



# The Role of M-Learning and Open Educational Resources in Women's Empowerment through Education in the NEP-2020 Framework

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## To Cite this Article

Dr. C.S. Joshi and Ramerica Opplinger. The Role of M-Learning and Open Educational Resources in Women's Empowerment through Education in the NEP-2020 Framework. International Journal for Modern Trends in Science and Technology 2023, 9(08), pages. 24-31. <https://doi.org/10.46501/IJMTST0908005>

## Article Info

Received: 06 July 2023; Accepted: 31 July 2023; Published: 05 August 2023.

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## ABSTRACT

*The fundamental component for achieving all of human potential is education. Women's education is a persistent global issue since no country can speak of development if half of its people are disabled. With the introduction of the New Education Policy 2020, there has been a change in India's educational policy after 34 years (NEP). This new policy intends to achieve 100% gross enrolment in schools by 2030, and also aims at achieving the goal of universalizing education in India with women participating equally. The provision includes the establishment of a Gender Inclusion Fund to promote equitable education for underprivileged girls and the establishment of Special Education Zones. The study's objective is to critically evaluate the significance of mobile learning, open educational resources (OERs), and related policy issues within the NEP framework, which will aid in empowering women in our nation. Contextual analysis is done to examine the application of OERs and the extent of the current M-Learning system. Our results give support to the claim that M-learning is one of the primary and alternate forms of instruction available to students today and in the future. The Indian government is constantly working to improve and develop its OER programs. This study makes it easier for policymakers to grasp the present trends in mobile learning and open educational resources (OERs), offers some recommendations for a better NEP implementation, and suggests few gaps in m-learning and OERs that should be filled in the future.*

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Education, National Education Policy 2020 (NEP), Open Education Resources(OER), Mobile learning (m-learning) , Special Education Zones, Gender Inclusion Fund

## INTRODUCTION:

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once famously said that "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Womenempowered means mother India empowered." Empowerment can be defined as a process that enables

people to assert control over the factors that affect their lives. Women's empowerment entails making them more independent, politically engaged, economically successful, and capable of having thoughtful conversations about issues that concern them. The concept of women's empowerment was first established

at the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985. Women's empowerment has been a highly contentious issue since the beginning of time.

Women's empowerment refers to the liberation of women from the suffocating clutches of caste, social, economic, and political inequality. Giving women the opportunity to choose their own lives is what it means. Women's empowerment does not imply "deifying women," but rather that parity will take the place of patriarchy. Women's empowerment is essential to every nation's economic development. As women's education has become one of the most important development goals, it is critical to evaluate the assumptions that underpin policies, initiatives, and projects aimed towards this goal. Despite reforms, India has yet to meet the standards; little has been accomplished in the area of women's empowerment; but, for this to occur, this sector must undergo a series of reforms. India's economy, which has the potential to grow to be one of the biggest in the world, is being hampered by the underrepresentation of women.

### **Women's Empowerment through Education**

Women's empowerment is a global problem, and discussions on women's political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal initiatives around the world. The ability to adapt to difficulties, to challenge their established roles, and to transform their lives is what makes education a key component of women's empowerment. Women's education is the most effective instrument for changing their status in society. Therefore, we must not undervalue the role that education plays in empowering women. India is on the verge of becoming a powerhouse, but this can only happen when its women are given more influence.

Moving from a vulnerable position to use a power is empowerment. Additionally, education contributes to the eradication of inequalities and enhances the role of women in the family. The government is offering a package of concessions in the form of free books, uniforms, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities, midday meals, scholarships, free circles, and other things in an effort to involve more girls in mainstream education, particularly those from BPL families who are largely ignored.

### **National Education Policy (NEP) – 2020**

On July 29, 2020, the Indian government approved the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The previous education policy was in effect since 1986, which is quite a long time, so the government must establish a new policy to meet the national educational aims and expectations. In NEP 2020, there are four main sections. The New Education Policy proposal focuses on all the major areas, including Pre-School Education, Higher Education, and other important areas of attention. It also discusses the implementation and creation of new bodies to control the structure. NEP 2020 addresses the following issues confronting the current educational system: quality, affordability, equity, access, and accountability.

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was created by a committee chaired by Scientist K. Kasturirangan, also known as the Kasturirangan Committee. The new policy emphasises the holistic, adaptable, and diverse development of students with an emphasis on the acquisition of essential 21st century skills and a reduction in curriculum content, which is in fact a long overdue requirement.

