

## Exploring Institutional Readiness: A Comprehensive Review of Practices and Challenges in Transgender Inclusion within Teacher Education Programs

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### Abstract-

This conceptual paper's primary focus is on the dearth of transgender inclusivity in teacher education programs. It is necessary to integrate transgender individuals into educational settings in order to promote inclusive and supportive learning environments. Thus, it is critical to assess how well teacher preparation programs provide aspiring educators with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to support transgender pupils. Through a detailed analysis of a variety of existing literature, this review looks at potential strategies to promote transgender inclusion in teacher education programs, identifies common impediments and problems, and assesses the current state of institutional preparation. By synthesizing information from numerous academic sources, this review enhances inclusive practices in educational settings and increases our understanding of the difficulties associated with transgender inclusion in teacher education.

**Keywords:** transgender inclusion, readiness, teacher education institutions.

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### Introduction

India has evolved and advanced significantly. Key indicators of human progress, such as health, education, and literacy, have all increased. There are indications, nevertheless, that not every underprivileged group has profited equally from the economic process. Among these is the transgender population, which is among the most marginalized and vulnerable in the country and is falling well short of the national average in every sphere of human development, including schooling (Rajesh & Naved 2013). Despite affirmative action (reservation rules, right to education, etc.), there are still concerning disparities within the transgender population in India. Most people are unable to participate in social, cultural, political, or economic activities because they do not possess sufficient education.

Along with teachers' lack of interest in the transgender community, some important elements that may be linked to transgender people's low engagement in educational activities are poverty, exclusion from society, continuous prejudice, and violence. Individuals who identify as transgender face everyday challenges in gaining acceptance due to widespread ridicule and social rejection. In almost every aspect of their lives—including their health, education, jobs, social services, and entitlements—they encounter extreme stigma. One's feeling of self-worth and societal commitment are undermined by extreme social marginalization. The term "transgender" refers to a broad category of people, not just those with mixed genitalia, who do not act or express themselves in ways that are frequently associated with their biological sex (Transgender protection act, 2019). This includes a range of identities i.e,

LGBTQIA+. Many transgender identities, like the Hijras, Aravanis, Kothis, Jogtas/Jogappas, and Shiv Sakthis, are found in India. They were accorded great reverence in historical events.

In India, there are around 4.9 lakh transgender persons, according to the 2011 Census. Only 46% of transgender people and 74% of the general population, according to the report, are literate, illustrating the low literacy rates in this demographic. The Right to Education Act classifies the community as a "disadvantage group" (Indian Express 2014). These children will fall under the EWS and Disadvantaged Student categories, making them qualified for a 25% admissions reservation (Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009). Therefore, those who identify as transgender and exhibit conduct that deviates from conventional gender norms fall into this category. People who identify as transgender in India face a number of challenges, such as being rejected by their families and society. They are also unable to fully engage in social and cultural life because they have recently been refused access to public spaces, healthcare, and education. They weren't acquainted with politics or the decision-making process. In addition to being denied basic rights, transgender persons have reportedly faced harassment, assault, discrimination, and denial of services.

After looking through relevant material, the researcher concluded that marginalization and discrimination against transgender people frequently occur in a variety of contexts, including the educational system. In teacher education institutes, transgender students, teachers, and staff are still underrepresented despite growing public knowledge of and acceptance of transgender people. Transgender people must be included in teacher education programs in order to give all students equal opportunity and to encourage diversity and inclusivity on campuses. Academic leaders and teacher

educators are essential in fostering an inclusive atmosphere that values diversity and offers transgender people a secure and encouraging space. Thus, it's critical to comprehend how prepared teacher educators and teacher education programs are to include transgender students. This paper contributes to highlighting the extent to which teacher educators receive training on gender diversity in the classroom and how to address it.

### **Rational of the study**

Education for Transgender People: In India, formal education is not available to transgender people. Transgender people stop their schooling, jeopardize their chances of finding employment in the future, and are not allowed to enter their families or places of education. Through a comprehensive review of numerous reports and interviews with community members and stakeholders, it has been established that transgender people are often ignorant or uninformed and reluctant to pursue more education. Enrollment is noticeably low, and the primary and secondary dropout rates remain quite high. They do not obtain a proper education since they are not socially accepted or educated. Even when they are enrolled, children are frequently expelled from school.

Education is the most important aspect in the development of social conduct on an individual and societal level. It has been found that transgender people acquire relatively little relevant education and suitable employment in the current environment. Making the most of the transgender community's potential is essential to our nation's success. They are being forced to make a living by begging or doing sex work since they are still having difficulties with acceptance and social acknowledgment in the workplace. As noted by NALSA (2014), a number of researches on the transgender community have brought attention to concerns with social stigma and identity crises. For the benefit of their group's and the nation's growth, mainstreaming them is therefore essential.

