



From Policy to Practice: Implementing NEP's Equity Vision for LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Employability Enhancement

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to build an education system that is fair, inclusive, and focused on the overall development of every learner. It wants to remove inequalities and make sure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds get equal opportunities. However, the policy does not clearly talk about the LGBTQ+ community, which still faces a lot of exclusion and discrimination. This paper explains how the goals of NEP can be expanded to include LGBTQ+ learners so they feel emotionally, socially, and educationally supported. It also shows how an inclusive education system can help all students develop important skills like communication, teamwork, empathy, and critical thinking—skills needed for today's workplaces. The paper suggests practical ways to make education more inclusive through curriculum changes, teacher training, and supportive school policies. It concludes that true reform under NEP 2020 is possible only when every gender and identity is included, helping create a more equal, employable, and socially peaceful society.

Keywords: NEP 2020; LGBTQ+ Inclusion; Equity in Education; Employability Skills; Inclusive Education; Social Justice.

Introduction:

Education is not only a process of acquiring knowledge but also a means to promote equality, dignity, and empowerment. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a forward looking vision for the Indian education system by emphasizing access, equity, quality, and lifelong learning for all. It aims to develop future citizens who are ethical, skilled, and socially responsible. However, while the NEP includes several measures to promote gender inclusion and social justice, it remains silent on the specific needs and rights of the LGBTQ+ community. This silence becomes a barrier to the realization of true inclusivity and equity in education. The LGBTQ+ community, despite legal recognition and social awareness, continues to face significant discrimination, bullying, and exclusion in educational settings. Their marginalization affects not only their learning experience but also their confidence, career opportunities, and participation in the economy. Therefore, if India aims to fulfill its vision of an inclusive and equitable education system, it must consciously extend educational inclusion to this community. This paper discusses how NEP's equity vision can be practically implemented to include LGBTQ+ learners and how such inclusion can enhance employability skills and contribute to building a progressive and harmonious society.

Aim of the Study:

To examine how NEP 2020's equity framework can be extended to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion and enhance learner employability.

Objectives:

1. To analyze NEP 2020's vision of equity and its relevance to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
2. To understand challenges faced by LGBTQ+ learners in educational institutions.
3. To explore the relationship between inclusive education and employability skills.
4. To propose strategies for integrating LGBTQ+ inclusion in Indian education.
5. To identify barriers hindering inclusive implementation.

Research Questions:

1. What academic, emotional, and social challenges do LGBTQ+ learners face?
2. How does LGBTQ+ inclusion strengthen employability skills?
3. What strategies can institutions adopt to make education more inclusive?
4. What barriers resist LGBTQ+ inclusion within NEP's implementation?

Data Collection:

The present study is based on secondary sources of data. Information has been gathered from government documents such as the National Education Policy (2020), NCERT position papers, UNESCO frameworks, United Nations reports, and Supreme Court judgments related to gender and inclusion. In addition, scholarly articles, research studies, books, educational surveys, and credible institutional publications were reviewed to understand the challenges, gaps, and possibilities in implementing LGBTQ+ inclusion within India's educational landscape.

1. NEP 2020 and its Equity vision:

NEP 2020 highlights that inclusion and equity form the basis of quality education. The policy envisions an education system that identifies and removes barriers faced by learners from different backgrounds, including those who are socially or economically disadvantaged. It emphasizes that education should enable all individuals to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the nation's development. The policy talks about creating a safe and inclusive learning environment and proposes special efforts to include girls, socio economically disadvantaged groups, and children with disabilities. Inclusive education, as envisioned in NEP 2020, means ensuring that every learner feels accepted, valued, and supported. It calls for a shift from a one-size-fits-all approach to a learner centered model that accommodates diversity in ability, background, and identity. However, while the NEP acknowledges the importance of gender inclusion, it primarily refers to women and girls. The absence of explicit **Reference** to LGBTQ+ learners leads to a form of practical exclusion, as institutions and educators often overlook their specific needs. This policy silence is significant because invisibility in policy often translates into invisibility in practice. Schools and universities may not consider LGBTQ+ learners in their inclusion plans, leading to continued discrimination. In this context, there is a pressing need to extend the NEP's vision of equity to gender and sexual minorities as well. Achieving this would not only fulfill the constitutional values of equality and dignity but also align India's

education system with global frameworks such as UNESCO’s Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Equity is different from equality. Equality means providing the same opportunities to everyone, while equity means recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals to ensure fairness in outcomes. LGBTQ+ learners, due to the stigma and discrimination they face, require specific emotional and institutional support. Without equity, the goal of inclusive education remains incomplete. The implementation of NEP 2020 must therefore include targeted measures to ensure that education truly reaches all learners, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation.

