

GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES



Notes

THE BETTER INDIA, a Radio Show, presented a heart-touching story of a girl, **ROJA**, from rural Karnataka, who had fought all odds to pursue her education. This 14-year-old girl encountered many obstacles that prevented her from remaining in school. However, she was determined to pursue her passion and reach out to the stars. As Priya Pillai interviewed her, she was asked why girls did not stay in school. To this, she sadly replied, “parents think girls will marry and go away to live in another house. All the money they spend on sending girls to school will only benefit an outside family. So, instead of daughters, they send their sons to school”. She continued, “my family was so poor that they could not buy any books for me. Then, the Government started to give textbooks which helped me a lot”. She qualified for scholarships close to Rs. 3400 per month to get her bicycle to ride to school. The school provided milk to drink and a meal to eat every day.

Our heart goes out to millions of such girls who are married off at a very young age and do not have access to education. Poverty often is an obstacle. However, various government programmes have supported them to continue with their education. In view of the above, this lesson aims to look at the educational policies that aim to maintain gender equity and help those girls who want to rise above the deprivation in their lives and move ahead with their dreams and urges to study and build a career.



OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, learner:

- analyses the educational policies from a gender point of view.
- explains the challenges involved in access to education because of socio-economic inequalities.
- discusses the role of national policy in breaking gender barriers and myths.

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- examines the role of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 in addressing gender issues.
- appreciates the contribution of NEP 2020 in dealing with gender issues,

10.1 EDUCATIONAL POLICIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

As discussed in lesson (Development of women's education in India), women enjoyed almost equal status with men, particularly in the early Vedic period. However, during the medieval period, the condition of women deteriorated under the Muslim rulers in India. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar worked to uplift and empower women.

The Constitution of India makes special provisions for women to enable them to exercise their rights and participate in national development.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India **assures justice, social, economic and political equality of status, opportunity and dignity to the individual**. Thus, it treats both men and women as equals. Some of the **Fundamental Rights** in the Indian Constitution provide for the following special provisions for women-

Article 14 ensures women the right to equality.

Article 15(1) specifically prohibits discrimination based on sex.

Article 15(3) empowers the state to take affirmative actions in favour of women.

Article 16 provides equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office.

Similarly, the **Directive Principles of State Policy** also outline certain specific provisions for women in India:

Article 39 (a) provides that the state should direct its policies towards securing equality for men and women and the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

Article 39 (d) mandates equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Article 42 provides that the state shall make provisions for securing just and humane work conditions and maternity relief.

Given the long-term nature of issues impacting women in India, there is a need to strengthen the process that promotes the **overall development of women by focusing on a coordinated approach** for implementing schemes of concerned Ministries/Departments and by creating an environment that is conducive to social change.



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10.2. CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING EDUCATION DUE TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

Many social and economic factors disrupt access to education in India. First, students in the rural belt of India need better schools and colleges. They lack even the basic infrastructure like furniture or manpower like teachers or well-trained staff. This creates inequality in the level of education offered. It is common to see children drop out of school after primary education. Rural India falls short of secondary or higher secondary schools. In addition, girl children are majorly deprived of education due to the social pressure of marriage or taking care of their younger siblings when their parents are out for work.

Some of the reasons of low access to education are: lack of trained teachers, toilets especially for girls; lack of adequate infrastructure, illiteracy, low access to education, poverty, lack of adequate transport, early marriage and care of siblings which is diagrammatically represented as under:

