP 2020 seeks to empower women with

mathematical proficiency, enabling them to pursue lucrative careers in fields traditionally dominated by men.

Vocational Education and Skill Development

Recognizing the importance of skill development and employability, the NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on vocational education and training (VET). According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20, the female labour force participation rate in India stood at a mere 24.5%, significantly lower than the global average of 47% (International Labour Organization, 2020).

The NEP 2020 aims to address this issue by integrating vocational education into the mainstream education system, starting from the secondary level. The policy envisions the establishment of vocational training centers and the introduction of vocational courses aligned with industry needs and local economic opportunities.

By providing women with access to high-quality vocational education and training, the NEP 2020 seeks to equip them with the necessary skills and competencies for various trades and professions. This includes sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, and emerging fields like renewable energy and sustainable technologies.

Moreover, the policy emphasizes the development of entrepreneurship skills, enabling women to explore self-employment opportunities and contribute to the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). According to the Sixth Economic Census (2013-14), only 13.76% of establishments in India were owned by women entrepreneurs. Through vocational education and skill development initiatives, the NEP 2020 aims to empower women economically, promoting their financial independence and fostering a sustainable future through inclusive and equitable economic growth.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative step towards empowering women in India through education. By emphasizing mathematical and vocational education pathways, the policy seeks to address gender disparities in STEM fields and promote economic self-reliance for women.

Through the implementation of the NEP 2020, women will have access to high-quality mathematical education, fostering their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and opening doors to diverse career opportunities in technology-driven sectors. Simultaneously, the integration of vocational education and skill development programs will equip women with industry-relevant competencies, enabling them to secure gainful employment or pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

By addressing the gender gap in education and promoting women's economic empowerment, the NEP 2020 has the potential to contribute significantly to the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). However, effective implementation and sustained efforts from all stakeholders, including government, educational institutions, and society, are crucial to realizing the transformative vision of the NEP 2020 and creating a sustainable future for women in India.

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