

EDUCATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLSThe Policy

The NPE (Para 4.2) stipulated that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman. The policy says that the National Education System has to play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women and to foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks and training and orientation of teachers. In para 4.3, the NPE gave a call for removal of female illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention, in, elementary education and also for a major emphasis on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education and promotion of their participation in non-traditional occupations.

2. LITERACY SCENARIO OF WOMEN

According to the 1991 census, the female literacy rate for population aged 7 years and above is 39.42% against the male literacy rate of 63.86%, bringing the average rate of national literacy to 52.11%. One encouraging feature of 1991 census is that whereas the male literacy rate for population aged 7 years and above during the period 1981 to 1991 increased by <sup>only</sup> 7.49%, the increase in female literacy rate was 9.67%. Of the 14 most populous states, large number of rural female illiterates are found in five states, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Out of 304.04 million women in the rural areas, only 76.42 million women are literates. Out of the remaining 227.62 million rural illiterate women in the country, 129.22 million are in these five states.

3. STEPS TAKEN FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S EDUCATION

The NPE gives an unqualified priority to the following three programmes for eradication of illiteracy particularly among women:-

- (a) Universalisation of elementary education and universal retention of children upto 14 years of age.

- (b) A systematic programme of non-formal education in the the 10 educationally backward States.
- (c) The National Literacy Mission which aims at making 80.00 million adults literate by 1995.

4. Some of the recent strategies initiated to promote women education throughout the country, with emphasis on women in rural and tribal areas include the following:-

(i) UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The NPE called for a drive symbolically called " Operation Blackboard" for a substantial improvement in the quality of primary schools. This Centrally Sponsored Scheme was started in 1987-88, to bring all existing primary schools in the country to a minimum standard of physical facilities. The policy is to give preference to women in recruitment of teachers upto school level, so as to create a greater confidence in rural areas and motivate parents to send girls to schools. By the close of 1990-91, 4419 blocks had already been covered under 'Operation Blackboard' programme.

The States have been advised to see that no district is left out and that preference is given in selection of blocks to educationally disadvantaged groups, SC/ST and minorities. Other steps taken to improve enrolment and ensure reduction in drop-out rates at elementary stage include:

- Abolition of tuition fees in Government Schools at least upto Upper Primary level.
- Provision of support services for early childhood care.
- Provision of incentives such as free textbooks, uniforms, attendance scholarships and mid-day meals.
- Increase in the number of women teachers.

(ii) GIRLS ENROLMENT AT THE ELEMENTARY STAGE

There has been significant increase in education of girls at the elementary stage, as shown in the tables below:-

	<u>Enrolment</u>	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Upper Primary</u>
1950-51	53.84 lakhs	5.34 lakhs
1990-91	410.24 lakhs	124.39 lakhs

Percentage of girls enrolment to total enrolment

<u>Year</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Upper Primary</u>
1950-51	28.1	16.1
1990-91	37.37	41.39

<u>Year</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Upper Primary</u>
1950-51	42.6	12.92
1990-91	85.97	46.13

(iii) NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Non-Formal Education (NFE) was introduced during the VI Plan in 9 educationally backward States namely, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Subsequent to NFE, the scheme was revised in 1987-88 and expanded to cover urban slums, hilly, desert and tribal areas and areas of concentration of working children in all other States/UTs. Under the scheme, 50% Central assistance is given to the States/UTs for setting up and running co-educational NFE Centres; the Central assistance is higher at 90% for NFE centres for girls. About 2.70 lakhs NFE centres were sanctioned upto 31.3.91 in different States/UTs.

(iv) NATIONAL LITERACY MISSION

The important steps which have been taken under NLM during the last two-three years to eradicate illiteracy with particular emphasis on illiterate women, are:

- (a) special environment building efforts being taken up for mobilising women volunteers and learners for literacy in Total Literacy Campaign districts;
- (b) increase in the number of students participating in the literacy programmes. About 40% of them are expected to be girl students.
- (c) integrating messages like 'women's equality and empowerment' through education in the curriculum and course content of teaching/learning materials and training, etc.;

- (d) appointment of large number of women adult education functionaries and provision of continuing education to them for skill upgradation;
- (e) involvement of a large number of voluntary agencies in literacy work especially those working for women;
- (f) more attention by Shramik Vidyapeeth to women workers;
- (g) production of films on female literacy and empowerment, and their telecast through Doordarshan.

(v) MAHILA SAMAKHYA:

This project has been launched in 10 districts of three States of Karanataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. The basic thrust of this programme is to create a mechanism whereby women are given an opportunity to plan and monitor their own education and reach out to a new body of knowledge. It aims at involving women in process of educational planning at the village level and providing educational inputs, if and when they are not in a position to harness the existing inputs from the ongoing schemes. This project has now been made an integral part of comprehensive education projects like Bihar Educational Project (BEP) and Rajasthan Lok Jumbish Project. In the VIII plan period, this project will cover 23 districts in the States of Karanataka, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh and in all the BEP districts in Bihar.