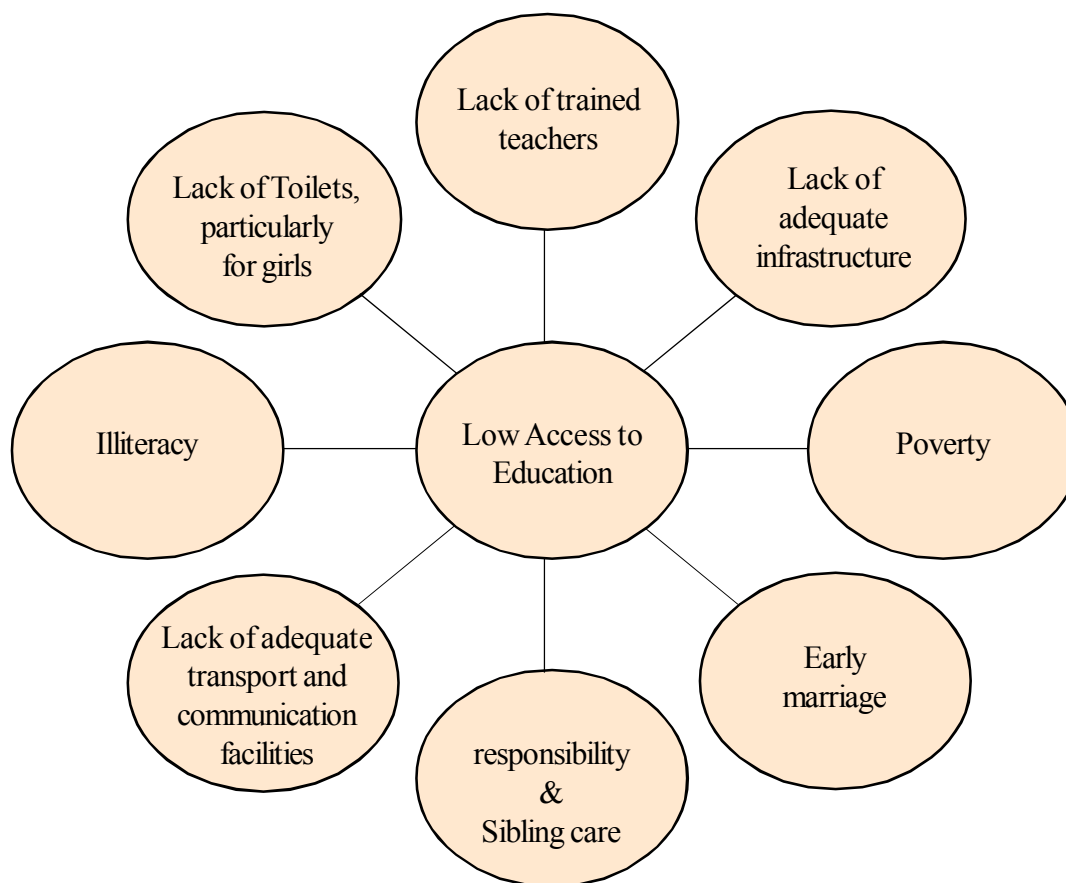


Figure 10.1: Reasons of low access to education

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Now, you might have understood different reasons of low access to education and drop-out. You might have seen boys and girls might not be able to go to school due to different reasons. Write a report citing different reasons of low access to education and drop-out in your area. Also compare how reasons of low access to education and drop-out is different among boys and girls.

National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), January to June 2014, 71st Round, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation states that male literacy was 83% against the female literacy rate of 67%. Furthermore, it was found that 4.5% of males, as against 2.2% of females, completed the education level of graduation and above. In urban areas, 17% of males and 13% of females completed graduation.

10.3 ROLE OF NATIONAL POLICY IN BREAKING GENDER BARRIERS**10.3.1 The National Policy of Education (1968)**

The National Policy of Education (1968) marked a significant step in the educational arena in post-independent India. The policy focused on a radical reconstruction and expanding educational facilities at all levels in the country.

The acceptance of a standard structure of education all over India and the introduction of the 10+2+3 system by most states has been its most notable development. It laid down a standard scheme of studies for both boys and girls in the school curriculum. Science and mathematics were ideally incorporated as compulsory subjects. In addition, it aimed at restructuring of courses at the Undergraduate level, and the Centre of Advanced Studies for post-graduate education and research were established.

Education was planned to be imparted in a manner that played a positive role in women's empowerment. New values were instilled through curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators with the active involvement of educational institutions. Women's studies promoted various courses and educational institutions to take up active programmes to further women's development. Removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in elementary education received priority. Provisions were made for special support, services, setting time targets and effective monitoring. A significant emphasis was laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy of non-discrimination was pursued to eliminate sex stereotyping in vocational and professional courses. Women's participation in non-traditional occupations and emergent technologies was encouraged.



