



Denied Desks and Broken Dreams: Educational Discrimination against Transgender Persons in India

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Abstract

Transgender discrimination in Indian educational institutions cannot simply be defined as 'access to classroom' issue, it's a constitutional and social justice issue of dignity, identity, safety and material possibility of citizenship. This doctrinal and qualitative socio-legal research article examines the push factors of transgender learners out of school, college and university because of the barriers of admission in school, college and university, bullying, infrastructure of gender binary nature, curriculum invisibility, unpreparedness of teachers, family rejection, poverty and lack of institutional accountability. The study uses doctrinal and qualitative secondary research methods which include analysis of constitutional guarantees, the NALSA judgment, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the National Education Policy 2020, official government information, civil-society reports and peer-reviewed scholarship. There is an ongoing implementation gap: Indian legislation now officially includes transgender, but educational institutions continue to be structured around binary documents, binary toilets, binary uniforms, and binary ideas of discipline, safety and merit. The article calls for institutional responsibilities to go beyond symbolic treatment and recognition to the actual provisions of gender-inclusive records, safe infrastructure, anti-discrimination cells, scholarships, hostels, mental-health support, teacher training, and curriculum reform. It concludes that educational justice for transgender people is essential to the constitutional right of equality, dignity, and substantive citizenship.

Keywords: transgender persons; educational discrimination; India; NALSA; inclusive education; gender identity; socio-legal research

Introduction

Education has often been described as a pathway to the realization of constitutional promises. In India, however, schools have frequently functioned as spaces of exclusion rather than mobility for transgender learners. The Constitution of India assures equality before the law, non-discrimination, life and personal liberty, freedom of expression and elementary education; these assurances take a distinct meaningful turn for learners whose gender identity falls outside of the binary administrative and/or social expectations (Government of India, 1950). The Supreme Court in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India* introduced the concept of 'self-identified gender' as a fundamental right of dignity and constitutional personality and invalidated the assumption by schools and universities that transgender identity is a deviation that needs to be corrected (2014).



The title 'Denied Desks and Broken Dreams' is a structural statement: discrimination doesn't just happen in one insulting remark, one denied admission or one unsafe washroom. It is created by a series of practices starting from admission to school and extending through certificates, uniforms, toilets, admission to the hostel, attendance register, examination, scholarship, discipline and employment. Section 13 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 places a statutory obligation on every educational institution funded or recognized by the appropriate government to provide inclusive education and opportunities for sports, recreation, and leisure activities to transgender persons without discrimination. But legal obligation does not result in safe classrooms.

The National Education Policy 2020 conceptualizes education as a public good linked to equity and social justice, and it recognizes transgender children within the broader concern of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) (Ministry of Education, 2020). As the NEP 2020 envisioned, the Gender Inclusion Fund is designed particularly for the girls and transgender students (Press Information Bureau, 2023). The policy directions are encouraging, but what is still needed is institutional translation, that is, how the recognition is going to be translated into day-to-day school and higher education institutional life, so that no one is humiliated, dropped out or denied an opportunity to be a student.

There are several layers of educational marginalization faced by transgender learners. Gender nonconformity at home can lead to rejection, violence or withholding of money. The learner may experience misgendering, bullying, being invisible in the school curriculum, and punishment for breaking the gendered norms of dress and conduct in school. Administratively, certificates, identity documents, admission forms and scholarship systems can be unavailable or misrepresentative of affirmed names and genders. In higher education, hostels and washrooms are sometimes still a dichotomy; grievance procedures may be inadequate; and the responsibility for educating teachers and fellow students may fall upon the transgender student. Such circumstances hinder access, as well as retention, achievement, and mental health. The need for institutional attention is also visible in official population data, as the Census of India has recorded transgender persons within its demographic enumeration, showing that educational exclusion concerns a legally and socially identifiable population rather than an abstract category (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011).

This article thus tries to address the problem of educational discrimination as a socio-legal phenomenon. It does not only question the extent to which law protects transgender people; it also asks whether educational environments are restructured to ensure that this protection is enacted in practice. The article offers a thematic analysis of the law's failure to recognize and educate trans people in India, with recent policy documents and interdisciplinary research on stigma, minority stress, school climate, curriculum, and transgender rights.