5. SECONDARY EDUCATION

(i) ENROLMENT

The enrolment of girls at the Secondary and the Higher Secondary stages has increased during the period from 1989-90 to 1990-91 as per the table shown below:-

Stage	Year	Girls enrolment	Year	Girls enrolment	% increase
Secondary	1989-90	44,86,897 (32.53)	1990-91	4861604 (33.44)	8.36
Higher Secondary	1989-90	19,60,647 (31.72)	1990-91	2032227 (31.96)	3.65

(Figures in parenthesis indicate of girls enrolment to total enrolment).

In 1990-91, percentage of girls enrolment in Secondary/Hr.Sec. stages (taken together) to total enrolment at these stages was 32.99% against 17.85% in 1950-51.

(ii) NEED FOR EXPANSION OF GIRLS EDUCATION AT  
SECONDARY & HIGHER SECONDARY STAGES.

The latest data of class-wise enrolment is given in the Concise Report of the Fifth All India Educational Survey (Refce. date 30.9.86) published by the NCERT. As per this data, the transfer rates of girl students from class VIII to class IX and from class X to class XI are 77.80% and 39.95% respectively. As such, 22.20% of girls (about 5.88 lakhs) passing from upper primary stage are not entering Secondary stage. Similarly, 60.05% of girls (about 9.56 lakhs) passing from Secondary stage are not entering Higher Secondary stage. As per the latest available data on girls institutions, in 1987-88, only 12% and 14.48% of High and Higher Secondary schools respectively, were girls institutions. In order to encourage the retention of girls at the Secondary/Higher Secondary stages, it is clear that the number of High/Higher Secondary Schools for girls should be substantially increased.

(iii) FREE EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AT SECONDARY/HIGHER  
SECONDARY STAGES. (AS ON 1.1.90)

Girls education is free upto the Secondary stage, in the Government/Local Body Schools in all States and UTs except Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Punjab, Mizoram, Chandigarh and Delhi. In Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Rajasthan (only in Govt. Schools), Sikkim, Tripura, UP, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, A&N Islands, D&N Haveli, Daman & Diu and Pondicherry, girls education in such schools is free upto Higher Secondary stage. In the States of UP, Tripura, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh and the UTs of A&N Islands and Daman & Diu even the private-aided schools do not charge any fees from girls upto Higher Secondary stage.

In Madhya Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi, girls education in Govt./Local Body schools is free upto class VIII and in Meghalaya upto class VI. However, Meghalaya offers free education for all SC/ST students upto class X. In Punjab and Mizoram, girls education in Govt. Schools is free upto class VIII and class VII respectively and Punjab provides free education for girls in local body/private-aided schools upto class V. In private-aided schools of Mizoram, girls education is free upto class VII. There are no local body schools in Mizoram and Chandigarh.

(iv) NATIONAL OPEN SCHOOL PROGRAMME FOR EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN THROUGH DISTANCE MODE - FEE CONCESSIONS.

In order to cater to the educational needs of girls, school dropouts, house wives and other socially disadvantaged sections of the society, an autonomous organisation namely, National Open School (NOS) had been established by the Government on 23.11.1989. NOS provides Bridge, Secondary and Senior Secondary Courses through distance education. The cumulative enrolment of NOS is about 2 lakhs. About 37% of the students of NOS are girls and women. The girls and women students of NOS pay much less fees in comparison to the general category of students.

(v) VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The NPE recommended that the introduction of systematic well-planned and vigorously implemented programme of Vocational Education was crucial to the proposed educational re-organisation. Accordingly, a Centrally sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education was started in February, 1988 under which substantial financial assistance is given to States/UTs for starting vocational courses at the +2 level.

By the end of 1991-92, the programme was being implemented in 24 States and 4 Union Territories and 12543 vocational sections had been sanctioned in 4400 schools. The vocational courses are open to both boys and girls. Concerted efforts are made to eliminate sex stereotyping and offering non-traditional vocational courses to girls both through co-education schools and separate girls institutions. As per a recent survey, 27.44% of students enrolled at +2 stages in vocational courses are girls. During the 8th Plan it is proposed to encourage States/ Voluntary organisations to take up short-duration non-formal vocational training courses for girls who drop out after class VIII.

(vi) THE WORK DONE BY THE NCERT.

The NPE (para 3.9) envisaged that the National System of Education should be based on a national curricular framework containing a common core along with other components that are flexible. Equality of the sexes and observance of the small family norm are among the ten core components identified in the NPE. Keeping in view these postulates of the NPE, the NCERT brought out in 1988, a National Curricular Framework and revised its entire range of school syllabi/textbooks. The Department of Women's Studies in NCERT has been undertaking following programmes for empowerment of women through education:-

- i) Organising regional/national workshops to orient key persons from States/UTs to the process of identification and elimination of sexist bias in educational programmes and textbooks.
- ii) Developing resource material on education for women's equality.
- iii) Identification of indicators and strategies for operationalising women's education and development.

6. AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION.

- Intensification of efforts towards UEE for girls through formal and non-formal systems in the educationally backward States.
- Expansion/consolidation of girls education at the Secondary/Higher Secondary stages, particularly in Science and Commerce streams.
- Need to take preparatory action for the quantum jump in providing additional secondary schools with the expansion of elementary system.
- States to consider starting of Open Schools upto Secondary/Higher Secondary stages.
- Promotion of female literacy particularly in the States where literacy rates are far below the national average.