



# The 2020s Education Policy in India to Achieve Women's Empowerment and Lifelong Learning: A Qualitative Study

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**Abstract:** This qualitative study was undertaken to provide an overview of the 2020s Education Policy (NEP) to achieve lifelong learning that leads to breakthrough women's empowerment initiatives. The 2020 Policy is an all-encompassing policy manual that aims to promote the economic and social advancement of women in our nation, as well as address the gender inequities currently prevalent in our society. This research analyses the important features and objectives of NEP 2020 that contribute to advancing women's empowerment and leading to better lifelong learning. It describes the program's different support systems and resources, including access to education and lifelong training. The study underlines the need to create a suitable climate that supports equal opportunities for women, challenges gender stereotypes, and breaks down barriers inhibiting lean growth. The study sheds light on the positive outcomes and success stories emerging from the implementation of NEP 2020 and lifelong learning. The research underlines the growing participation of women in elected and managerial roles, as well as the improvement of their economic independence and the increased recognition of their rights and contributions to society.

**Key Words:** NEP 2020, Women's Empowerment, Lifelong Learning, Girls' Education in India.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

*"Empowerment of women would imply equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, and have positive self-esteem to enable them to handle any challenging scenario, and they should be able to engage in development initiatives." - Kiran Devendra (2001)*

Empowerment of Women was proposed at the third International Conference of Women at NAROIBI in 1985. The NAIROBI Strategy claimed that "despite the tremendous progress gained and the rising participation of women in society, the decade has only partially realised its goals and objectives. Although the earlier years of the decade were characterised by relatively favourable economic conditions in both developed and developing countries, deteriorating economic conditions have slowed efforts toward promoting women's equal participation in society and have given rise to new problems. Regarding development, there are indications that in some circumstances, although the participation of women is increasing, their advantages are not increasing accordingly." - (15-26 July 1985, Nairobi, Kenya)

Education is the key to success, but it is not always easy for girls in India to get it. They confront various problems, such as economic hardship, prejudice based on Gender, and early marriage. In the context of the Indian education system, only the 2020s education policy might be the saviour. Although it has yet to be entirely enforced in the country, it is highly focused on encouraging girls' education. (Riya, 2023).

Women's empowerment is crucial to developing a truly equal and balanced society. Considering this, governments worldwide have undertaken different programs and efforts to enhance women's empowerment. It has been noticed that women are considered to be less literate than men. According to the 2001 census, the percentage of literacy among men in the nation is reported to be 76%; however, it is just 54% among women (Hazarika, D. 2011). The Indian National Education Policy, NEP 2020, has significantly strengthened women's empowerment. In terms of education in India, the new policy is a comprehensive policy structure aiming at bridging the gender gap and empowering women in different sectors of life. It reconnects with women's empowerment. It is not just about reaching gender parity but also offers equal chances, resources, and platforms for women to prosper professionally, socially, and economically. With 84.4% of the men in the country and 71.5% of the female population being literate as of 2021, India displayed a higher overall literacy rate among males than it did among women (Rathore, 2023). Thus, boosting education among women is essential and significant to empowering them.



## 1.2 What is Women's Empowerment?

Through female empowerment, women can establish themselves in control of their own lives, exercise their rights as women, and realise their full potential in every aspect of society. It involves granting women equal opportunities, resources, and decision-making power, challenging gender stereotypes, and fostering a supportive environment that values and respects women's contributions (Saini, P., & Supriti. (2018)). To create a society that is more legitimate, inclusive, and equal, the empowerment of women is not only a goal it is a method to achieve this aim.

Empowerment is a process that is both functional and complex, and it assists women in recognising their life identity and the powers they possess in many aspects (Sahay, S. 1998). Empowered women can contribute to economic growth, enhance social development, and foster political stability. By investing in women's education, health, economic opportunities, and ability to shape policies, societies can unlock the potential of half the population and accelerate progress toward gender equality.