Research Gap

The legal recognition of transgender persons, constitutional significance of NALSA and the limitations of the 2019 Act have been well documented in existing Indian scholarship and policy discourse. Bhattacharya et al. (2022) suggest that the legal rights are incomplete if they are not accompanied by the corresponding access in the day-to-day institutions. Indian transgender health research has grown, albeit sporadically, as revealed by the study of Raj and Dubey (2024), indirectly suggesting the diversity of the evidence base in other areas like education, health and



welfare. Singh and Karmakar (2024) highlight that despite the progress of law in India social and institutional discrimination still exists.

The focus on education, however, is often diffused. Some of the work treats the legal status issue; some addresses health and stigma; some explores youth victimization on a global scale; and some analyses NEP 2020 without considering the institutional processes by which transgender learners are ineligible for admission, recording, classroom, toilet, hostel and grievance systems. Further, there are gaps between constitutional analysis and actual educational practice, as Articles 14, 15, 19, 21, and 21A offer a rights-based approach, but there are no protocols in place in schools for name and gender change, anti-bullying response, inclusive curriculum, and safe infrastructure. This paper aims to fill that void by providing a focused doctrinal and qualitative socio-legal analysis of educational discrimination against transgender persons in India. It brings together constitutional law, statutory duties, education policy, official welfare schemes, civil-society materials, and peer-reviewed scholarships on stigma and school climate. Its contribution is to not only see exclusion in education as a social attitude, but also as a societal institutional process.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the major forms of educational discrimination faced by transgender persons in Indian schools, colleges, and universities
2. To analyse constitutional, statutory, judicial, and policy protections relevant to transgender learners in India
3. To identify institutional barriers relating to admission, documents, infrastructure, curriculum, teacher behaviour, safety, hostels, scholarships, and grievance redressal
4. To connect Indian socio-legal concerns with interdisciplinary literature on stigma, minority stress, and school climate
5. To recommend practical reforms for making educational institutions substantively inclusive rather than merely formally open.

Research Questions

1. What forms of discrimination do transgender persons encounter in Indian educational institutions?
2. How do Indian constitutional, statutory, and policy frameworks protect transgender learners, and where do they remain incomplete?
3. Why does the gap between formal recognition and actual educational inclusion persist?
4. What institutional reforms can reduce dropout, humiliation, and exclusion among transgender students?
5. How can Indian educational institutions move from symbolic visibility to enforceable inclusion?

Methodology

The research method in this study is doctrinal legal and qualitative secondary research. The doctrinal component focuses on the following: constitutional provisions, NALSA judgment, Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020, Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, National Education



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Policy 2020 and other official schemes and advisories. The qualitative secondary component analyzes government materials, civil-society and international reports as well as peer-reviewed scholarship on gender identity, stigma, minority stress, school climate, school bullying, and inclusive education.

The study does not represent primary survey data. Any statements in the form of numbers regarding prevalence, dropout, harassment or mental health are only made when there is a source that can be identified in the public. Analysis is thematic as opposed to statistical; a number of sources were read for patterns of exclusion, rights language, institutional duties, and implementation gaps. The method is suitable for a doctrinal and qualitative socio-legal research article because the central research problem concerns how legal recognition is translated, limited, or blocked within educational institutions since the focus of the central research problem is not only that discrimination exists, but that it is translated or blocked in legal recognition in educational institutions.

The source strategy prioritizes Indian law sources (official-legal), theory and empirical sources (peer-reviewed journals), and credible civil society or international sources (implementation context). Where available, recent sources (2020-26) are used, and older landmark sources are retained as foundational legal or theoretical sources.

Source Map

Source type	Examples used	Purpose in article	Reason for inclusion
Constitutional and judicial sources	Constitution of India; NALSA judgment	Rights foundation	Equality, dignity, identity, expression, and education
Statutes and rules	RTE Act; 2019 Act; 2020 Rules	Institutional obligations	Non-discrimination, inclusive education, identity certificates, document changes
Education policy	NEP 2020; Gender Inclusion Fund material	Policy direction	SEDGs, equitable education, transgender inclusion
Welfare and implementation sources	SMILE; National Portal	Practical support mechanisms	Scholarship, identity cards, welfare access
Peer-reviewed scholarship	Stigma, school climate, minority stress, rights analysis	Analytical framework	Explains why legal access without safe environment is insufficient