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The new Policy emphasised the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunities. Focus on attending specific needs of women, who have been denied equality so far received importance. Population control could be achieved through the spread of literacy and education among women.

The Constitutional Amendment of 1976 focussed on Education for Quality and a new policy for an equitable Education system. The Five Year Plans focused attention on the development of women. The Committee on Status of Women in India, in 1974, submitted a report which gave a new impetus towards gender perspectives on public expenditure. The National Policy on Education (1986) was adopted during the seventh plan period which focused on providing educational opportunities to women. For the first time in India, the Planning Commission, under the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), highlighted the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from general developmental sectors to that of women.

Further ahead, the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted the “Women Component Plan” as one of its major strategies of planning and budgeting. It directed the Central and State Governments to ensure that “not less than 30 percent of the funds/benefits are earmarked to all women’s related sectors”. It also directed that a special vigil be kept on the flow of earmarked funds/benefits towards empowering women. In addition, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 provided reservations for women in local bodies.

In the following section, government educational policies in concerning the education of girls in India have been included.

10.3.2 The National Policy on Education (1986) revised in 1992

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, as modified in 1992, emphasizes three aspects of elementary education-

- Universal access and enrolment
- Universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and
- A substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve basic levels of learning.

In pursuance of the National Policy of Education (1986) revised in 1992, the main features of the implementation strategy concerning the status of women include-

1. To gear the entire education system to play a positive role in women’s empowerment.
2. To encourage educational institutions to take up active programmes to enhance women’s status and further women’s development in all sectors.

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3. To widen women’s access to vocational, technical and professional education at all levels by breaking gender stereotypes.
4. To create a dynamic management structure that will respond to the challenge posed by this mandate.

Strategies outlined below deal primarily with operational details regarding the implementation of the POA (1992):

1. All the Bureaus of the Department of Education will prepare a concrete action plan addressing gender-related issues and concerns in their specific work area by August 1993. Relevant nodal institutions like the UGC, AICTE, ICSSR, ICAR, ICMR, IAMR, State Boards, Vocational Education Bureau, etc. to prepare similar action plans.
2. A monitoring unit will be created in the Planning Division of the Department of Education to ensure the integration of gender issues into policies, programmes and schemes. This unit will develop indicators for monitoring implementation, ensure effective dissemination of information and coordinate action. This will be done by August 1993.
3. Similar monitoring Units/Bureaus will be set up at the State Level.
4. Annual Reports of all the bureaus and institutions will spell out the steps they have undertaken.