Workplaces and educational institutions should be the starting points for the mainstreaming process. Establishing school environments that foster a sense of inclusivity for all students is a laborious task for educators and administrators. For the teachers to embrace gender inclusion in the classroom, they need to be properly trained. Curricula for teacher education must address these issues. It is important to keep in mind that creating different policies is not the most important step; rather, spreading knowledge of these regulations and putting them into practice are important. Studies on teacher understanding of transgender issues and potential teacher educators are scarce, especially in India. A court ruling was clearly insufficient to fully integrate the transgender population into mainstream society in a country like India because the group's acceptance in society depended on demographic variables (Roy Choudhury et al., 2016). People cannot be made to accept change by sensitization until they are prepared, and the only way to prepare people for change is through education. Transgender individuals are conscious of their basic right to an education, but they are not aware of state regulations governing education, and most of them are unaware that they belong to disadvantaged social groups. (Jayaseelan's ,2015) As a result, they are not exposed to higher education. Layton (2012) investigated the attitudes of a group of London-based Postgraduate Certificate in Education Citizenship student teachers toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in the classroom, their perception of their own preparedness for handling these issues in the classroom, the type of training they had received from their teacher-training institutions, and potential areas for future improvement. The same survey found that bullying based on homophobia was the second most common form of bullying, behind bullying based on weight, and three times more common than bullying based on religion or race. Additionally, a positive correlation between

bullying rates and LGBT youths' openness to their sexuality was found in this study.

If no one comes out as transgender, then perhaps there won't be anyone to target with homophobic hatred and heterosexism will remain the mainstream with no resistance. Watkins (2008), a researcher on the problems and strategies for dealing with homophobia in secondary schools, suggests that teacher training institutions need to be the venue for introducing new teachers to LGBT concerns since they are more qualified to promote LGBT education awareness. According to the study, these suggestions might be harder to put into practice because they rely on financial and human resources, support from the government and senior management, harassment and bullying, and being asked to leave frequently. There are laws, rules, policies, and privileges reserved for transgender persons in India. They don't have a good education, or perhaps to put it another way, their family and school surroundings don't encourage them to pursue their education. Thus, the focus of the current study is on transgender people's knowledge and awareness, specifically as it relates to their education among teacher educators or teacher education institutions.

#### **Objective of the study**

To study the present level of preparedness, pinpoint obstacles, and explore methods to improve transgender inclusion in teacher preparation programs.

#### **Method of the study**

The foundation of this study is an extensive evaluation of the literature that includes studies and research papers about transgender inclusion from many sources. Using academic databases, scholarly publications, and reliable internet repositories, a thorough search was carried out to find pertinent research articles on transgender inclusion. The articles were chosen on the basis of the caliber of the study and their applicability to the subject. To guarantee that modern viewpoints were covered, studies released between 2000 and the present were included. A portion of the

content from the chosen papers was taken out and categorized into sections like limitations, key findings, research aims, and methodology. The approach of thematic analysis was employed to ascertain recurring themes and trends in the literary works. In order to develop a thorough grasp of the present condition of transgender inclusion in teacher education institutions' preparedness across a variety of areas, including education, government policies, healthcare, employment, and society at large, the findings from the evaluated publications were combined. Recommendations for future research directions were suggested in light of the literature review in order to fill in any gaps in the current body of knowledge regarding transgender inclusion readiness and to further expand understanding. By using this methodology, the study hopes to add to the continuing efforts to promote an inclusive and equitable society by offering insightful information about the status of readiness for transgender inclusion in numerous fields.

### **Finding and Discussion**

The current state of readiness of teacher education institutions towards the inclusion of transgender individuals varies. While there have been advancements in certain areas, there are still problems and gaps in many others. The needs and rights of transgender pupils are now more widely acknowledged in progressive areas. A few educational establishments have put in place rules and regulations with the goal of fostering inclusive cultures and providing assistance to transgender students. Gender-neutral restrooms, the use of preferred names and pronouns, letting students engage in activities that reflect their gender identification, and providing staff with transgender issues training are a few examples of these actions.

Nonetheless, the idea of transgender inclusion is still a challenge for many teacher education programs. School officials, instructors, and staff members might not be aware of, comprehend, or accept transgender identities. This may lead

to a lack of procedures and regulations that sufficiently assist transgender students, which may result in harassment, discrimination, and exclusion. Significant obstacles, like bullying, exclusion from gender-specific activities, and trouble getting access to facilities and healthcare, are frequently faced by transgender kids. Their academic performance and general well-being may suffer greatly from a lack of extensive support networks and resources

Advocates, educators, and legislators are working to advance transgender inclusion in education. Training courses, guidelines, and other materials are being developed to help schools create welcoming and secure learning environments for transgender children as well as regular students. Overall, even though there has been progress in some areas, more has to be done to ensure that educational institutions are fully prepared to embrace transgender inclusion and provide equitable opportunities for all students, irrespective of gender identity. There are several obstacles and difficulties in the way of transgender people being included in teacher education programs

1. Lack of Knowledge and Understanding: In teacher education institutes, administrators and faculty members frequently lack knowledge and understanding regarding transgender concerns. This can result in misunderstandings, bias, and discrimination against transgender people, which makes it challenging for them to get support and inclusion.