### **NEP 2020 and Women's Education**

The Kasturirangan Committee created the framework for the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. After 34 long years, there has been a change in India's educational policy that wants to make the country "a worldwide knowledge superpower" and universalize education. In order to promote gender equality in education with the support of states and local community organisations, the policy mandated a cross-cutting approach to gender. This more general objective has been broken down and represented visually as the following: ensuring that girls are enrolled in school at a rate of 100% by 2030 and 50% in higher education by 2035; reducing gender gaps at all levels; promoting gender equity and inclusion in society; and enhancing the leadership skills of girls through constructive civil dialogues.

The policy suggests a number of measures to increase women's access to education, including a gender inclusion fund, formula-based and discretionary funding of gender-inclusive projects at the school level, the creation of a special education zone, targeted scholarships, and, in line with this goal, it also aims to enhance women's leadership capacity through

constructive civil dialogues with women leading institutions, such as principals, teachers, wardens, physical educators, and others.

The strategy also emphasises encouraging women's involvement and leadership in education, as these women might serve as powerful role models for the girls, encouraging them to come to school on a regular basis. The revised Maternity Benefit Act will go into effect to give female educators access to crèches. These measures will guarantee that women play a leading role in children's education by focusing on leadership development, incentive programs, and teacher education, recruiting and retention activities. Alternative pathways would be introduced for the recruitment of female teachers without compromising on merit and qualification, both education and qualification, especially in some remote areas, to reduce the gender balance among the instructors.

The policy placed a strong emphasis on the protection and safety of female students both inside and outside of the institution. Additionally, it will be required that all educational institutions hold awareness events on gender issues in order to dispel outdated gender norms, promote gender equality, foster an environment free from harassment, and teach students about their legal rights and protections as women and girls. To raise awareness of gender-sensitive and inclusive classroom management, laws such as the Child Marriage Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act must be included. The policy will emphasise gender-neutral education.

### **Mobile Learning (M-learning)**

Digital learning has grown in importance as a means of ensuring education is accessible on a worldwide scale. E-learning and other forms of digital technology are essential to the global transmission of knowledge. E-learning is an old concept by this point. These days, learning is being done on a growing number of mobile devices, including smartphones, laptops, tablets, and other devices with improved portability. M-learning is a tool utilised for modern learning; this may be because of its easy handling, the ease with which modern apps can be run on these devices, and their affordability. One of the main factors contributing to the success of mobile learning is its portability.

M-learning also gives students, especially those who live in rural and isolated areas, improved access to educational resources and services. With the aid of mobile learning, students can create, access, and validate content from their electronic devices whenever it suits them. It offers opportunities for learning that are independent and unrestricted.

### **Open Educational Resources**

UNESCO gave the term Open Educational Resources (OER) in 2002 and it describe it as "Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others.

" Open license refers to a license that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, re-use, re-purpose, adapt and redistribute educational materials.

The permission for OER supplied here is in five ways, and is generally referred to as the 5Rs concept given by David Wiley for free licensing, as indicated below:

- Retain - This is the ability to make and keep copies of OER content that you can also control. This implies that the OER content can be downloaded, copied, stored, and managed.
- Reuse - This right allows for unlimited use of the content for teaching, learning, self-study, in a class setting, in a study group, etc.
- Revise - This right allows for the adaptation, adjustment, modification, or alteration of the content. A good example of using this right is translating from one language into another.
- Remix - Adding new content to previously published material is referred to as remixing the content. OER content can be created from digital resources that supports remixing.
- Redistribute - This refers to redistributing OER content that already exists. Content must be redistributable in order to be considered OER.

## Literature Review

**Nurutdinova (2022)** investigated the efficacy of m-learning and compared it to face-to-face and distance learning technology. According to their findings, m-learning offers many benefits for developing a digital economy and a digital education for diverse nations.

The findings of a qualitative analysis undertaken for teachers to evaluate OER on content, design, usability, engagement, and readability have been published by **Bass (2022)**. They advised teachers to include open educational resources (OER) practises into curriculum changes and offer training for their growth.

**Mncube and Mthethwa (2022)** investigated a number of ethical difficulties that the OER system has. The goal of the study was to pinpoint the moral standards and peer-review process related to implementing and expanding the OER system. They identified three main causes of this OER ethical issue: noncompliance with openness requirements, transactional OER purchases, and an analysis of the lack of developer incentives.