One pivotal aspect of women's empowerment is providing access to quality education. Education empowers women by equipping them with knowledge, chops, and confidence to share in social, profitable, and political spheres laboriously. Through education, women can gain mindfulness of their rights, challenge traditional gender roles, and pursue their career goals (Singh, P., & Gupta, S., 2013). True education can be accomplished if only we pay equal importance to women's education. Empowering women is empowering the nation. (Hekha, 2022). It involves presenting women with income-generating opportunities, access to fiscal treasuries, and entrepreneurship support. When women have lucrative independence, they may contribute to their own and their family's well-being, challenge traditional patterns of reliance, and exercise agency in decision-making processes. In addition, the Women's Agency makes efforts to improve the health and mental wellness of women. This involves the provision of accessibility to appropriate medical treatments, the implementation of parental rights, and the elimination of potentially harmful behaviours such as discrimination and violence based on gender (Devendra, K., 2001). By promoting women's health, society can enable women to have healthy and satisfying lives free from physical, emotional, and mental disadvantages.

## 1.3 Women's Empowerment Prescribed by NEP 2020:

The NEP 2020 recognises the requirement of women's empowerment as a crucial pillar of education reform in India. The strategy underlines the need to address gender disparities and promote equitable opportunities for women and men in every aspect of education (National Education Policy, 2020). NEP 2020 has produced a few recommendations for the education of women; nevertheless, there continue to be a great deal of issues as it involves the implementation of these proposals (Hekha, 2022). Here are some significant areas linked with women's empowerment as described in the NEP 2020:

- **Equal Access to Education:** The NEP 2020 focuses on achieving equitable access to education for girls and women at all levels. It strives to eradicate barriers that impede girls from enrolling in schools and receiving quality education (Shamim, M., & Mishra, R., 2023). The strategy emphasises programs to address issues like early marriage, gender-based discrimination, and socioeconomic obstacles that hamper girls' education.
- **Gender-Responsive Curriculum:** The NEP 2020 underlines the significance of a gender-responsive curriculum that promotes gender equality and fights gender stereotypes. The policy advocates for including diverse viewpoints, contributions, and achievements of women in different sectors, including history, literature, the sciences, and the arts. This inclusive curriculum strives to empower girls by giving them role models and increasing their expectations.
- **Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment:** The NEP 2020 promotes the construction of safe and inclusive learning environments that address the special needs and concerns of girls and women. It encourages gender-sensitive infrastructure, like separate restrooms, changing rooms, and safe transit facilities, to guarantee that girls can access education without fear of intimidation or assault.
- **Life Skills and Gender Sensitisation:** The policy argues for the inclusion of life skills and gender sensitisation courses in the curriculum. These activities aim to enhance girls' critical thinking, communication, decision-making, and leadership abilities, helping them handle problems and make educated decisions. Gender sensitisation courses educate both boys and girls about gender equality, tolerance for diversity, and the value of inclusivity.
- **Women's Participation in Education Governance:** The NEP 2020 recognises the need for enhanced representation of women in decision-making bodies within the education system. The strategy encourages the involvement of women in school administration committees, academic councils, and governing boards of educational organisations. This strives to ensure that women's opinions are heard and that their perspectives are acknowledged in establishing educational policies and procedures.



- **Vocational Education and Entrepreneurship Opportunities:** The NEP 2020 underlines the importance of vocational education and entrepreneurship opportunities for girls and women. It aims to provide people with practical skills and information to enter numerous fields, become self-reliant, and contribute to economic growth. The strategy supports access to vocational education, financial support, and supervision for women in unconventional sectors, encouraging their involvement and achievement.

By addressing these elements, the NEP 2020 acknowledges the significance of women's empowerment within the educational landscape. It attempts to establish an inclusive and gender-responsive education system that promotes equitable opportunity, challenges gender stereotypes, and educates girls and women to actively engage in all aspects of society. The NEP 2020 strives to promote a more egalitarian and progressive India by promoting girls and women through education (Carr, A., Balasubramanian, K., Atieno, R., & Onyango, J., 2018).

