



INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: INCLUSION OF LGBTQ+ STUDIES IN CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This paper emphasises the need to include a curriculum on LGBTQ+ studies and proposes the method of implementation in secondary school education. The study also explores the feasibility and possibility to make changes and to make the curriculum mandatory that paves way to the preservation and dignity of the community. This paper focuses on the issues involved in the inclusion of studies on gender non-conforming individuals, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, (LGBTQ+) into the curriculum of Indian Education System that aids in understanding and accepting of the people and their way of lives, thus eliminating bias-based bullying by Homophobic/Queer-phobic students and teachers.

The inclusion of sexuality studies into the education system has been a matter of debate for decades, but now with the gradual acceptance of the people belonging to the community by the government with its decriminalisation of the Indian Penal Code section 377 and Tamil Nadu government's recent issue of inclusion of LGBTQ+ studies into the syllabus in schools, it is high time the whole education curriculum adopts this into the system. Incorporating curriculum ideas of gender studies as an elective course, intersectionality course, history of rights and laws enforced till date are a few propositions that will be dealt by the researcher in the paper. A curriculum will be designed according to the needs of the time and society.

Keywords: *LGBTQ+, Homophobic, Queer-phobic, Decriminalisation, Intersectionality.*

INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM – A BRIEF HISTORY

The Indian Education System was primarily designed to preserve the nation's culture, history, values and customs. Ancient Indian education were specifically reserved for the children belonging to the upper caste where they were taught in the Gurukul which was a residential schooling system and the first system of education in India. The system, despite inculcating book reading and memorising information, also incorporated holistic development of the child with regards to their mental, cognitive, physical and spiritual wellness. Modern Indian Education has moved far from the primitive method of teaching starting with the mode of language to the goals of education. The Modern school system was established in India by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay in the 1830s where modern subjects like science and mathematics took precedence. New Education policies uprooted in India that aimed to achieve equal right and opportunities to education for all children, irrespective of the social class they belong, paved way to a more inclusive education system. Though the aim of equal education has improvised with laws, education in modern India has become more involved with competitive exams and grades rather working on the moral and ethical standards of the students. Schools are small societies where children belonging to different cultures and economic backgrounds meet and form an association. A child's moral and ethical character and behaviour is altered by what is being taught at school level. The information learned at early ages stand out in our sub conscious all through our lives. Thus, it becomes necessary for the information given to the future of our society, our children to be precise and proper. This paper focuses on the existing education system of India, the laws and policies with prime concern on LGBTQ+ issues in regard to education. There are no particular laws in the education system that address the LGBTQ+ issues directly. However, the Indian constitution assures equality before the law and discrimination based on sex or gender. In 2014, the Supreme court of India recognised transgender people as third gender and ordered steps to be taken on protecting their rights. But the decision has not yet been reflected completely by the society. And even if so, it has been accounted to the least bit of toleration, it has been only specified for Transgender people and not the other gender non-conforming individuals. The abbreviation of LGBTQ+ is still baffling to most and this comes because of lack of knowledge which originates from schools and educational institutions. The terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' are commonly used by school kids as a mean to mock others without

even properly understanding the meaning behind the terms, the teachers and educational institutions are to be held accountable for this. Teaching students that foul language is offensive, is the responsibility of the teachers but on various occasions. Teachers who are supposed to eliminate such improper stigmatisations associated with sexual identities, actually take part in insensitive behaviours either by not rectifying the student's behaviour or by indulging in it themselves. Rigid ideas about sexuality and gender which the children imbibe in their early years escalate into bias and bullying in later years. This makes it mandatory to educate the students of sensitive issues and subjects of life. The government of India is slowly becoming more concerned towards the needs and rights of the LGBTQ+ community starting with the abolishment of the Indian Penal Code section 377 after almost two centuries and the Tamil Nadu government has recently issued the inclusion of LGBTQ+ syllabus in schools and injunction of new curriculum that alters the existing one widely. With these gradual optimistic changes, it is crucial for India to incorporate this new world of belief system that accepts the reality of humans in whichever form they choose to exist. The paper further recounts the laws and statistics of education in India generally and with regards to the queer community further proposing rectifying methods and a model curriculum for better understanding.

