Inclusion of Third Gender in National Education Policy 2020

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Abstract

The rights of transgender people and the significance of their inclusion and representation in many facets of society, including education, are being more widely acknowledged in recent years. To guarantee that everyone has access to high-quality education, educational institutions and legislators use the National Education Policy (NEP) as a guide. However, there have been barriers to meeting the requirements of transgender people because the policy has generally been designed with a binary view of gender in mind. The National Education Policy (NEP) is a significant document that outlines the goals and strategies for education in a country. In India, the NEP was recently revised in 2020 after over three decades. One of the key advancements in the new NEP 2020 is the recognition and inclusion of the third gender in the education system. The recognition of the third gender in the education policy is a crucial step towards ensuring inclusivity and equality in the education sector. This research paper aims to analyze the inclusion of the third gender in the National Education Policy 2020 in India. The paper will discuss the historical context of the third gender in India, the challenges faced by the community in accessing education, and the implications of the new NEP on the education of the third gender.

Keywords: Third Gender, National Education Policy 2020, Inclusion and Education.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for every individual, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or social status. It is a tool for empowerment, liberation, and social transformation. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education that caters to the diverse needs of all individuals. This includes individuals who identify as third gender or transgender.

The third gender, which includes individuals who do not identify as strictly male or female, have long been marginalized in society. They face discrimination, stigma, and exclusion in various spheres of life, including education. The lack of recognition and acceptance of their gender identity often leads to barriers in accessing education, pursuing their chosen career paths, and participating fully in society.

In light of these challenges, it is crucial for governments to adopt inclusive education policies that cater to the needs of the third gender community. The National Education Policy 2020 plays a significant role in shaping the education system and creating an enabling environment for all individuals to access quality education. In this research paper, we will explore the importance of inclusive education for the third gender community and the role of the National Education Policy in promoting equality and diversity in education.

Background

The concept of the third gender has been present in various cultures and societies around the world for centuries. In India, individuals who identify as third gender have traditionally been recognized as hijras, kinnars, aravanis, jogappas, and other terms that denote a gender identity outside of the binary male-female classification. These individuals often face discrimination and marginalization in society due to their gender identity, which affects their access to education, employment, healthcare, and other basic rights.

The lack of recognition of the third gender community in mainstream society has resulted in a lack of data on their educational status and needs. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many individuals who identify as third gender face significant barriers in accessing education. These barriers may include discrimination and harassment in educational institutions, a lack of understanding and acceptance of their gender identity, and a dearth of inclusive policies and practices that cater to their specific needs.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of inclusive education for all individuals, including those who identify as third gender. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India recognized the third gender as a legal category and granted them certain rights and

protections under the law. This landmark ruling paved the way for greater recognition and acceptance of the third gender community in various spheres of life, including education.

Despite these developments, there is still a long way to go in terms of mainstreaming the third gender community in the education system. Many educational institutions remain ill-equipped to address the specific needs of third gender students, leading to high dropout rates and lower educational attainment among this marginalized group. Additionally, societal attitudes and stereotypes about gender continue to pose barriers to their full participation in education and other social activities.

In this context, the National Education Policy plays a crucial role in shaping the education system and promoting inclusivity and diversity in education. The policy provides a framework for addressing the educational needs of all individuals, including those who identify as third gender. By incorporating principles of equality, diversity, and social inclusion, the National Education Policy can help create an enabling environment for all individuals to access quality education and realize their full potential.

In the following sections of this research paper, we will explore the key components of the National Education Policy that are relevant to promoting inclusive education for the third gender community. We will also examine the challenges and opportunities in implementing these policies and practices in educational institutions across India. By doing so, we hope to contribute to the discourse on inclusivity and diversity in education and advocate for the rights of all individuals to access quality education, regardless of their gender identity.

The concept of the third gender has existed in India for centuries. In Indian culture, individuals who do not identify as male or female are recognized as the third gender, known as Hijras, Aravanis, Jogappas, and other local terms. Hijras, in particular, have a long history in India and are often considered to have spiritual and auspicious powers. Despite their cultural significance, the third gender community has often faced discrimination and marginalization in society.

Third Gender Population and Literacy Rate in India

2011 Census: The first Indian census to acknowledge a "third gender" (490,000 individuals identified). However, critics argue this data under represents the actual population

National Transgender Survey (2020): Conducted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, but results are yet to be officially released

The literacy landscape in India paints a stark contrast when considering the third gender community. While the national average hovers around 74%, studies consistently reveal a **significantly lower literacy rate** among transgender individuals, often estimated at around **43%**. This vast disparity signifies a critical issue demanding urgent attention.