#### 1.4 Lifelong Learning Related to NEP 2020 and Women's Empowerment

The 2020s game-changer education strategy in India stresses the importance of lifelong learning and women's empowerment. Lifelong learning refers to the constant gathering of information and abilities in the individual's life beyond formal education. Here's how NEP 2020 promotes lifelong learning about women's empowerment:

- **Flexible learning options:** NEP 2020 emphasises the need for flexible learning options, including online and distance education, to accommodate women's diverse needs and circumstances. This allows them to balance their education with other responsibilities, such as caregiving or work.
- **Skill development:** NEP 2020 emphasises integrating vocational education and skill development across all levels. This is particularly significant in women since it prepares them with real-world abilities that boost their employability and economic independence. By gaining relevant skills, women can break traditional gender roles and contribute to the workforce (Dosunmu, A., & Adeyemo, K., 2018).
- **Empowering women through education:** NEP 2020 comprehends that academic achievement is a key weapon for empowering women. It aims to provide education that promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and gender sensitisation (Sharma, V. 2021). This equips women with the knowledge and skills to participate in decision-making actively, challenge societal norms, and advocate for their rights.
- **Lifelong learning opportunities:** NEP 2020 encourages lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals, including women. It emphasises the value of continuous learning throughout one's life and supports programs and initiatives that enable women to access further education and skill development at any stage.

Focusing on empowerment through education, NEP 2020 promotes equal access, skill development, and flexibility for lifelong learning options. By emphasising these values, NEP 2020 aims to create an inclusive society that encourages women to reach their full potential. Ultimately, this emphasis on education has the potential to empower women in ways that are both unique and transformative.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Despite lots of Research done in the past that shows how the National Education Policy boosts women's empowerment as well as their lifelong learning. The study searched for some related studies to conduct fair support. (Walter, S. 1999) In his recommendations, he suggests that overall educational improvement must happen for both children and adults, as well as within each learning environment. If it doesn't, you have at least two polarised "lifelong educations." Another study showed that one of the reasons for empowering women is correct education. The takeaway here is that women's empowerment will not happen unless women join in supporting each other in their self-empowerment. We must develop procedures to mitigate poverty, raise the level of education among women, and curb the violence against women to make progress, Hazarika, D. (2011). This Research ends with a note that opportunities for knowledge and employment are only the facilitator element promoting empowerment, but it's how far society will allow this process to succeed that depends upon their perception of gender equality. Nayak, P., & Mahanta, B. (2012). If India needs to empower women first, are the women financially empowered as lots of Western countries do in the present situation? Al-Shami, S. S. A., Razali, R. M., & Rashid, N. (2016 & 2018), in their Research, discovered that women who receive AIM microcredit have higher monthly incomes. Further to this, women microlenders also get the freedom to make their own decisions concerning household choices such as their mobility, day-to-day spending money on education, and healthy life expenses. Chaudhary, T. (2020) revealed that rebuilding public education in India through an inclusive lens with Gender is being taken up in this report. It focuses on the Instruction 2030 Roadmap for Commitment and Renewable Development Goals' Enforce Equal and Quality. When NEP 2020 came, the definition of education was changed. Aithal, P.S., & Aithal, S. (2020) found that, as such, India has altered the system of higher learning from being focused on teachers to being student-centric. Information-oriented, knowledge-oriented, and skills-oriented Examination to trial-centric; teaching pivotal to investigation pivotal; choice pivotal to competency. Women's empowerment and lifelong



learning are connected, and both are to be expanded in our nation when the new education program is implemented effectively.