**Inaholi (2022)** conducted research on the significance, consequences, and difficulties of the NEP for women's education in Nagaland. If the New Education Policy is implemented strategically and successfully, he claimed, it will significantly raise the state's female literacy rate. As the implementation of new policy will provide several obstacles, it is expected that today's generation will be able to see a revolution in education that will prepare them to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In order to better understand the preferences of students in higher education, **Cóndor-Herrera (2021)** conducted an intriguing study on mobile learning. 16 students, aged 9 to 12, who participated in the trial comprised 37% females and 63% males. Students were positively motivated to complete learning tasks using mobile technology as a result of them.

In order to promote sustainable economic growth, **Kim (2020)** has looked at rethinking and redefining the role of mobile learning. In the study, an m-learning project named e-ICPON globe contest was the subject of a qualitative case study. Numerous young people took part in this research, and it ultimately suggested three areas for m-learning integration to ensure sustainability. The most common method of M-learning is to expand access to education; the second is that it can raise

educational standards; and the third is that it is the greatest way to foster cooperative relationships.

## Objectives

The study's specific objectives are as follows:

- To study the significance of education in empowering women, particularly in light of NEP 2020.
- To study the role of M-learning and Open Educational Resources in women's education.
- To propose few suggestions towards women empowerment through education as contained in NEP.

## Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on a detailed investigation of secondary data, including books, websites, databases, and research papers.

## Result and Discussion

Education helps to strengthen the spirit of women in their ongoing fight against exploitation and societal evils. Without education, the concept of "women empowerment," which has quickly and widely entered the mainstream discourse, is essentially worthless. Even after 75 years of independence, the country of India is appalled to see the terrible state of women's education. According to the 2011 census, India's national female literacy rate is 65.46%, compared to an estimated 82.14% male literacy rate. India has a 74.04% average literacy rate. The difference in literacy rates between men and women is about 17%. In rural places, there is a greater gender disparity. The literacy rate for rural women is only 57%, whereas the rate for rural men is higher at 77%. However, after a number of new policy interventions by the government, the gender gap in India has shrunk in comparison to prior years, according to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2018–19. Nearly 48.6% of all students enrolled in higher education were female, making up nearly half of the total enrollment.

The aim for India's new educational system is laid forth in the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP 2020), which the Indian Union Cabinet approved on July 29, 2020. The K Kasturirangan Committee created the National Education Policy 2020 to address a number of issues that are worsening the educational environment in India and to combat the threat of female illiteracy. The

strategy aims to provide all students with an equitable and inclusive education, with a special emphasis on girls and young people from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The recently highlighted policy is anticipated to usher in a new era for women's education. In both rural and urban India, the policy provides a complete framework for education from early childhood through higher education. It also covers vocational training. Although the policy does not make many statements on gender-related issues, several of its recommendations could potentially make a significant difference in the current grim situation.

In order to strengthen the nation's ability to deliver equitable, high-quality education for all girls and transgender students, NEP 2020 calls for the establishment of a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF). According to the NEP, governments will have access to the "Gender Inclusion Fund" to enact policies that are essential for ensuring that female and transgender children have access to education (such as the provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc.). According to the policy, "States will be able to support and scale up community-based initiatives that address local context-specific impediments to female and transgender children's access to and participation in education through the use of this fund," the policy continues. The funds will be used to ensure facilities, safe and hygienic restrooms, and quality instruction for all students. NEP has recommended hostel amenities for female students in addition to restrooms. The fund will concentrate on ensuring that all girls are enrolled in school, a record number of girls attend higher education, gender gaps are closed at all levels, gender equity and inclusion are implemented, and girls' leadership skills are enhanced through constructive civil debates. All of this will assist in boosting the enrolment rate for girls, which will serve to improve the status of women in our country by empowering them through education.

According to the NEP 2020, women and transgender people are the most adversely affected across all socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs). Plans call for putting into action programs that distribute bicycles to form cycling groups and establish walking groups at schools to encourage community involvement and provide safety nets for these vulnerable youngsters. The strategy aims to identify particular social factors,

such as gender stereotypes, traditions, and beliefs, which have contributed to the treatment of girls that is less favourable, including their educational opportunities.