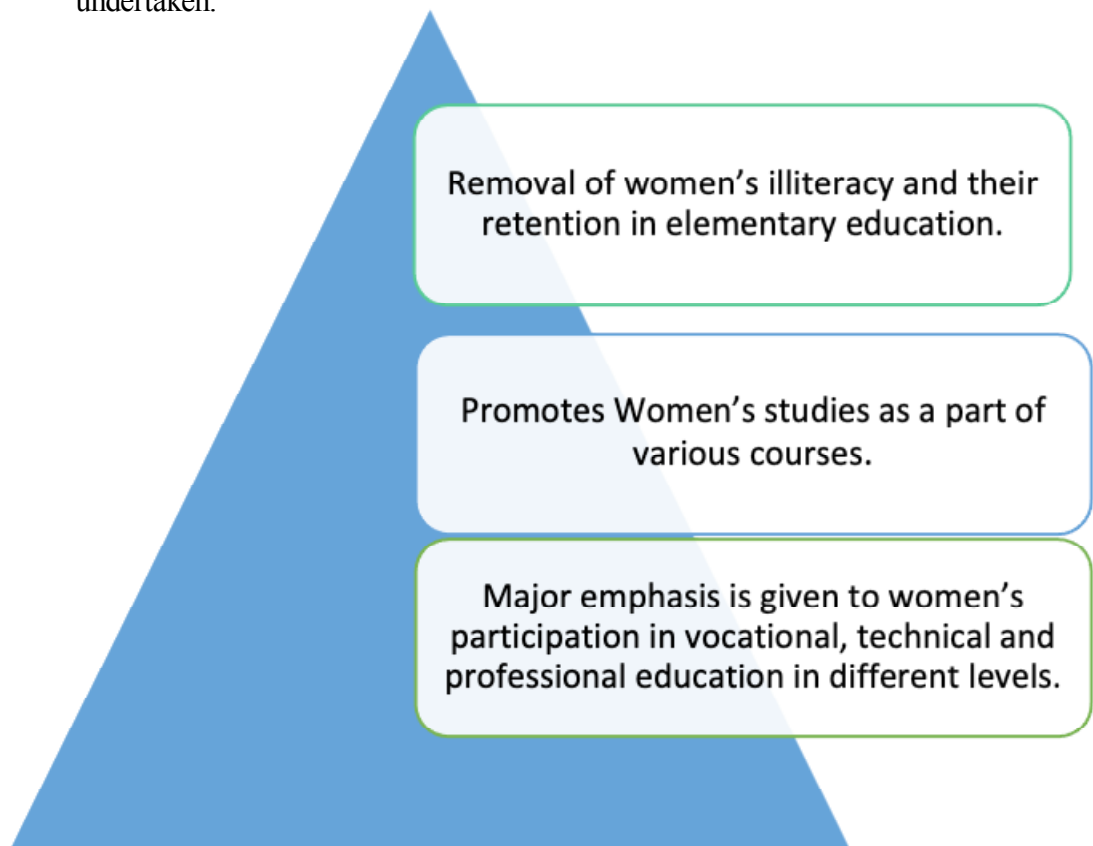


Figure: 10.2. Focus areas of NEP, 1986 and Gender Equality

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Equity and social justice in education can be attained by including Women's Equality as a vital component of its overall strategy. The National Policy on Education (1986), revised in 1992, emphasized the provision of special support services and prevents the discrimination of women at all levels of education. The Programme of Action (POA), 1992, spells out actions to be taken to promote education for women's equality. It should be incumbent on all actors, agencies and institutions in the field of education at all levels to be gender sensitive and ensure that women have their rightful share in all educational programmes and activities.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.1**

1. The National Policy of Education was revised in the year _____.
2. A gender _____ society ensures that women have their rightful share in all educational programmes and activities.
3. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 gave reservation to women in _____.
4. The universal retention of children up to _____ years of age was emphasized in the National Policy of Education, 1986.

10.3.3. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Government of India adopted the **National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001** with the objective of bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. It was directed towards achieving inclusive growth with the special focus on the social empowerment of women.

The goal of this policy is to create an environment for women to realise their full potential and have equal access of women and girls to participation and decision-making. Accordingly, special measures to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy; create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning, as well as the development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women, was facilitated. In addition, reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area.

Support Services-The provision of support services to women, like child care facilities, including crèches at workplaces and educational institutions, and homes for the aged and the disabled. will be expanded and improved to create an enabling environment and to ensure their full cooperation in social, political and economic life. Women-friendly personnel policies will also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in all developmental processes.

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Historically, various factors are responsible for poor literacy rates of females, such as gender-based inequality, social discrimination and economic exploitation, occupation of girl child in domestic chores, low enrolment of girls in schools, and low retention rate and high dropout rate etc. Therefore, the main strategies adopted by the Government for increasing female literacy in the country include imparting Functional Literacy, Universalization for Elementary Education and Non-Formal Education. In addition, the National Literacy Mission (NLM) or Sakshar Bharat Mission, with its objective of extending educational options to those adults who have no access to formal education, targeted female literacy as a critical instrument for women's empowerment. Now, National Literacy Mission (NLM), as revised Sakshar Bharat focuses on Women and Backward Communities like SCs, STs, OBCs, Minorities, etc., as its core target groups.

10.3.4. Draft of National Policy for Women, 2016

The mission of this policy was to create a practical framework to enable the development of policies, programmes and practices to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in the family, community, workplace and governance. This draft policy aims to strengthen Aanganwadi Centres and make efforts to improve access to pre-primary education for girl children. It also aims to identify the significant constraints preventing women from accessing higher education and developing innovative and accessible educational systems.