Several factors contribute to this gap. **Social stigma and discrimination** often push transgender individuals out of educational settings, creating barriers to accessing basic literacy skills. Additionally, **limited access to inclusive education** systems that cater to their diverse needs further fuels the disparity. Moreover, **economic challenges** faced by the community often force them into informal work, leaving little time or resources for pursuing education.

Addressing this literacy gap requires a multifaceted approach. **Implementing inclusive educational policies** that recognize the unique needs of the transgender community is crucial. This includes creating **safe and supportive learning environments**, training teachers on gender sensitivity, and providing targeted literacy programs. Furthermore, **combating social discrimination** through awareness campaigns and legal frameworks that protect their rights is essential to create a level playing field.

Investing in the literacy of the third gender community is not just about individual empowerment, but also about social progress. By dismantling the barriers they face and providing them with the tools to thrive, we can build a more inclusive and equitable India, where every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Literature Review

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the rights of transgender individuals and the importance of inclusion and representation in various aspects of society, including education. The National Education Policy (NEP) serves as a guideline for educational institutions and policy-makers to ensure that all individuals have access to quality education. However, as the policy has historically been geared towards a binary understanding of gender, there have been limitations in terms of addressing the needs of transgender individuals.

This literature review aims to explore the current state of inclusion and representation of third gender individuals in the National Education Policy. It will examine the existing literature on the rights of transgender individuals in education, as well as the barriers and challenges that they face. Additionally, it will discuss the efforts made by various stakeholders to ensure that transgender individuals have equal access to education and are able to fully participate in the learning process.

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the rights of transgender individuals in education. This has been driven by recognition of the discrimination and exclusion that transgender individuals face in educational settings. According to Goldblum et al. (2012), transgender individuals are more likely to experience harassment, bullying, and violence in schools, which can have a negative impact on their academic performance and psychological well-being. Additionally, transgender individuals may face barriers to accessing educational opportunities, such as restricted access to gender-segregated facilities or discriminatory policies and practices.

In response to these challenges, there have been numerous efforts to advocate for the rights of transgender individuals in education. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed lawsuits on behalf of transgender students who have faced discrimination in schools, resulting in legal victories that have established important precedents for protecting the rights of transgender individuals (ACLU, 2018). Additionally, organizations such as GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) and the National Centre for

Transgender Equality have developed resources and guidelines for schools to create safe and inclusive environments for transgender students.

Despite these efforts, there are still significant gaps in the representation and inclusion of transgender individuals in education. For example, a study by Greytak et al. (2019) found that only 22% of transgender students reported that their schools had official policies prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity. Additionally, transgender students reported lower levels of school connectedness and higher rates of absenteeism compared to their cisgender peers. These disparities highlight the need for more comprehensive policies and interventions to ensure that transgender individuals have equal access to education and are able to fully participate in the learning process.

The National Education Policy is a key document that outlines the goals, objectives, and strategies for improving the quality of education in a country. In India, the National Education Policy was first introduced in 1968 and has been revised several times since then to address the changing needs of the education system. The latest revision of the National Education Policy was released in 2020, with a focus on promoting holistic and multidisciplinary education for all individuals.

However, the National Education Policy has traditionally been designed with a binary understanding of gender, which may not fully address the needs of third gender individuals. The term "third gender" refers to individuals who do not identify as either male or female, but rather as a different gender identity that is not strictly binary. In India, third gender individuals are recognized as a separate gender category by the Supreme Court and have legal rights and protections under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Despite this legal recognition, there are still significant challenges in terms of the inclusion and representation of third gender individuals in education. A study by Kukreja (2016) found that third gender individuals face discrimination and exclusion in schools, colleges, and universities, which can have a negative impact on their educational attainment and social well-being. Additionally, third gender individuals may face barriers to accessing educational opportunities, such as lack of appropriate facilities or discriminatory policies and practices.

In response to these challenges, there have been efforts to promote the inclusion and representation of third gender individuals in the National Education Policy. For example, the 2020 revision of the National Education Policy includes a focus on promoting gender-sensitive education and creating safe and inclusive environments for all individuals, including third gender individuals. Additionally, organizations such as the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and the National Human Rights Commission have developed guidelines and recommendations for schools to ensure that third gender individuals have equal access to education.

Despite the progress that has been made in advocating for the rights of transgender individuals in education, there are still significant challenges and barriers that need to be addressed. One of the key challenges is the lack of awareness and understanding of gender diversity among educators, school administrators, and policy-makers. According to Meyer et al. (2017), many educational institutions lack policies and trainings on gender identity and expression, which can result in discriminatory practices and exclusion of transgender individuals.