It is anticipated that the NEP 2020 would bring about measures aimed at closing the gender gap in male and female literacy rates. The community, parents, and teachers need to be properly informed in order to accomplish this goal. No change will occur unless society is made aware of the negative effects of denying girls access to education. Despite the constitutional protections, the girls are still at risk from terrible forces. Legal literacy should be required in the curriculum, and female students must be educated aware of their legal rights. Gender prejudice and discrimination in the educational system and society can only be eliminated by a gender-responsive educational curriculum.

The policy emphasises the need of instructors and facilitators, such as Anganwadi workers, receiving appropriate training in order to provide guidance to the families of girl students. Since girls' education is frequently seen as less important than boys' in our society, and since there are many lame reasons why parents choose not to send their daughters to school, it is felt that providing families with the proper counselling is essential for facilitating equal opportunities and space for girls in education. All of this will make sure that girls are given priority, and their education should be mandatory rather than a choice. All of these initiatives under NEP 2020 will increase the educational empowerment of women.

Education is no exception to how dramatically globalisation is affecting many facets of our society today. Every second, new pieces of knowledge are added, and those that already exist are corrected or updated. To stay up to date with the norms of the global society, one must regularly refresh their knowledge in accordance with the changes and improvements occurring in their specific sectors. This is only feasible if there is a sizable collection of resources from which anyone can freely access, utilise, and redistribute the desired information. In this aspect, the digitization of educational resources is unquestionably extremely helpful. Learners can access the resources at any time and from any location.

It is a well-known fact that a qualified workforce and women's educational attainment are closely related to the country's overall growth. According to Statista, 6.65

million undergraduate degrees were granted in India in 2019. During the academic year 2018-2019, almost 3.5 million female students received their undergraduate degrees (Statista 2019). This demonstrates how India's qualified workforce is expanding at a consistent rate. The Government of India's (GoI) Census-2021 Report, however, is not available owing to COVID-19 disruption. Numerous economists in India have expressed optimism about the rise of degree holders, which will benefit the nation's efforts to promote women's empowerment and the advancement of society as a whole through a qualified workforce. Technology support was necessary for improving the educational system. India just introduced a 5G service, which is also a significant stride in the country's telecom journey and reduces connectivity concerns while accelerating digital connectivity. Only 6 crore Indian citizens used the internet in 2014, but 80 crore now do, according to the Prime Minister of India (PM launches 5G Services, 2022). This proof enhances the expansion of m-learning while demonstrating the evolution of digital learning. M-learning will be a more effective complementary solution to India's workforce shortage. The m-learning system will have a significant positive impact on the nation's manpower shortage by boosting the number of knowledgeable personnel.

M-learning is one of the most useful learning methods available today. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions work to promote online learning for students, where instruction continues between students and teachers but takes place in multiple settings. Online learning is a solution and can be done through m-learning when educational facilities are closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, according to UNESCO (2020), students will continue to advance their rights through continuing education, even if it is done remotely. M-learning is therefore helpful in sustaining the teaching and learning processes, and it is especially important for girls to have quick access to all the information they need through their mobile phones at any time and any location, providing them and everyone else with a new resource that provides abundant information at the palm of their hands.

Open Educational Resources (OER) significantly increase the variety of learning resources available to the world's learners. The use of open educational resources

(OER), a new movement that aims to give free access to a variety of online learning tools, has exploded in popularity in recent years. India has seen a slow but steady increase in open educational resources, with several national institutions setting up OER portals to make their educational materials available to everyone.

The National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), which was introduced in 2003, marked the beginning of open educational resources in India. The then-MHRD, Government of India provided funding for this joint venture between the IITs and IISc. NPTEL initially provided education and educational resources to all national engineering hopefuls, but starting in March 2014, it began offering open online courses open to everyone outside of the IIT community. In addition to NPTEL following are some of the standard OER initiatives in India:

- The IGNOU E-GYANKOSH is a repository of different text study materials from all the courses it offers, all of which are open to the public. Additionally, the YouTube video offers a variety of Open Educational Videos produced at the IGNOU studio for the educational channels of Gyan Darshan.
- The Government of India launched the SWAYAM initiative, which aims to meet the three guiding principles of education policy—access, equity, and quality. This initiative aims to make the best teaching-learning tools available to everyone, even the most disadvantaged.
- SAKSHAT is envisioned as a one-stop education site to encourage lifelong learning for students, teachers, and people in work or seeking information at no cost.
- The SWAYAM PRABHA is a collection of 32 DTH channels that use the GSAT-15 satellite to continuously broadcast high-quality educational programming.
- E-PG PATHSALA is the entry point to all postgraduate programmes. It was developed by the MHRD as part of its National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT), which is being carried out by the UGC. High quality, curriculum-based, interactive e-content in 70 subjects spanning all disciplines of social sciences, arts, visual arts, and humanities, as well as scientific and mathematical

sciences, makes up the core of the educational system.