Literature Review

Stigma, identity, and institutional exclusion

Literature on stigma is key to understanding why there is formal access to education and yet educational exclusion persists because socially discredited identities can be marked, managed, and punished within everyday institutions (Goffman, 1963). According to Link and Phelan (2001), stigma is a social process characterized by labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination in unequal power relations. This model can provide understanding of how a trans learner might be regarded as an administrative burden, as a moral threat or as a social problem



well before any policy is applied. Minority stress theory is elaborated by Meyer (2003) to demonstrate how stigma-related stressors build and result in disproportionate health and well-being responses for sexual and gender minorities when they are in various social contexts (Meyer, 1995, 2003) while psychological mediation frameworks further explain how stigma affects mental health through stress, concealment, vigilance, and coping processes (Hatzenbuehler, 2009). Another aspect of concealed stigma is its psychological cost—when people have to cope with disclosure, fear and concealment in hostile settings, says Pachankis (2007).

Stigma is worse for transgender people as institutions may require a stable, binary, document-based identity. Hendricks and Testa (2012) draw on the minority stress analysis and apply it to transgender and gender-nonconforming clients, focusing on the external victimization, the internalized stigma, and the nature of resilience. Testa et al. (2015) creates a gender minority stress and resilience instrument that includes both distal stressors (e.g., discrimination and rejection) as well as proximal stressors (e.g., internalized transphobia and concealment). As demonstrated by White Hughto et al. (2015), stigma can impact the health of transgender people at three levels: structural, interpersonal, and individual. Bockting et al. (2013) also associate stigma with mental health and highlight resilience, community belonging, and pride.

These frameworks are directly relevant to education. A school that calls a child by the wrong name, who is refused a document correction, or who provides only a binary toilet is sending a clear message: the legitimacy of this institution rests in the erasure of identity. Minority stress needs to be examined in the context of the social distribution of stigma and discrimination (Clark et al., 2023). Reisner et al. (2016) show that transgender populations face substantial global health burdens shaped by structural marginalization. According to Winter et al. (2016), transgender individuals are marginalized by social, legal and health systems. These studies combine to warrant a structural approach to educational discrimination, instead of an individual approach of adjustment.

School climate, bullying, and safety

Studies of school climate show that participation in a classroom is not the same as participation in a safe classroom particularly where educational settings fail to respond to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (UNESCO, 2016). McGuire et al., 2010, report that while general lesbian, gay and bisexual interventions may address some of the issues transgender youth might face in the school environment, it does not fully address the negative environment they may create. Toomey et al. (2010) demonstrate the association between adolescent gender nonconformity and subsequent psychosocial adjustment is mediated by school victimization based on perceived or actual LGBT identity. In addition, Russell et al. (2011) found that the effects of adolescent school victimization on health and adjustment outcomes in youth persist and that the school setting can be a source of harm for youth. Evidence from school-based research also shows that transgender students may face elevated risks of violence victimization, substance use, suicide risk, and sexual risk behaviours, making educational safety a public-health concern as well as a rights concern (Johns et al., 2019).

It is also important to consider curricular inclusion. Snapp et al. (2015) report that LGBTQ inclusive curricula relate to perceptions of safety and school climates that are more supportive. The findings of Goodenow et al. (2006) show that school support systems relate to student safety and decrease health risk for sexual minority students. Poteat et al. (2013) demonstrate that things such as adult support and student organizations can affect the school climate that sexual and gender



minority learners experience. Ryan et al. (2009, 2010) link family rejection and family acceptance to later health outcomes for LGBT young adults, suggesting that school support may be particularly crucial where family support is lacking.

Results need to be adapted to the context of Indian institutions. Bullying can manifest as slurs, moral policing, forcing conformity to uniforms, segregation from peers, or ridicule from teachers. Lack of curriculum that positively represents transgender lives can have the effect of making students feel like an exception, rather than a citizen. A climate perspective then moves the focus of reform from occasional awareness sessions to structural responsibilities—anti-bullying policies, trained teachers, affirming records, accessible washrooms, accessible counsellors, and visible avenues for grievances.

Much of the evidence relating to school climate and bullying presented here is drawn from international scholarship research and not direct evidence of school climate and bullying in India. International education-sector guidance similarly warns that exclusion of LGBTI students remains a persistent institutional problem and that schools must actively prevent exclusion rather than merely declare formal access (UNESCO, 2021). The claims made specifically for India are presented with a degree of caution and, as far as possible, backed up by sources from India, including legal, policy, civil-society and peer-reviewed.