2. Stigma & Discrimination: Transgender people frequently experience discrimination and social stigma in a variety of spheres of their existence, including the classroom. Gender identity discrimination can make it more difficult for people to get a good education and pursue jobs as teachers. An antagonistic and unwelcoming learning environment can result from bigotry and prejudice among classmates and teachers.

3. Policy Gaps: Inadequate laws and rules pertaining to the rights and educational integration of transgender people might

impede development. It may be difficult to adopt inclusive practices and offer the required support in teacher education institutes if there are no explicit rules or laws for handling transgender concerns.

4. **Absence of an Inclusive Curriculum:** Transgender topics may not be sufficiently covered in teacher education programs, leaving future educators unprepared and lacking in understanding. This may exacerbate prejudices and make it more difficult for educators to support transgender pupils and provide inclusive school environments.

5. **Limited Support Systems:** It's possible that teacher education programs lack the essential support networks, such as therapy programs and teacher support groups, that are designed with transgender students' and instructors' needs in mind. As a result, transgender people may find it difficult to overcome challenges and acquire the assistance they need.

6. **Institutional Resistance to Change:** Within teacher education institutions, conservative views and resistance to change can obstruct the advancement of inclusivity. Because of cultural, religious, or sociological reasons, some institutions could be reluctant to implement inclusive policies and practices, which would further marginalize transgender people.

### **Recommendations**

A multifaceted strategy is needed to address these issues, including awareness campaigns, faculty training programs, inclusive policy initiatives, curriculum revisions, and the creation of support networks. To guarantee transgender people's complete inclusion and engagement, it is imperative that teacher education institutes cultivate an environment of acceptance and tolerance.

Several tactics can be used to improve transgender inclusion at institutes of teacher education. The aforementioned initiatives center on fostering a climate that is more inclusive and accepting of transgender students and educators.

**1. Awareness and Sensitization:** To raise teacher, staff, and student understanding and sensitivity to transgender issues, organize workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns. These programs can assist in debunking falsehoods, combating prejudices, and encouraging an inclusive way of thinking.

2. Create and put into effect inclusive policies and guidelines that specifically address the inclusion and rights of transgender people. Policies pertaining to admissions, school amenities, attire regulations, name and gender marker modifications, and anti-discrimination should all be included. Make certain that the institution as a whole is well informed about these policies.

3. Transgender concerns should be included in the teacher education curriculum. Aspiring educators should get instruction and training on subjects including gender diversity, inclusive teaching methods, and fostering conditions that are secure and encouraging for transgender pupils. To encourage acceptance and tolerance, include a variety of perspectives and experiences in your instructional materials.

**4. Support Systems:** Provide special resources, including as counseling services, mentorship programs, and support groups, for transgender instructors and students. These tools can help transgender people deal with the difficulties they could encounter in the institution by offering them advocacy, emotional support, and direction.

5. **Facilities That Are Gender-Neutral:** Provide gender-neutral amenities, such as locker rooms and restrooms, to create a more inviting atmosphere. Transgender people may feel safer and more at ease on campus as a result of this.

**6. Partnerships & Collaboration:** Work together to create cooperative projects, discuss best practices, and exchange information with LGBTQ+ organizations, transgender rights advocates, and community organizations. This collaboration could provide helpful



direction and support for implementing inclusive policies and practices.

### **7. Faculty Development and Training:**

Continually offer faculty members chances for professional growth and training in inclusive teaching methods and transgender concerns. Through this program, teachers can acquire the abilities and knowledge required to successfully serve transgender kids in the classroom and build inclusive learning environments.

### **8. Student Engagement and Support:**

Encourage a welcoming and inclusive campus environment by endorsing student-run projects, LGBTQ+ organizations, and diversity-themed events that serve to spread awareness. Encourage students to get involved in planning awareness campaigns and developing inclusive policies.

**9. Recruitment and Hiring:** To guarantee diversity representation in teacher education institutes, actively seek for and hire transgender people for faculty positions. Encourage transgender people to apply for teaching jobs, participate as stakeholders, and offer assistance with reservations during the hiring and recruitment process.

10. Encourage academics, staff, and students to take up the cause of transgender

inclusion in higher education by becoming champions and allies. Encourage programs and activities that raise transgender people's visibility and acceptance in the academic community.

It is imperative to bear in mind that these strategies ought to be tailored to the particular setting and needs of every firm. Transgender students' and instructors' regular evaluations and comments can be used to pinpoint problem areas and guarantee ongoing advancement toward greater inclusion.

In conclusion, everyone involved must work together to create an inclusive atmosphere in teacher education programs. Teacher education institutions can better prepare future educators to establish inclusive, equitable classrooms that celebrate the diversity of all identities by acknowledging and appreciating the diversity of transgender individuals. In order to create a more inclusive society and educational system for everybody, it is imperative that we never stop encouraging knowledge, comprehension, and compassion toward transgender concerns.

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