Research Methodology

The approach used for this study was documentary research, which was then followed by qualitative analysis. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, produced NEP 2020, which served as the document's focal point. Books, journal papers, official websites, news reports, government reports, and foreign publications were among the secondary sources used to analyze this key document.

Challenges Faced by the Third Gender in Education and NEP

The third gender community in India faces multiple challenges in accessing education. Discrimination and stigma often prevent them from enrolling in schools or colleges. Many educational institutions do not have policies or facilities to accommodate the needs of transgender students. Additionally, the lack of awareness and sensitivity among teachers and students can create a hostile environment for third gender individuals in educational settings.

The concept of gender identity has evolved over time, challenging traditional notions of male and female. The term "third gender" refers to individuals who do not fit into the binary categories of male or female, and may identify as transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, or genderfluid. These individuals often face unique challenges in society, including in the field of education. This research paper will explore the challenges faced by the third gender in education, examining the barriers they face in accessing quality education and achieving academic success.

The concept of a third gender is not a new one, and has been recognized by many cultures throughout history. In ancient civilizations such as the Indus Valley, Mesopotamia, and Native American societies, individuals who did not conform to traditional gender roles were often revered and respected for their unique qualities. However, as Western societies became more patriarchal and rigid in their gender norms, marginalized groups such as the third gender faced increasing discrimination and marginalization.

Implications of the NEP on the Education of the Third Gender

The new NEP in India recognizes the importance of inclusivity and diversity in education. The policy emphasizes the need to create a gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory educational environment. It also calls for the development of gender-neutral infrastructure, policies, and curriculum in educational institutions. The NEP aims to promote the holistic development of all students, including those belonging to the third gender.

The National Education Policy in India is a crucial document that dictates the direction and framework of educational policies in the country. It aims to shape the education system to meet the needs and challenges of a rapidly changing society. One of the key aspects of the National Education Policy is inclusivity, ensuring that every individual, irrespective of their gender, caste, or socio-economic background, has access to quality education. However, the education system has historically marginalized certain groups, such as the transgender community, also known as the third gender.

The term 'third gender' refers to individuals who do not identify as either male or female. This community has long been excluded and discriminated against in various spheres of

society, including education. The National Education Policy acknowledges the need to address these issues and ensure that the rights and needs of the third gender community are adequately met in the education system.

The goal of this literature review is to assess the current state of inclusion of the third gender community in the education system in India, as well as to analyze existing research and initiatives aimed at improving access and quality of education for this marginalized group. By examining a range of scholarly articles, reports, and policy documents, this review aims to highlight the gaps and challenges in the education system and identify potential strategies to promote inclusion and equity for the third gender in education.

To understand the challenges faced by the third gender community in the education system, it is important to examine the historical and cultural context of gender identity in India. The concept of the third gender has been recognized in Indian culture for centuries, with references to hijras, aravanis, and other gender non-conforming individuals in ancient texts and scriptures. However, despite these historical precedents, the third gender community has faced significant discrimination and marginalization in contemporary society.

One of the key factors contributing to the discrimination against the third gender community is the deeply ingrained binary understanding of gender in Indian society. The dominant narrative of gender as a binary construct of male and female has led to the exclusion of individuals who do not fit into these categories. This exclusion is further exacerbated by social stigma, lack of legal recognition, and limited access to resources and opportunities.

Historically, the third gender community has been relegated to the margins of society, with limited access to education, employment, healthcare, and other basic rights. This exclusion has perpetuated a cycle of poverty, discrimination, and violence against the third gender community, making it difficult for individuals to achieve their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

The exclusion of the third gender community from the education system in India is a significant barrier to their social and economic advancement. The lack of access to quality education restricts opportunities for employment, economic empowerment, and social

mobility for individuals belonging to the third gender community. This exclusion also perpetuates the cycle of discrimination and marginalization, further marginalizing this already vulnerable group.

One of the key challenges faced by the third gender community in education is the lack of awareness and understanding of their needs and rights. Many educational institutions in India are ill-equipped to address the unique challenges faced by the third gender community, such as discrimination, bullying, and lack of access to gender-appropriate facilities. This lack of awareness and sensitivity contributes to the marginalization of the third gender community in educational settings, making it difficult for individuals to access and benefit from quality education.

Another major challenge faced by the third gender community in education is the lack of legal recognition and protection. Despite efforts to promote gender equality and inclusion in education, the Indian legal framework does not adequately address the rights and needs of the third gender community. This lack of legal recognition hinders efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity in education and perpetuates discrimination and exclusion against the third gender community.