Indian legal recognition and substantive access

Indian scholarship following NALSA has made it clear that recognition is not enough. Bhattacharya et al. (2022) discuss and consider the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act and believe that rights must be assessed on their substantive content and not just in their written form. Education is part of the Act's anti-discrimination framework but requires institutional capacity and accountability to put it into practice. As revealed by bibliometric review by Raj and Dubey (2024), the research on transgender in India is still in its nascent stages, which is an indirect indication of the need for domain-based studies on education. In this article, Singh and Karmakar discuss the Indian legal system and draw the conclusion that although legal reform has been witnessed, the fact is that discrimination has not been eradicated.

Transgender India is an edited collection of interdisciplinary accounts of the experiences and identities of third gender(s) in contemporary India (Dutta & Roy, 2022). The Routledge Handbook of Gender, Culture and Development in India situates gender justice in the development, culture and institutional life (Kumar & Lekha, 2024). These works are useful in that a discussion of educational discrimination cannot be detached from caste, class, language, religion, family structure, urban-rural location, disability, and the livelihoods. Those transgender learners who also do not have family protection, income security, safe housing, and documentation are most vulnerable to being excluded, especially when gender identity intersects with caste, class, language, religion, disability, and location-based disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989; World Bank, 2018).

The lack of educational inclusion is also evident from the recent Indian articles and civil-society sources. Dixit and Singh (2023) address the issue of transgender students' discrimination in India. In a systematic review of transgender adversities, Sharma and Aggarwal (2024) name three recurrent barriers: schooling, stigma, and access to services. Mitra (2025) centers on the barriers faced by secondary school students and the IJFMR (2025) brings out the disconnect between the NEP 2020 and institutional realities in the context of equity in Indian education.



Legal and Policy Framework

Constitutional guarantees

The constitutional underpinnings for transgender education are provided collectively by Article 14, 15, 19, 21 and 21A. Article 14 ensures equality before the law and equal protection of the law. Discrimination based on gender identity is to be interpreted in light of the notion of substantive equality as per the prohibition of discrimination in Article 15. There is a right to expression in Article 19, including gender expression. Article 21 guarantees life and personal liberty, which the courts in India have interpreted to mean dignity, autonomy and privacy. Article 21A provides for free and compulsory education for children in the age group 6-14 years. These provisions do not simply mean to ensure the gates of schools remain open, but they also mean that there must be educational environments in which the learner can enter, stay, learn and grow without humiliation consistent with international human-rights principles on sexual orientation and gender identity (Yogyakarta Principles, 2007).

In *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India* (2014), the Supreme Court recognized transgender persons' right to dignity and autonomy and their right to fundamental rights, which includes the right to self-identified gender. The judgment is particularly relevant for the education sector, where it denies the notion that there are only two categories of legal protection—sex and gender—when it comes to education. It suggests that transgendered people belong to socially and educationally backward classes and should be reserved and accorded welfare, which has not been applied consistently. From an educational perspective, NALSA creates the constitutional injury of misrecognition as a social problem.

Statutory framework: RTE Act, 2019 Act, and 2020 Rules

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 aims at universalization of education in primary school and exclusion from school (Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009). The Act does not establish a specific framework for transgender people but must be interpreted considering NALSA and the 2019 Act which commits to non-exclusion. A child that is pushed out or bullied, a child that refuses to be documented, a child that doesn't have access to safe infrastructure is not getting free and compulsory education in any meaningful way. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 explicitly bans discrimination against transgender persons in the field of education and imposes duties on educational institutions. The Government funded or recognized educational institution has to ensure inclusive education, sports and recreational facilities without discrimination as per the section 13 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020, put in place the provisions for certification, as well as identity documents and Annexure 1 covers the identity documents that may require correction following the act of recognition. (Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020). This is essential for educational certificates, admission records, identity cards and examination documents.

In order to make it easier to apply for a certificate for transgender identity and identity cards without physical contact, the National Portal for Transgender Persons was created (National Portal for Transgender Persons, 2026). As per the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's FAQ, the portal helps applicants track their applications and obtain certification digitally (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, n.d.). These can mitigate the humiliation that occurs during administration, but they will only work if educational boards, universities and scholarship



institutions accept and update the records on time. Despite the 2019 Act and 2020 Rules, the issue with documentation has not been resolved as there have been recent reports of revising certificates after gender transition upon court orders.