The draft policy also aimed to enhance and uphold the respect for women and empower women. The policy also aimed to reduce the maternal and prenatal mortality rate, provide transport facilities for girls so that they can reach schools, and ensure their security and other rights.

Key features of the Draft National Policy for Women, 2016

A new National Policy for Women Empowerment was unveiled in August 2016. The salient features of the policy are given below. The National Policy for Women, 2016 aimed to:

- to create a society with women working as equal partners in all spheres of life.
- to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.
- to make cyberspace a safe place for women.
- to give priority to the health and education of women
- to improve access to pre-primary education, enrichment and retention of adolescent girls.
- to carry skill development and provide equal employment opportunities.

**Notes**

- to save girls and women from all forms of violence and ensure safety for girls/women.

10.4. NCF, 2005 IN ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES

In Baroda, Class VII students have penned a poem reflecting the social roles assigned to men and women.

In my textbooks, I learned that only men are kings and soldiers,

Till I read a book in which famous queens ruled and fought against enemies.

In my textbooks, I learned that only men are doctors

I went to a doctor, I saw that she was a woman

In my textbooks, I learned that only men do farming in my country, until, on a train journey I saw women working in the fields

I have learned that I have a lot to learn by seeing.

National surveys and data like (NSSO 1995-96) cited in Government of India, 2002) showed that nine out of every ten girls enrolled in schools could not complete schooling, and 14 out of every 100 girls enrolled in Class I reach Class 12 in urban areas.

The National Focus Group covered various significant areas of the National Curriculum Framework 2005. The National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education devoted itself entirely to the issue of gender. Gender was a significant area in the current curriculum review process. Gender, it was believed, cuts across all disciplines and was essential to the construction of knowledge. It has substantial implications for human relations in general and education in particular.

The focus group initially made two recommendations:

1. **Access to education for All Girls-** Free and quality education for all and provision of accessible schools for girls in every area of the country to ensure that girls have equal access to education.
2. **Quality of Girls' Education** – The quality of education in Government schools has increasingly become a subject of concern for the marginalized sections of society, especially girls, which in turn is related to the high dropout rates of girls. Hence, the infrastructure and quality of teaching in government schools must be brought up to the mark.

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Another important recommendation includes the need to integrate the input from Women's Studies Research in Textbooks, Syllabi and Training.

The NCERT and SCERTs in each state should develop formal linkages with centres and schools of women's studies in universities. Joint programmes by NCERT and SCERTs should be set up to draw inputs from research on women's studies. Such efforts will result in developing teaching learning materials in a critical and proactive approach towards gender for textbooks at the primary, middle and secondary levels. Women's Studies academics and researchers should also be invited to shape the formation of syllabi, content of different disciplines and teacher training programmes.

The Focus Group Project bifurcated the sections on "Gender Issues in Education: Contexts and Concerns" and "Towards a Project of Possibility". The first section on "Contexts and Concerns" addresses how schooling reinforces gendered inequality in socialisation and social control. Norms relating to masculinity and femininity continue to be traditionally imbibed and practised (like boys are allowed to go to school while girls sweep and clean at home). Contexts of caste, class, religion, and the rural-urban divide impact girls and how they are socially constructed.

In the second section, "Towards a Project of Possibility", the successful implementation of gender policy, requires a dynamic shift in approach. Therefore, notions of "equality", "empowerment", "masculinity", and "gender" have to be understood from a critical perspective.

It emphasises school reforms that stress 'character development'. "Stereotyping" exists in a particular culture. For example, boys are discouraged from being emotional or gentle, weak or fearful. They are given the role of breadwinners, protectors and warriors. To get a gender-just society, empowerment in education promotes a positive self-image, stimulates critical thinking and develops an understanding of the structures of hegemonic power that prevents the creation of a gender-just society.

10.5. GENDER AND THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY 2020

The NEP 2020 has come up with the following proposal as part of its policy initiatives highlighting the importance of education for girls.

The NEP 2020 has geared its policy towards ensuring quality education so that students, especially girls, are interested in attending school. NEP 2020 aims to expand and strengthen the learning needs of young people in India. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and the National Institutes of Open Schooling prioritise those who cannot attend a physical school. Efforts are directed towards creating a safe, all-inclusive, effective learning environment so that children of all genders are comfortable and inspired to teach and learn in their schools.