2. Struggles of the LGBTQ+ Community and the Need for Inclusion:

Members of the LGBTQ+ community face profound challenges that affect their emotional, social, and economic well-being. Behind each individual who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer lies a quiet struggle i.e. a story of longing for love, facing rejection, and constantly seeking acceptance in a world that often misunderstands them. Many grow up without the warmth of family support or the comfort of social acceptance. This absence of emotional care and understanding leaves them feeling isolated and insecure, depriving them of the sense of belonging that every human being needs to flourish and live with dignity. Emotionally, LGBTQ+ students often battle fear, loneliness, and inner conflict. When schools or families fail to accept them, they experience bullying, social isolation, and a loss of confidence. The absence of love and understanding can make them question their own worth, leading to depression, anxiety, or even dropping out of school. A simple act of kindness or acceptance could make a difference between hope and despair in their lives. Financially, exclusion continues to limit their opportunities. Many LGBTQ+ individuals are denied jobs or promotions due to stereotypes and bias. Transgender people, in particular, face severe discrimination in formal workplaces, pushing them into unsafe or informal jobs. This economic hardship often starts early — when education and skill development opportunities are denied to them. Without financial independence, they remain trapped in a cycle of poverty and invisibility. Socially, they struggle to be accepted as equal human beings. Society often fails to understand that their feelings, identities, and expressions are natural to them, even if they differ from traditional norms. People who are attracted to the same gender, or those whose gender identity differs from their physical appearance, are often judged harshly. They are seen as “different” and are denied the warmth of community and family life. This social neglect can lead to frustration, anger, and alienation, creating emotional scars that take years to heal. In truth, what the LGBTQ+ community seeks is not special treatment but love, dignity, and the chance to live freely like everyone else. Their inclusion is not only a matter of rights but also a path toward a more compassionate and balanced society. If they continue to remain excluded, feelings of isolation and resentment can deepen, leading to emotional or behavioral challenges. On the other hand, when they are embraced and understood, they contribute immensely to creativity, cooperation, and peace within society. Therefore, inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in education and employment is not optional — it is essential for national harmony and human progress. It fulfills the spirit of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which envisions equity, inclusion, and holistic development for all. When we open our classrooms, workplaces, and hearts to every individual, we nurture the true meaning of justice, equality, and fraternity — the foundations of a better and more humane India.

3. Linking LGBTQ+ Inclusion to Employability Skills:

Inclusive education plays a significant role in developing employability skills among all students. Employability skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving, adaptability, and emotional intelligence are essential for success in modern workplaces. LGBTQ+ inclusion helps foster these very skills by creating a diverse and empathetic learning environment. When students learn in inclusive

classrooms that value every identity, they develop respect for diversity and openness to different perspectives. This exposure enhances their communication and interpersonal skills, which are highly valued by employers. Working with peers from different gender and sexual orientations teaches teamwork, adaptability, and conflict resolution. Moreover, inclusive education builds empathy and emotional intelligence, as students learn to understand and support each other despite differences. For LGBTQ+ learners themselves, inclusion in education boosts self-confidence, leadership, and creativity. When they feel safe and accepted, they can focus on learning and personal growth instead of hiding their identity. This empowerment helps them acquire professional skills and prepare for employment opportunities. On a broader level, inclusive education contributes to creating workplaces that value fairness, innovation, and collaboration. Thus, LGBTQ+ inclusion in education is directly linked to building an employable, ethical, and globally competent workforce.

4. From Policy to Practice: Strategies for Implementation

To make NEP 2020's vision of equity truly inclusive, it is essential to translate policy into concrete actions at the ground level. The first step is to integrate the idea of inclusion into school and college curricula. Lessons on gender diversity, equality, and human rights should be part of subjects like social science, moral education, and value education. Stories, biographies, and examples of LGBTQ+ individuals can be included in textbooks to promote awareness and acceptance. Teacher education programs play a crucial role in this transformation. B.Ed. and M.Ed. curricula must include modules on inclusive education that address issues of gender and sexuality. Teachers should be trained to handle classroom diversity sensitively and to support students without bias. Workshops and training sessions can help educators become allies who promote a culture of respect and equality. At the institutional level, schools and universities should implement anti-discrimination policies, gender-neutral facilities, and grievance redressal mechanisms to protect students from harassment. Institutions can also establish equity cells or inclusion committees to monitor progress and organize awareness programs. Career guidance and skill development initiatives should specifically include LGBTQ+ learners, helping them prepare for employment and entrepreneurship. Partnerships with inclusive organizations and industries can further ensure that education leads to meaningful work opportunities.

5. Barriers and Challenges:

Despite the progressive vision of NEP 2020, there are still several barriers that hinder LGBTQ+ inclusion. Deep-rooted social stigma and cultural taboos make open discussion of gender and sexuality difficult in schools. Curriculum frameworks rarely mention LGBTQ+ topics, leaving students uninformed or misinformed. Teacher biases and lack of training often lead to silence or avoidance when such issues arise in classrooms. Parental resistance, driven by social and religious beliefs, further discourages schools from addressing LGBTQ+ inclusion. Policy ambiguity also contributes to inaction. Since NEP 2020 does not explicitly mention the LGBTQ+ community, many educational institutions do not feel compelled to take specific steps toward their inclusion. Additionally, intersectional discrimination affects those who belong to multiple marginalized identities, such as LGBTQ+ individuals from rural or economically poor backgrounds. These overlapping disadvantages make it harder for them to access quality education and employment. To overcome these barriers, there is a need for stronger policy guidelines, awareness campaigns, and systematic monitoring. Inclusion should be made an integral part of school evaluation systems, ensuring that no learner is left behind. Empowering teachers, involving parents, and using media responsibly can also help change social attitudes over time.

Conclusion:

The National Education Policy 2020 has the potential to transform India's education system by making it more inclusive, equitable, and skill-oriented. However, its success depends on how well it reaches every

learner, including those from the LGBTQ+ community. True equity can be achieved only when inclusion goes beyond gender binaries and embraces all identities. LGBTQ+ inclusion in education promotes emotional well-being, confidence, and equal access to opportunities. It also enhances employability skills and prepares learners to contribute to a diverse and globalized world. Implementing NEP's equity vision requires concrete actions like curriculum reform, teacher preparation, supportive institutional policies, and awareness building. Education that respects and empowers all learners can lead to a more compassionate and future-ready nation. Inclusion is not just a policy requirement; it is a moral responsibility and a foundation for sustainable progress. When education becomes inclusive of all, India can truly fulfill the promise of equality and justice envisioned in its Constitution and NEP 2020.

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