National Education Policy 2020 and welfare measures

NEP 2020 has made equity and inclusion the core of educational reforms and has included transgender in the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (Ministry of Education, 2020). This recognition is crucial because it moves away from charity work and towards structural equality. The policy recognizes that there is a need to specifically support access, retention and achievement for students from disadvantaged groups. But NEP 2020 has no implementation power, it is a policy document. Implementation relies on budgets, guidelines, institutional monitoring, teacher education and accountability.

Press Information Bureau says that the Gender Inclusion Fund, under NEP 2020, is particularly allocated for the girls and the transgender students to ensure a fair quality education for them (Press Information Bureau, 2023). Welfare measures for transgender persons are covered under SMILE scheme such as Education, Skill Development, Counselling and economic linkages, (Press Information Bureau, 2022). A scholarship element for qualified transgender students begins to appear on the myScheme page (myScheme, 2026). All the measures are useful but should not be used as a replacement for institutional anti-discrimination. A scholarship will not solve the issue of everyday harassment, a student ID will not solve the problem of no safe toilets on campus, and a policy statement will not solve the issue of the teacher who is not equipped to respond to bullying.

Analysis and Discussion

Admission and documentation barriers

Admission systems can be the first area in which barriers are imposed because they require binary gender markers, birth-assigned names, parental information or documentation that do not correspond with the identity that the student has affirmed. But even if changes in the official documents are allowed by the 2020 Rules, educational institutions might not have clear procedures or might consider requests for correction as an exceptional favour instead of a right (Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020). There developed a negative paradox: the law affirmed identity while the school record remained with a "no".

Documentation barriers have an impact on access to examinations, scholarship, admission to hostel, identity card, degrees, and employment-linked verification. A former name and/or gender on a certificate can result in continuous disclosure of personal history. This can lead to stigma and exclusion in recruitment or mobility or the lack of admission. The challenge is not just a technical one, but rather a dignitary challenge: institutions which do not keep records current are ensuring that the misrecognition stays misrecognition.

Bullying, harassment, and classroom exclusion

Bullying can happen through words, actions, sexual behavior, digital means, and/or institutional means. Students can be ridiculed for their voice, clothing, walk, hairstyle, name, or perceived sexuality. They are not allowed to participate in peer groups, sports teams, cultural activities, or seating arrangements in the classroom. Bullying may be viewed as teasing or the victim's actions as being 'different' and thus may be considered a problem to be solved by discipline. Research on



school climate in the world across different countries also demonstrates the long-term psychosocial impact of victimization associated with gender nonconformity (Toomey et al., 2010). In India this is exacerbated by the lack of family support for students and by schools' definition of gender expression as 'disorder.'

Anti-bullying approaches and policies are frequently adopted as a generic strategy and do not capture gender identity or gender expression as a protected identity or gender expression of concern. A complaint procedure that does not include a complaint of transgender discrimination may not be able to identify transgender discrimination when it happens. An untrained teacher might mistake harassment for a kind of moral concern or a student-to-student conflict. For this reason, explicit policies, explicit complaint procedures, no retaliation, and sensitization of the teachers, non-teaching staff, counsellors, the wardens of classrooms, and transport staff should be priorities for classroom safety.

Gender-neutral toilets and safe infrastructure

Infrastructure communicates belonging. Transgender students can end up being humiliated, put in danger, and/or avoid using a binary toilet, hostel room, and/or changing space. Lack of gender-neutral toilets might encourage students to avoid the campus, limit intake of water or subjected to violence. While infrastructure barriers have been trivialized, as compared to admission or scholarship barriers, for students, it's a daily reminder that they are not in the institution's imagination.

Safe infrastructure means no compromise on services for other students. It involves putting things in place: gender neutral toilets easy to access, space set aside for changing, non-exclusive accommodation of the hostel and unambiguous harassment policies. Transgender students and community groups should be involved in the planning of these facilities. When infrastructure is not consulted, it can be tokenistic, inaccessible, or unsafe.

Curriculum invisibility and misrepresentation

Curriculum invisibility is an implicit yet potent discrimination. When transgender subjects aren't acknowledged in textbooks and in classroom conversations but only as objects of pity, disease, mythology, and controversy, then transgender lives are not part of the ordinary citizenship. International research shows that inclusive curriculum is linked to safer school climates (Snapp et al., 2015). Transgender lives can be explored in Indian curriculum without sensationalizing them, through the lens of constitutional rights, biographies, literature, social movements, health and gender diversity.