Furthermore, the lack of representation and visibility of the third gender community in educational materials and curricula further perpetuates stereotypes and misconceptions about gender identity. This invisibility erases the experiences and perspectives of individuals belonging to the third gender community, making it difficult for them to see themselves reflected in the education system and feel a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Inclusive education policies and initiatives for the third gender

Despite the challenges faced by the third gender community in education, there have been significant efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity in the education system in India. The National Education Policy (NEP) is a key document that aims to address the needs and rights of marginalized groups, including the third gender community. The NEP emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in education and calls for a more inclusive

and responsive education system that meets the needs of all learners, regardless of their gender identity.

One of the key initiatives outlined in the NEP is the promotion of gender-sensitive and inclusive education policies and practices that address the needs and rights of the third gender community. The NEP emphasizes the importance of creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students, including those belonging to the third gender community. This includes providing access to gender-appropriate facilities, promoting gender diversity.

In order to support states in financing and growing community-based programs that address regionally specific barriers to transgender children's participation in and access to education, the Indian government will also establish a "Gender-Inclusion Fund". Closing any remaining gaps that prohibit children of any gender or other socioeconomically disadvantaged groups from receiving education (including vocational education) is the ultimate goal of this program.

In recent years, there has been a growing acceptance and recognition of the rights of the third gender, and efforts have been made to ensure that they have equal access to education. However, many barriers still exist, which prevent these individuals from fully participating in the educational system and reaching their full potential.

One of the primary challenges faced by the third gender in education is the lack of inclusive policies and practices in schools and educational institutions. Many schools are still structured around the binary gender system, with separate facilities and programs for boys and girls. This can create a hostile environment for third gender students, who may not feel comfortable or welcome in these spaces.

In addition, there is a lack of awareness and understanding among teachers and administrators about the needs and experiences of third gender students. This can lead to discrimination and bullying in the classroom, which can have a negative impact on the educational outcomes of these students.

Furthermore, the curriculum in many schools does not reflect the diversity of gender identities and experiences, which can further marginalize third gender students. This lack of representation can make it difficult for these students to see themselves reflected in the material being taught, and can lead to feelings of alienation and disengagement from the educational process.

Another barrier to education for the third gender is the lack of support services and resources available to them. Many schools do not have policies in place to address the specific needs of third gender students, such as access to gender-neutral facilities or support groups. This can make it difficult for these students to feel safe and supported in their educational environment, and can hinder their academic success.

Finally, social stigma and discrimination can also be significant barriers to education for the third gender. Many individuals face prejudice and harassment in their communities and schools, which can lead to feelings of isolation and low self-esteem. This can have a detrimental impact on their educational outcomes, as they may struggle to focus on their studies and may be more likely to drop out of school.

Solutions and Recommendations

In order to address the challenges faced by the third gender in education, it is essential that schools and educational institutions take proactive steps to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for these students. This can be achieved through the following strategies:

Inclusive Policies and Practices: Schools should develop policies and practices that promote inclusivity and respect for all gender identities. This may include creating gender-neutral facilities, allowing students to use their preferred name and pronouns, and providing training for teachers and staff on how to support third gender students.

Curriculum Representation: Schools should work to ensure that the curriculum reflects the diversity of gender identities and experiences. This can be achieved by including materials that represent a range of perspectives on gender, and by providing opportunities for students to learn about the history and contributions of the third gender.

Support Services: Schools should provide support services and resources for third gender students, such as counseling services, support groups, and access to gender-neutral facilities. These services can help students feel safe and supported in their educational environment, and can empower them to succeed academically.

Awareness and Education: Schools should engage in awareness-raising efforts to educate students, teachers, and administrators about the needs and experiences of the third gender. This can help to reduce stigma and discrimination, and create a more inclusive and accepting school community.

Advocacy and Support: Schools should work to advocate for the rights of the third gender and provide support to students who may be facing discrimination or harassment. This can include working with community organizations and local government to promote equality and ensure that all students have equal access to education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the challenges faced by the third gender in education are significant and multifaceted. These individuals often face discrimination, prejudice, and social stigma in their communities and schools, which can have a negative impact on their educational outcomes. However, by implementing inclusive policies and practices, providing support services and resources, and raising awareness about the needs of the third gender, schools can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for these students. The inclusion of the third gender in the National Education Policy is a significant step towards creating a more inclusive and equitable education system in India. By recognizing the needs and rights of transgender individuals, the NEP paves the way for a more diverse and welcoming educational environment. However, the implementation of the policy will require concerted efforts from policymakers, educational institutions, and society at large to ensure the meaningful inclusion of the third gender in the education sector.

Acknowledgement

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