Inclusion of LGBTQ+ studies into the Indian curriculum have been discussed by various research articles, journals and studies. Excerpts from such research are followed.

Anuja Sarada, (2020) in their study writes about the binary collapse experienced in growing up in a heteronormative society. The study deals with personal witnesses, and society's mere attempt to preserve childhood innocence and the ill-equipped Indian school teachers unable to tackle conversations of sexuality and heteronormativity.

Sahil Pradhan, (2022) writes about homophobia in Indian schools and the part played by the school authorities in the discrimination and abuse against the non-binary students. The paper demands the education system of queer-inclusive curriculum through collective efforts and further throws light on a desperate need of a vigorous curriculum revision that eliminates gendered notions and various aspects of textbooks that promote queer phobia slowly forming a stereotype.

Tashafi Nazir, (2019) in their study deals with world academia and highlights the educator's opinions on curriculum inclusion of LGBTQ+ studies. It stresses on school being a place that inculcates values and knowledge in a broader context of acceptance on sexual orientation and sexual identities. The study also suggests implementation of measures concerning the laws that support LGBTQ+ and their issues.

LAWS AND STATISTICS ABOUT EDUCATION IN INDIA

- New Education Policy (NEP)2020: Replacement of 10+2 system with 5+3+3+4 system in accordance to the child's natural cognitive development.
- The right of children for free compulsory education act (REA) 2009: Ensuring and compulsory education to every child between ages of 6 to 14.
- The Right to Education (RTE) Amendment Act 2019: This amendment extended the provisions of 2009 regulations to children between the ages of 3 and 18.
- Literacy rate in India: 77.7%
- UGC Regulation Third Amendment 2016: Discrimination, Bullying and ragging targeted at a student on the ground of their sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited curbing the menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions.

THE NEW EDUCATION POLICIES AND ADDED PROPOSITIONS

India is making significant changes to the education system in order to become a global power. The new education policy which replaces the 34 years old policy that was formulated in 1986. It starts with extending the mandatory schooling from the age bracket of 6 to 14 years to 3 to 18 years and aims to be more inclusive and equitable to all with its exceptional emphasis on marginalised communities. The policy represents a significant shift in India's approach towards Education. This great change has the potential to impact the lives and ethics of the students of future generations, altering their perspectives on gender and sexuality. At present there is no official curriculum model for LGBTQ+ studies in the system. This paper aims to provide a curriculum design for that basis which would help students and teachers develop their knowledge of LGBTQ+ and their lives and cultures. The high court of Madras has recently issued the inclusion of LGBTQ+ syllabus in schools and has vouched to address their concerns from grassroots level by including a curriculum based on queer knowledge and understanding. One approach to incorporating LGBTQ+ studies is to inject it into existing subjects such as in history, the topics could include the struggles of LGBTQ+ individuals through history, the social and legal issues faced by the community, In Civics, the rights and laws pre-existed and current developments can be taught, their representation of the community can be taught in media and literature. In addition to that, elective courses can be implemented that could cover topics related to gender and sexuality such as LGBTQ+ identities, experiences, culture, as well as the social, legal, and political issues faced by the community. Research shows that even primary school students are aware and talk about sexualities without proper intervention. Educating the students right from elementary even if it sounds absurd now will turn into the development of the child. The ideas of childhood innocence being affected and the tendency to preserve it results in misinformation of sex and gender. The acceptance must begin with early childhood where the child is taught to normalise the different kinds of family structures and also by introducing the kids to stories with LGBTQ+ people as protagonists. The establishment of gender-neutral restrooms in educational spaces will normalise this further. Recruiting more teachers from the community will ensure respect and dignity for the people. Keen observations must be undertaken in the use of languages to describe the community people in text books while formulating the new curriculum instructions where even the pictures represented should not create bias among the students