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These provisions include working toilets, clean drinking water, clean spaces, computers, internet, libraries, sports and recreational facilities, etc. According to statistical data (e.g., data provided by DISE-2016-17), there is a steep decline in the enrolment of female students at the primary and higher secondary levels.

The Govt. of India plans to constitute a Gender Inclusive Fund” for capacity building to provide equitable quality education for all girls’/transgender students. These funds (NEP, 2020) “will enable states to support and scale effective community-based interventions to address problems within local contexts that tend to create specific barriers to female and transgender students access to and participation in education. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas will ensure that girls from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds participate in quality schools (up to Grade 12). Gender sensitization will be a part of all teacher education programmes at the primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education levels.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.2**

1. Explain the recommendation mentioned in NCF-2005 with regard to access to education for girls.
2. Describe the purpose of Gender Inclusion Fund as envisaged in NEP, 2020.

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- The Constitution of India makes special provisions for women to enable them to exercise their rights and participate in national development. It treats both men and women as equals.
- Many social and economic factors disrupt access to education in India. The students in the rural parts of the country need better schools and colleges. They lack infrastructure like furniture or manpower like teachers or well-trained staff. This creates inequality in the level of education offered.
- Rural children tend to drop out of school after primary education because of fewer number of secondary and higher secondary schools. Girl children are majorly deprived of education due to the social pressure of marriage or taking care of their younger siblings when their parents are out for work.
- The National Policy of Education (1968) marked a significant step towards reconstruction and expanding educational facilities at all levels in the country. The acceptance of a

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standard structure of education all over India and the introduction of the 10+2+3 system by most states has been its most notable development.

- 1 Science and mathematics were incorporated as compulsory subjects. It promoted various courses and educational institutions to further women's development. A significant emphasis was laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. Women's participation in non-traditional occupations and emergent technologies was encouraged. The National Policy on Education (1986) focused on providing educational opportunities to women.
 - The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, as modified in 1992, emphasized on three aspects of elementary education, that is universal access and enrolment, universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and a substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve basic levels of learning.
 - The Government of India adopted the **National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001** with the objective of bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. It was directed towards achieving inclusive growth with the special focus on the social empowerment of women. The National Policy for Women, 2016 aimed to create a society with women working as equal partners in all spheres of life to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.
 - The NEP 2020 is aimed at ensuring quality education. It aims to expand and strengthen the learning needs of young people in India. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and the National Institutes of Open Schooling prioritise those who cannot attend a physical school. Efforts are directed towards creating a safe, all-inclusive, effective learning environment so that children of all genders are comfortable and inspired to teach and learn in their schools. These provisions include working toilets, clean drinking water, clean spaces, computers, internet, libraries, sports and recreational facilities, etc.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Discuss the NCF 2005 in relation to addressing issues of gender.
2. Write a brief note on the NPE 1968 and its focus on the breaking the gender barriers.
3. Describe the main highlights of the National Policy for Women 2016.



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4. Highlight the socio-economic inequalities that create barriers to accessing education in India.
5. List the measures taken by the government to prevent violence against women.
6. Highlight the major recommendations made by Focus Group in NCF 2005.

GLOSSARY:

Access to Education: A learning environment that is safe enough to allow learning to take place, and opportunities to learn that are equitably distributed.

Gender: Differences between men and women as created by society.

Gender Equality: Equal treatment of men and women in all societies.

Gender Discrimination: Differential treatment of men and women.

Women Empowerment: The power to make choices, take independent decisions and freedom from violence against women.

Equitable: Impartial, fair and unbiased treatment.

Rehabilitation: Restoring a person's health or everyday life through training, therapy and treatment.

Hegemony: Cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

10.1

1. 1992
2. sensitive
3. local bodies
4. 14 years

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*Notes***10.2**

1. Free and quality education for all and provision of accessible schools for girls in every area of the country to ensure that girls have equal access to education.
2. Gender Inclusion fund “will enable states to support and scale effective community-based interventions to address problems within local contexts that tend to create specific barriers to female and transgender students access to and participation in education