Curriculum reform should avoid two errors. First, it should not victimize transgendered people. Second, it should not be showing inclusion as an import from the west. There are several traditions of gender-diversity in South Asian history such as the hijra practice, and there is a modern rights-based foundation of constitutionalism (Kalra, 2012). The education objective should not be to impose identity but to foster respect, proper information and co-existence in a democratic way.

Teacher insensitivity and lack of training

Classroom climate is the responsibility of teachers. A supportive teacher may be able to intervene to stop bullying, correct misgendering, update records and link students with counselling. An insensitive teacher can legitimize harassment through laughter, by enforcing sartorial binaryism with inflexibility, or by telling students to put aside their identity. Sustained training in transgender



inclusion, minority stress or gender affirming pedagogy are rarely part of teacher education in India. This means, even if they aren't antagonistic, some teachers still might not be ready.

Training should be practical rather than symbolic, because professional development for school personnel can play an important role in creating more supportive environments for gender-diverse learners (Greytak et al., 2013). This should include terms, use of pronouns, confidentiality, responding to bullying, referral to counsellors, inclusive language, concerns about hostels, toilets and record correction as well as legal obligations under the 2019 Act. It must also cover issues related to caste, class, disability, religion and language, as no transgender student exist in isolation.

Dropout, poverty, family rejection, and mental health

The path to exclusion from school education often starts before school. A student may end up leaving home, having to drop out of school or get into precarious jobs because of family rejection. Poverty is linked to transport, books, access to the Internet, uniforms, coaching, examination fees and the cost of living in the hostel. While the SMILE scholarship and welfare measures do show an awareness of the economic barriers, specific financial support needs to be planned, available and stigma free (myScheme, 2026). The same is true for mental-health support; reoccurring misrecognition, bullying, and fear of disclosure can cause chronic stress and research on transgender youth has documented significant mental-health disparities associated with hostile social environments (Russell & Fish, 2016; Veale et al., 2017).

The minority stress literature warns against viewing distress as a part of being transgender. Discrimination, rejection, and unsafe settings are what create distress (Meyer, 2003). Consequently, counselling should not seek to 'correct' identity. It should provide support for safety, self-acceptance, family mediation as appropriate, legal documentation, crisis response and academic retention.

Higher education barriers

The barriers to enrollment in higher education are Entrance examinations, degree certificates, allocation of hostels, fieldwork, internships, placements, and professional licensing. A university might have a classroom that accepts a transgender student formally but does not have a hostel that is inclusive of transgender students or a grievance system that is safe for transgender students. Faculty may not be trained, peers may mock gender expression, and administrative offices may fail to change names and gender throughout the interrelated systems. These issues go beyond dignity to employability – degrees and transcripts are portals to jobs.

The admission, records, toilet, hostel, scholarship, classroom behaviour, counselling and placement office should be included in an inclusion protocol by every institution, as required by UGC and higher education regulators UGC's gender-champions framework also supports the need for institutional mechanisms that promote gender sensitisation within educational institutions (University Grants Commission, 2015). The term gender identity and gender expression should be added to equal opportunity cells. If not explicitly stated, transgender discrimination may slip away in the diversity language.

Gap between law and implementation

This analysis reveals that India has shifted from a legal invisibility to formal recognition but not yet been structurally transformed in educational institutions. It is recognized under the NALSA. Discrimination is banned under the 2019 Act. There is a certification pathway available in the 2020 Rules. The NEP 2020 has included transgender persons in the disadvantaged groups. SMILE



provides welfare assistance. But there can still be misgendering and ridicule, unsafe toilets, binary uniforms, mean peers, and administration that refuses.

There are several reasons for gaps in implementation. First, laws do not always become rules for the institutions. Second, schools and universities are not able to gather privacy protective information about transgendered students, leaving needs unnoticed. Third, there is a fear of controversy among teachers and administrators and/or lack of training. Fourth, grievance procedures can be inadequate or untrusted. Fifth, transgender learners might be lacking in economic and familial resources to contest discrimination. Sixth, inclusion can be seen as one of the areas where sensitization is chosen instead of being required by law.