on the subject. The use of pronouns they/them in text books instead of he/she right from elementary to high school would develop a habit among the students to accept the non-binary individuals right from their early days. The UGC Anti-Ragging Regulations (2009) covers homosexual assault, but binds only public and private universities — i.e., after 12th grade. The schools must also ensure mandatory discipline against bullying and discrimination and in classroom spaces restriction of expression should be prohibited. Peer groups and counselling sessions must be available in every single educational institution. Acceptance not tolerance must be inculcated in the minds of children and teachers. Educating the teachers is also extremely important to avoid the common mistreatment from teachers to students. The new education policy recommends the inclusion of diverse and inclusive perspectives in textbooks and curricula, as well as the training of teachers and staff on LGBTQ+ issues. It has mandated that teachers have to be given training that include multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. This would broaden the minds of those who teach the children in the best mentoring way possible. But the implementation of these recommendations would be left in the hands of the schools and institutions which is why these paper advises a law to be passed that makes all the recommendations mandate for the entire nation and its education system. This paper suggests a curriculum design that includes diverse and inclusive perspectives in textbooks and curricula, including to those that is related to gender and sexuality. The suggested curriculum can be modified to the betterment of the subject and its motive.

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO LGBTQ+ STUDIES

Course Description: This course aims to provide an overlook of LGBTQ+ identities, their culture and experiences, the social, legal, and political issues faced by the members belonging to the community. The course will examine the historical and cultural context of LGBTQ+ identities and movements from history and also the contemporary debates and challenges faced by the community.

Course Objectives:

- To develop knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ+ identities, their experiences, and culture
- To investigate the social, legal, and political issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community around the world and especially in India.
- To bring forth acceptance and respect towards diversity and inclusion
- To develop critical thinking and analytical skills

Week 1: Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies

- What is LGBTQ+ studies?
- Historical and cultural context, identities and movements of the LGBTQ+ community
- What is Intersectionality?

Week 2: LGBTQ+ Experiences and Identity Issues

- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Gender Dysphoria
- Coming out struggles
- LGBTQ+ relationships and family treatments

Week 3: Social Issues

- Discrimination and harassment
- Stigma and stereotypes
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Bias and Bullying

Week 4: Legal and Political Issues Facing the LGBTQ+ Community

- LGBTQ+ rights and laws in India and around the world
- LGBTQ+ acts and movements
- The role of media

Week 5: Culture and Representation

- LGBTQ+ in literature, film, and art
- LGBTQ+ celebrities and models
- The politics in representation

Week 6: Conclusion and Reflection

- Recap of the entire course
- Future directions for LGBTQ+ studies
- Personal reflection, learning and growth

ASSESSMENT METHODS

1. Written assignments on course readings and topics
2. Class participation and discussion of the topics
3. Group presentations on a selected topic related to LGBTQ+ studies
4. Final reflection paper on personal growth and learning

This sample curriculum design can be modified based on the level and context of the course admitted to specific age groups. It is significant to ensure that the curriculum design is inclusive, sensitive, and respectful towards the LGBTQ+ community, and that it promotes more acceptance and respect towards diversity and inclusion of the community in Indian Society.

CONCLUSION

History has not given equal treatment and rights to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBTQ+) both by government and the society. Much of this tolerance for the community individuals comes from lack of knowledge and education and that contributes to the stigma prevalent in the current scenario both social and political. There has been gradual recognition of the community by government in the recent times that has brought about minor changes in the system that aided in the acceptance process. The inclusion of LGBTQ+ studies into secondary education curriculum has been a matter of debate and this paper strives to lean onto the positive side of it on accounts of minimising homophobia and queer phobia among the students. A sample curriculum design has been developed for better understanding of the proposed idea. This paper thereby provides an insight into the existing LGBTQ+ climate in India and how the change in education system can bring about significant improvements in the perception of the people and support in equity of all.

“Tough information is better than Misinformation”

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