National Education Policy 2020 and Gender Inclusiveness

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Abstract

Disparities between men and women have persisted in society for a long time. Even though various measures have been taken the relevance of school textbooks and the curriculum that students are subjected in terms of encouraging gender-exclusivity cannot be overstated in order to promote gender equality and the removal of current gender norms. The formation of gender stereotypes in youngsters is aided by every aspect of our education, including textbooks, stories, images, and examples. An overview of the New Policy 2020 was used to conduct a comparative analysis of Indian educational institutions in order to identify the flaws in our system, suggesting that the our nation still has a long way to go in achieving SDGs 4 and 5. The researchers have also proposed various approaches and prospective solutions aimed at revolutionising India's educational landscape and promoting academic equity and inclusivity. In addition, this study examines the Education 2030 Framework's recommendations for 'Refurbishing Public Education in India with an intent to make It Gender-Inclusive,' and it proposes a multi-sectoral strategy to empower women as a prerequisite.

Keywords: Gender inclusivity, National Education Policy, 2020, SDG, Policies, Higher Education

1. Theoretical Background:

Over the last two decades, higher education has grown at a breakneck pace, which can be traced back to private-sector initiatives (Menon et al., 2014). For the development process, educational policies have a crucial impact on the country's future schooling. Education, as a development process, produces a set of significant policies based on a set of models and structures, all of which are meant to improve the educational system (Khaparde, 2002). India, as a developing country undergoing educational developments, reflecting the country's considerable disintegration and many tiny HEIs connected with major universities (Kumar, 2005). The obstacles that the Indian government faced after independence were numerous. In 2015, India decided to support the United Nations' Fourth Sustainable Development Goal, which states: "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for all." An education policy introduced by government because the existing educational system was insufficient to accomplish the desired long-term aim (Kaurav et al., 2021). Regulating bodies are known to redefine the educational system and educational policies from time to time. It improves new educational standards as part of a larger goal to strengthen and update the educational system (Saini et al., 2021). Every level of education in India, from primary to university, is covered under the policy. (Kurien & Chandramana, 2020). (Jena et al., 2021) in their study highlighted the importance of NEP from the perspective of both teachers and education. They also suggested that the NEP, 2020, is a comprehensive document that proposes certain beneficial improvements to the overall educational system, which, if implemented, will undoubtedly result in positive changes in India's educational system. In addition, the NEP seeks to fortify the field of education and related fields. The government (or other organizations) always intends for these policies to target a specific audience (Shreshtha,2013). The implementation or approval of any policy will have an impact on ample number of people. Main objective of this study is to look into the application of the new NEP, 2020 in the context of women/ girls in India. Broadly we aim to achieve three objectives in this regard.

i) To find out if the NEP, 2020 is in link with the sustainable development goals (SDG).

ii) To Explore the gender inclusive perspective NEP,2020.

iii) Identifying role of NEP,2020 in educating women students.

1. proposition for the Study:

Since, the current study is based on secondary data we are not hypothesizing anything. Instead, the research proposed some propositions for the study and on the basis of that a conceptual model has been given mentioned below:
The new National Educational Policy

P1: The new Education Policy has an impact on gender inclusiveness. P2: The new Education Policy is useful of higher education in India.

P3: The new National Educational Policy fulfilling all the criteria mentioned in Sustainable development goals given by UN for developing countries like India.

P4: Sustainable development goals have and agenda of gender inclusiveness in developing countries as the women literacy rate is lower.

P5. Sustainable development goals and higher education in India (HEI) has same vision to promote education at higher level.