Key Findings

1. Discrimination is multidimensional. Educational discrimination is created by documents, infrastructure, curriculum, peer culture, teacher behavior, family rejection, poverty and poor grievance mechanisms. Solutions cannot be realised through admission access.
2. The formal recognition has been faster than institutional preparedness. While there is an effective constitutional and statutory framework to include transgender in India, there is a lack of protocols on how to do so in schools, colleges and universities.
3. Documentation is an elusive educational hurdle. When names and gender in certificates, forms, IDs, and degrees do not match, the student may be humiliated and excluded time and again from the administrative process.
4. Safe infrastructure is a rights issue. Having no gender-neutral toilets, safe hostels or privacy respecting facilities has an impact on attendance, dignity, health and retention.
5. There is a lack of strong curriculum and teacher training. Formal policy commitments do not alter the culture of classrooms without the presence of inclusive curriculum and trained teachers.
6. There needs to be a linkage between financial supports and anti-discrimination measures. Scholarships and welfare schemes are crucial but not enough unless other measures are taken to prevent the bullying, misgendering and administrative denial of these.
7. Implementation requires accountability. Institutions must have enforceable obligations, monitoring, grievance redressal and publicly reviewable inclusion plans with a focus on privacy protections.

Policy and Institutional Recommendations

1. **Schools and school managements:** Implement gender inclusive admission paperwork, attendance logs, ID cards, uniform choices, anti-bullying policies, procedures, and protocols for changing names and gender markers.
2. **Colleges and universities:** To ensure that no individual is left out of the planning and implementation of transgender inclusion, develop written protocols for admitting, examining, maintaining library accounts, email IDs, marksheets, degrees, hostel, toilets, fieldwork, placements, and grievance redressal procedures.



3. **UGC and higher education regulators:** Mandate that all higher education institutions incorporate gender identity and gender expression into policies on equal opportunities, anti-discrimination cells, counselling services, hostel policies, and annual compliance reporting consistent with the expanded human-rights obligations articulated in the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (2017).
4. **State education departments and school boards:** Provide binding operational guidelines for records, transfer certificates, board exams, scholarships, teacher preparation, complaint systems and privacy-protective data management that include transgender students.
5. **NCERT and SCERTs:** Update books, teacher training materials, and classroom curriculum to integrate age-appropriate, accurate, non-stigmatizing language, discussion and information about gender diversity, constitutional rights, and transgender contributions to society.
6. **Welfare departments:** Ensure that scholarships, emergency housing support, counselling support and skill development schemes are simplified and publicised for transgender students and involve institutions in ensuring that financial aid is a formal right, rather than a means for keeping students in school.
7. **Institutional counselling and health services:** Offer gender affirming, confidential, non-pathologizing care; prevent conversion-focused practices; and establish referral processes for students who experience violence, family rejection, homelessness, and/or mental-health distress.
8. **Infrastructure and campus planning units:** Make gender neutral toilets, privacy respecting changing spaces and hostel allocation arrangements, on the basis of safety, consent, privacy and student preference.
9. **Regulators and accreditation bodies:** Use transgender inclusion in indicator items of inspection and accreditation, including evidence of training, complaint disposal, infrastructure, scholarships, timelines for record corrections and privacy protections.
10. **Community participation:** Incorporate transgender people, community groups, legal professionals, counsellors and education academics into the design, training of staff, curriculum, and monitoring of policies and changes; don't just do this symbolically.

Conclusion

Transgender discrimination in India's education is a litmus test to validate the equality against which the constitution stands. Transgender discrimination in India's education is a test of the extension of the equality that the constitution promises into classroom life. The legal status has now improved; NALSA has declared identity and dignity; 2019 Act bans discrimination; 2020 Rules provide for avenues of documentation of identity; NEP 2020 includes transgender persons in the list of disadvantaged groups; welfare measures include SMILE, which recognize economic barriers to identity. However, transgender students remain dealing with institutions that are based on binary assumptions. A desk is taken away when a student is not admitted, denied, unnamed, misnamed, mocked, undocumented, unsupported or made to disappear from life on the campus and curriculum.



This article has proposed that inclusion in education should be “substantive”. It needs to involve administrative recognition, secure infrastructure, curriculum change, trained teachers, mental-health support, financial support, and accountability measures that are enforceable. The reform agenda is not special favour, it's the common sense of equality, dignity and the right to education. Transgender students' identities should not be left at a school's door. They have to establish an environment where all learners are able to sit at the desk and speak their own names and build a future without fear.

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