- The National Digital Library of India (NDL India) pilot project was started by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) as part of its National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) to create a framework of a virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. Focused searching is made easier by the use of filtered and federated searching, allowing students to access the appropriate resource quickly and easily.

The Government of India recognised the potential of OER and thus launched several major programmes. Though the projects are still in the early stages, the moment will come when it will bring about change and the entire population, including the girl child, will be educated and benefited.

### Suggestions

NEP 2020 has correctly addressed several fundamental concerns in the Indian educational system involving gender, as the goal of any educational system is to benefit children so that no child loses any opportunity to study and succeed due to circumstances of birth or background. The strategy places a strong emphasis on utilising the benefits of technology in education, which can serve as the finest platform for boosting women's access to the internet and increased mobility of ideas and opportunities. Through applications, websites, software, and other platforms geared toward women, services for girls can be developed. Through this digital mechanism, such as m-learning and open educational resources, access to library databases, publications, study materials, information on government initiatives targeted at girl children, sexual harassment laws with toll-free numbers, possibilities for special scholarships, and other information relevant to women safety can be uploaded for simple access by women. It is also essential to initially promote OER and inform people about it. If this is done, users will instantly start developing and utilising OER at its finest, and learners will develop cross-cultural talents and skills in order to meet the rising expectations of our

global society. The digitization of the learning materials in this way has enormous benefits for everyone.

The policy established a special education zone that incorporates gender, the identification of girls, particularly in rural regions, who fall within this purview, and their access to this facility in order to keep them in school. They shouldn't be denied an education because their parents' income is low. The planned "Targeted Scholarships" must be made clear and help children who require such assistance support themselves so they can continue their education.

The curriculum needs to include material on the subject of sex education. Sex education can result in a radical improvement in the socioeconomic standing of young girls, many of whom are forced to drop out of school as a result of child marriage, abuse, and unexpected pregnancies at a young age. Both genders need to be educated on this subject, which is equally vital. Since personal safety has become a major factor in female dropouts, it is important to strengthen the infrastructure that guarantees the availability of secure, clean, and fully working restrooms. This will help to lessen the discrepancy between male and female dropout rates in schools.

Through civil conversations, the policy seeks to increase women's ability for leadership. It is time to recognise women's potential and offer them a well-deserved position. They must be given more power over educational decisions so that women's issues relating to the safety of school-age girls and their rights to an education under the NEP can be brought to light for open discussion.

### Conclusion

Education is the only means of empowering a woman since it gives her the ability to take action against exploitation, learn about her legal rights, and combat numerous wrongdoings so that she can be safe and help other women to be as well. Overall, traditional education is expensive, time-consuming, and has variable outcomes; NEP is a remedy. Due to its emphasis on ensuring that education is inclusive, accessible, and equal, NEP would completely restructure the nation's educational system. The New Education Policy's goal is to transform the educational system into one that places a strong emphasis on obtaining vital 21st-century skills.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, open educational resources (OERs) and mobile learning are both strongly advised as key revolutionary trends in the field of education. By giving users access to a wealth of educational resources from around the globe, it opens up a lot of potential for digital learning. M-Learning can provide a substitute that is significantly quicker, less expensive, and possibly better. M-Learning helps women feel more independent and more confident about themselves. The ability to exchange content in a variety of formats, including videos, slideshows, word documents, and PDFs, is provided by m-learning.

It is crucial to first educate people about OER and raise awareness of it. Users will immediately begin creating and utilising OER at its best if this is done. Today's learners must acquire international abilities if they are to fulfil the rising expectations of our global society. Everyone benefits greatly from the learning materials' digitization in this way. The OER movement is one such important step that has been made. Assume that the potential of free educational resources is fully realised. In such situation, we will undoubtedly be able to meet the educational standards of the rest of the world, significantly altering our nation's higher education system.

Due to its benefits, such as anytime, anywhere learning at the users' pace, acceptance of m-learning and OERs is expanding. Under the NEP 2020 framework, OERs and m-learning can supplement the existing education system by providing online education and training and developing a technically prepared and skilled workforce.

#### **Conflict of interest statement**

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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