This is what **Pathak, R. & Pathak, R. (2021)** proved in their Research on the new education policy; there is an acknowledgement that educators need to be inspired or motivated, but without any proposal on how to inspire educators in India. In not addressing the core challenge facing India's higher education, the new education policy squandered an opportunity. NEP 2020 tried, in its way, to achieve flexibility in structuring and governance toward serving student interests. Many policies will come and go, but if people's minds are not changed, the nation and society of that country cannot improve. **Margaret (2021)** explained that if education is utilised properly, then it is an enabler and positively influences people's outlook towards it, and hence, the socioeconomic and political progress of India hinges on these. It is empowered by the Constitution of India to take positive action in favour of methods and means which will enable women to advance towards achieving economic independence. Education policy marginalised and developed an education structure that has benefited all stakeholders directly and has a direct relation to lifelong learning by shaping the education curriculum. **Gandhi, R. (2022)** stated that adult education constitutes a skill development program with lifelong learning included in it. In present-day digital India and Atmanirvar Bharat, wherein breakthroughs in technology have gone to a new level, adult education and lifelong learning are of key importance in allowing society to become economically free. **Sharma, P., & Gulati, D. D. K. (2022)** showed that in our country, it is going to be a huge problem to integrate the new education policy with the sustainability aim because education is a subject on the concurrent list of our constitution. But the states are expecting, as are schools and institutions, that we will be ready to integrate the contemporary and conventional concepts that constitute the backbone of NEP 2020 in the next few decades. Another study revealed that to ensure compliance with education regulations, all states should adopt effective implementation strategies. Government entities should establish a dedicated grievance mechanism to assist those in need. This will boost engagement from recipients, who, in turn, will develop trust in the system **Rajput, (2023)**. This theoretical study explores the role of NEP 20 in promoting education among women in India, highlighting its significant role in the advancement of women, based on the educational aspects of NEP 2020. **Nath, P. K., & Saikia, S. (2023)**.

### 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS:

This study intends to shed light on how the NEP 2020 framework can effectively facilitate lifelong learning opportunities that nurture women's empowerment, narrow gender disparities, and build an equitable society in India. The topic of women's empowerment is ubiquitous throughout the globe, and advocating for their political representation is at the cutting edge of various official and unofficial activities across the world. Although the NEP 2020 highlights the significance of lifelong learning in bolstering women's empowerment, tackling the obstacles that hinder the implementation of this initiative and ensuring fair and comprehensive education and skill development access are crucial in the present situation, as well as all over India.

### 4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Following the subject matter of the Research, the process of the investigator reached several questions-

1. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has several key provisions that particularly target enhancing women's empowerment through lifelong learning. What are these provisions?
2. Women's barriers and challenges in accessing quality education and lifelong learning opportunities are a prevalent concern, and the extent to which NEP 2020 addresses them is unclear.
3. Enhancing lifelong learning for women and promoting empowerment is important in the NEP 2020. As we consider the ever-changing societal needs and emerging challenges, in what specific ways can the policy grow? How can it be developed more in the context of women's being empowered?

### 5. OBJECTIVES:

The current study's accomplishments will enrich our understanding of lifelong learning on NEP 2020's women's empowerment objectives. Policymakers and stakeholders seeking to amplify the implementation of lifelong learning programs for women's empowerment will find practical insights within the study's results.

- To understand how the NEP 2020 incorporates lifelong learning principles and its potential impact on advancing women's empowerment in the educational system.
- To identify the barriers and structural factors that hinder women's participation in lifelong learning and limit their opportunities for empowerment.
- To focus on understanding how lifelong learning programs and initiatives within the NEP 2020 can address gender gaps, empower women with relevant knowledge and skills, and enhance their socioeconomic prospects.



1. To discover women's perception of lifelong learning and its potential in promoting empowerment within the NEP 2020 context.
2. To develop recommendations and strategies for effectively implementing lifelong learning initiatives and promoting empowering women through the NEP 2020 strategies.

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

To gain an understanding of the National Education Policy 2020, lifelong learning, and women's empowerment, thoroughly reviewed existing literature. Researcher utilise different perspectives on how lifelong learning contributes to enhancing women's empowerment within the framework of the NEP 2020. Analyse the data using techniques that identify recurring themes and extract relevant insights to address the relevant research questions with the help of Microsoft Excel. Additionally, the investigator observed policy papers, reports, and published works to assess the alignment between policy objectives and women's aspirations regarding learning and empowerment.