2. Conceptual Model for the study:

Based on the propositions given in the literature and framework for NEP,2020, we propose the conceptual model for this study
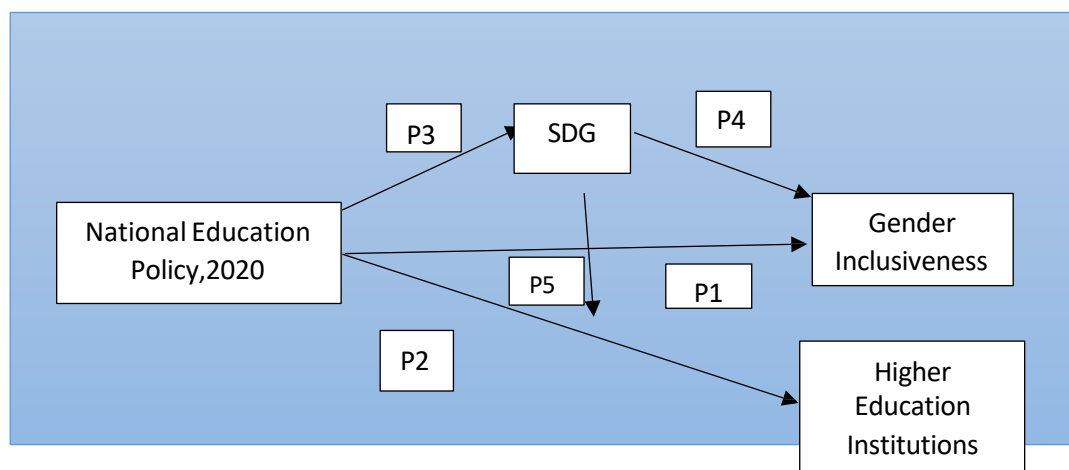

Figure 1: Conceptual model of Gender Inclusiveness (Source: Authors Design)

3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive one. Since the study tries to explore all the key features specifically related to gender inclusiveness a detailed study was needed. Hence descriptive method is suitable for the current study. To achieve this goal, secondary data was collected from a wide range of sources, such as papers, journals, and the official website of the Indian government. Analysis and examination of the data led to the inferences and conclusions.

4. National Education Policy (NEP),2020

There were two revisions to the National Educational Policy between its initial 1986 draft and its 1992 revision. It is now necessary to examine the Policy due to the developments that have taken place since then. Following the NEP of 1986, the first education policy of the twenty- first century, the NEP 2020, follows at 34 years younger. On July 29, 2020, the NEP 2020 was approved by the Union Cabinet of India. This policy, which is seen as a groundbreaking move by the Indian government, lays out the goals and objectives for the future education system in India. By making K-12 and higher education more comprehensive, adaptable, multidisciplinary, relevant to the needs of the modern world, and focused on fostering the development of each student's individual strengths. Recent announcements have focused on expanding access to high-qualilty.

A number of factors, including the present pandemic, Education 4.0, NEP 2020, increasing student demands, and new technology, may influence education. Education 4.0, NEP 2020, and other similar initiatives may cause changes in the educational landscape in the years to come. the current epidemic, growing student needs, and modern technologies. The contemporary social context, societal age divides, new student profiles, and massive technology advances have prompted HEIs to reimagine and remodel the higher education ecosystem to make it more accessible and inclusive. NEP 2020 strives to inspire the necessary confidence for the call for a self-sufficient nation to be a success. It must be confident in its ability to use India's unique assets and massive resources, which are frequently misunderstood as liabilities in the form of a rapidly growing population. It is frequently considered as a financial disaster rather than a

financial gain. To this end, the NEP tries to take advantage of the demographic dividend by permitting numerous exit points in higher education and putting a focus on a diverse set of skills (Jha et al., 2020).

5.1 Associated Policies

There are some existing policies and permit which will help the NEP 2020. These polices also considered the base of new NEP. (Kaurav et al., 2020) draws attention towards this and identified some policies inherited by government before the launch of new policy. Below Table is an attempt to specify these policies and documents.:

S No.	Policy	Description
1	Right to Education	As a fundamental right, with the goal of making education mandatory and free for all students, regardless of their family's financial situation.
2	National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)	The objective was to try to connect with the females, despite the fact that they are "the most difficult to approach."
3	District Primary Education Program (DPEP)	The primary goal is to lessen the informalization of primary education and to revitalize elementary education.
4	Draft National Policy on Education 2019	For the purpose of cognitive development and facilitation