### Sources:

The main source of this study was-

- National Education Policy 2020 Reports
- Academic Journals
- Reports and Publications
- Some websites
- Research article

## 7. FINDINGS:

- The NEP 2020 emphasises the significance of lifelong learning and the constant development of skills and knowledge throughout one's life. This recognition serves as a foundation for empowering women through education and providing them with opportunities for lifelong learning.
- Despite the recognition of lifelong learning in the NEP 2020, several obstacles still hinder women's access and participation in such initiatives. These barriers include sociocultural norms, limited awareness or information, financial constraints, and gender-based discrimination.
- The significance of lifelong learning in empowering women cannot be overstated. By providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities, lifelong learning enables women to participate in society actively.
- Lifelong learning plays an essential role in addressing gender inequalities in various aspects, like education, employment opportunities, and socioeconomic prospects. Initiatives that promote lifelong learning offer women the chance to enhance their skills and knowledge, which helps reduce gender disparities. Additionally, these programs encourage professional growth and empower women to participate in non-traditional sectors.
- Some aspects can boost the impact of learning in empowering women. These include establishing environments that provide support for learning, guaranteeing access to a range of opportunities, raising awareness, embracing diversity, providing financial and infrastructural assistance, and encouraging collaboration among all individuals involved.
- Fostering partnerships between educational institutions and stakeholders is one of many potential actions to utilise lifelong learning to empower women. Gender-responsive lifelong learning opportunities must be promoted, and specific barriers women face must be addressed with targeted initiatives.

Communities, policymakers, civil society groups, educators, and women all have a crucial place in the success of a lifelong learning initiative designed to promote women's empowerment.

## 8. DISCUSSION :

Learning and skill development are key, which were mentioned in the NEP 2020. The policy identifies the critical part of education in empowering women with promoting gender equality. Education serves a part in promoting knowledge also reducing gender bias, and improving women's status within their families and communities. Therefore, education stands as a pillar of empowering women (**Chaudhary, T. 2020**). Empowerment of women can be realised through lifelong learning and opportunities to develop skills. The policy emphasises the need to give great education and equitable chances to all girls and women, enabling them to acquire the information and abilities to participate effectively in society. The NEP 2020 seeks to bridge the existing gender imbalance in education, particularly in terms of student enrolment, retention, and completion. This advocates for the promotion of gender-sensitive and inclusive educational environments that promote equitable access and ensure the safety and security of female students. The NEP



2020 has recognised lifelong learning and skill development as crucial elements for empowering women. The next decade will have the largest number of young women in the world, which is India & our ability to provide them with a good education will decide their progress forward, development & empowerment (Bhat, R. A. 2015). It underlines the necessity for demographic-sensitive and diverse education systems and provides strategies to address the gender disparities in educational endeavours. Educating and extending opportunities in lifelong learning towards empowering women will empower them with active participation within society, enable them to attain their desired objectives, and assist them in contributing to the country's socioeconomic growth. The engagement of women in lifelong learning is tied to their household duties.

In comparison, men participated in continuous education and lifelong learning mainly because of their occupations and careers. Furthermore, these findings add to the knowledge about the correlations between age, Gender, SES, lifestyle, and learning habits among older adults engaged in lifelong learning (Chang, D. F., et al., 2012). Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process involving many aspects, including equal opportunity, resources, and decision-making powers. Empowering women means building a society where woman is empowered as individuals, and it results not only in their benefit but also ensures the well-being of families, communities, and nations. It promises a more gender-equitable world. The NEP 2020 offers hope to overcome today's difficulties and satisfy 21st-century needs successfully. To increase educational motivation, we should empower girls to believe in themselves and their abilities, provide role models to inspire them, make education relevant to help girls see how it can help them achieve their goals, and create a safe and supportive environment for their learning and growth. If these measures are taken seriously alongside the effective implementation of the NEP 2020, achieving gender equality in India is inevitable (Mohan, S. M., Netto, S. G., & Ram, A. T., 2024). Education is the key to success in life, and by providing girls with the opportunity to get an education, we can build an increasingly fair and equitable society.

In conclusion, the result suggests that women's empowerment can be furthered by promoting lifelong learning, as outlined in the NEP 2020. But it's key to tackling obstacles and adopting tailored measures to encourage equal participation, boost women's self-assurance, and empower them with social and economic opportunities through lifetime education.

## 9. LIMITATIONS:

This study will not be finished here. The researcher did not cover all resources in this study and only used existing materials. The researcher who has an interest in this area can study it more extensively and supply significant information. Anyone can go through additional sources and carry out the Research for a longer period for superior results.

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