Hence, the above-mentioned policies were the foundation of new NEP. In the current educational scenario, the NEP 2020 contains a slew of dramatic reforms. To replace the present educational system of 10+2 with a more participatory framework of 5+3+3+4, in which kids aged 3-6 would be given a firm foundation and infancy care to support improved growth and understanding. (Ministry of Education, 2020). Unluckily, gender discrimination still exists in many sections of our society. Because women play such an important part in a country's growth, it is critical that people recognise that female education is a fundamental right, just like men's. Improving the status of female education is a crucial step for all countries, particularly undeveloped and developing ones. As a result, women Education is a broad phrase that refers to all girls' and women's health and education up to the tertiary level. Gender overlaps with other repressive institutions in society, such as class and race, according to research, altering opportunities and discriminating experiences. Intersectionality clarifies the fact that women do not perceive gender in the same way men do a similar way, or that women aren't a monolithic group (Gupta, 2019). As it was evident from various research that literacy rates within women

in India is low as compared to men. According to a report of NSO, 2021 even in states like Kerala with highest literacy rate, women literacy rate is (92.07%) while men literacy rate is (96.11%). As the Govt of India launched new policy for education and students are having high hope from this it is important to know its viability, adaptability across nation. The aim of this paper is to identify various key features of national educational policy and also to know how whether it is helpful for women students equally. The paper also gives insights about focus of gender inclusivity. Gender refers to the socially defined roles and behaviors that are often associated with men and women in a given community. Discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or race is against the law. In terms of gender views, the main focus was on the gender gap in schooling.

5.   NEP and Higher Education Index

An overarching objective in formulating the new NEP was to formally establish systemic changes at the tertiary level. At some point, the National Education Policy should help the country's university system. A positive development is the government's decision to open up campuses in India to multinational institutions. As a result, kids in the country will have access to education on par with that found outside. Students will graduate from high school with a more solid body of information. The establishment of a single, standardized entrance exam is another encouraging development that will alleviate the burden of studying for numerous competitive exams. By completing a course, a student can earn points, which will be credited to their ABC account. If a student decides to change colleges, these credits can be transferred. If a student quits out for any reason, his or her credits will be preserved, allowing him or her to return years later and accept where they left off. Separate, autonomous, and empowered agencies will fulfil distinct administrative, accrediting, finance, and academic standard-setting tasks under the new higher education regulatory system.

6.1   Main Features of NEP, 2020
According to India's Higher Education Commission, within a single umbrella organisation, four structures will be developed as four autonomous verticals (HECI). Some features are described below:
i)   Higher education has a single regulatory body
ii)   Too many entries and exit programme
iii)   A technologically-based learning alternative for adults through television, applications
iv)   E-courses are available in regional languages
v)   International schools to establish presence in India
vi)   Common entrance exam for all colleges:

All four-year colleges and universities will use the same entrance exam administered by the National Testing Agency (NTA). Taking the test is something that can be decided upon. The Indian government's accrediting body for universities is the Higher Education Council of India (HECI). The council's goal is to increase the gross enrolment ratio. There will be four verticals in the HECI.:

a)   Higher education, including teacher education, is regulated by the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), which excludes medical and legal education.

b)   National Accreditation Council (NAC), a "meta-accrediting body".

c)   The Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) is responsible for university and college funding and finance. The National Council for Teacher Education, the All India Council for Technical Education, and the University Grants Commission will all be replaced by this body.

d)   The General Education Council (GEC) was formed to define "graduate qualities," or the intended learning results. It will also be in charge of developing a National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (NHEQF). As a professional standard-setting body, the GEC will oversee the National Council for Teacher Education (PSSB).

7.   Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and NEP

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of global objectives for equitable and long-term health at all levels (Morton et al., 2017). The publication in 2015 of a comprehensive and broad road map of targets and indicators underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) marked a watershed moment in the process of aligning not just developing but also developed countries on the path to sustainable

development (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).By 2030, the global education development strategy aims to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," as stated in Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which India adopted in 2015. To fulfil all the important targets and goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the entire educational system will need to be restructured to support and nurture learning[i].

The nation's first education policy for the twenty-first century, National Education Policy 2020 aims to address the increasing developmental demands of the country. With an eye toward achieving the lofty objectives of modern education, such as SDG4, this policy calls for a complete overhaul of the current educational system, including its regulatory framework and administrative practices, and the establishment of a brand- new system that incorporates Indian cultural norms and values. United Nations has some goals and targets and according to their goal (4) "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and (5) "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" which depicts that gender equality is a subject of concern. With this in mind, the national education policy 2020 was developed, with the objective of ensuring that everyone has access to education. In terms of higher education, the NEP document expressly mentions equality in section 14.1.1, which states that gender balance in admission to HEIs should be improved. In this regard, the new NEP, 2020, documents Equitable and Inclusive Education, which means Learning for All while removing gender prejudice.

8. Gender equality is a priority in the 2020 national education agenda

Various substantial and inclusive improvements have been made to the NEP 2020. In addition, public funding for education should increase to 6% of GDP (Bhatt, 2020) and there should be a gender inclusion fund to support transgender and female students' access to equitable educational opportunities. The NEP, on the other hand, barely includes the word "gender" 16 times in its 66-page paper on gender inclusion in education. The policy also includes ambitious goals like developing a gender-inclusive learning environment, demanding mandatory gender- based prejudice awareness workshops, and giving teacher training in gender-sensitive pedagogy and inclusive classroom management. Furthermore, the strategy includes no mention of a detailed plan of action for systematically achieving these goals. Moreover, despite referring to gender-inclusive learning environments, The policy fails to acknowledge the cultural construction of gender as anything other than a set of binary categories, focusing instead on girls and women and making isolated references to transgender kids. (Mathur & Sharma, 2020). Gender inclusive attitudes in the Indian New Education Policy 2020 eliminate gender discrimination, close the gender gap, and boost female literacy rates, all of which contribute to women's empowerment. Focus on developing policies and programmes for female students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. By providing them with more information, girls are better able to make educated decisions, which in turn benefits families, communities, and economies. An education gives girls a better understanding of their rights and the importance of taking care of themselves physically and mentally. Additionally, they will be more likely to be able to find fulfilling employment and realize their full potential. Following the adoption of the NEP, social media platforms such as Twitter, Face book, and Instagram were inundated with various viewpoints. Some have linked it to COVID-19, and numerous studies have underlined the value of NEP to higher education teachers and faculty. With this in mind, (Kaurav et al., 2021) identified some gaps in their study about gender inequality with the new NEP and discovered that the New Education Policy 2020 has a focus on inclusion and equity, as well as a provision for establishing a Gender Inclusion Fund, through a detailed twitter analysis. An encouraging step toward ensuring that all girls and transgender students have access to a quality education is the creation of the Gender Inclusion Fund. This initiative also highlights the NEP and its connection to India's goal of digital education. (Jha et al.,2020).

9. Conclusion

It is a well-known truth that India is still striving to achieve a 100% literacy rate, and that the situation of girls in rural regions is far worse. According to the (NSO,2021) data, Compared to boys, girls have a higher dropout rate. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread over the world, the situation in the country deteriorated as the number of school dropout females soared. A new educational policy has already been presented by the Indian government. The implementation across the nation is now a major challenge. According to the literature, policy was beneficial to both students and professors, but it was also necessary to emphasise gender equality. To keep up, education for a new generation of students must primarily address the growing dematerialisation and digitization of economies, which necessitates the development of a completely new set of skills. This looks to be an even more crucial requirement now that the epidemic is hastening the trend toward digitalization and disruptive automation.

Integrating the new education policy with other government programs will be crucial to its success, notwithstanding its noble intentions. As a result, through more dynamic engagement with the corporate sector, policy connections can make sure that learning examines and learns from ability India's experience in designing vocational education curricula and assuring their efficacy. To adapt to quickly shifting transmutations and disruptions, more evidence-based decision-making is also required. It is encouraging that the NEP includes real-time assessment tools as well as a participative monitoring and review system. This will be an incredible achievement in and of itself. The NEP 2020 represents a watershed point in higher education. It will only be genuinely ground-breaking if it is implemented well and on schedule. The future of the New Education Policy 2020 will be determined by political will and the system that it will provide to the country. Just as the Common School system has yet to see the light of day due to the political class's lack of foresight, it has yet to become a reality. This new NEP 2020 builds on the long-standing improvements in India's education system. Along with the government's ambitious nation-building mega-programs and SDGs, it brings about necessary fundamental institutional improvements. Comprehensive education for future nation's stakeholders will be determined by how the federal and state governments handle major implementation difficulties.

Five propositions were produced in the current research. Since this is a theoretical study, researchers can utilize these propositions to generate hypotheses and test them based on data availability. As everyone in the country adjusts to the new policy, it was critical to sketch out some crucial future scenarios and how they will benefit stakeholders and the broader public. The current study attempted to close this gap.

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