

# Governing Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir

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## Abstract

Education is the essential part of any development as it is a means of social improvement and material wellbeing, especially for the economically and socially backward people. Education is a powerful tool to boost the economy of a country. India has one of the largest and diverse education systems in the world. Privatization, widespread expansion, increased autonomy and introduction of Programmes in new and emerging areas have improved access to higher education. At the same time, it has also led to widespread concern on the quality and relevance of the higher education. Higher education In Jammu and Kashmir has also evolved over the years. Governing higher education has assumed significance in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Education Policy, 2020 in India. The study attempts to examine the scenario of higher education at the decentralized level in Jammu and Kashmir. An attempt has been made to analyze governance, performance and quality standards in higher education in Jammu and Kashmir. This paper also assesses the new opportunities and challenges that The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) Assessment, Faculty development and NEP-2020 poses to higher education system in J&K. The objective of NAAC is to make quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of Higher Education Institutions.

**Keywords:** Education, governance, NEP-2020, quality and decentralization

## 1. Introduction

We strive for sustainable economic and social progress. Higher education significantly, adds to economic development and growth by developing

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higher levels of skill and expertise. It plays a substantial role in enhancing the quality of life and addressing significant socio-political challenges. Raising living standards and well-being requires improvement in capabilities of people. According to the OECD, investing in knowledge creation and its dissemination is the key to generating high-salary jobs and boosting growth (Global Education News, 2018). In order to achieve sustainability, institutions of higher learning have begun to incorporate components of the Sustainable Development Goals into their targets and long-term plans in a variety of areas, including teaching/curriculum, administration, research, and public outreach activities etc. (HESI, 2021). These institutions identify skill gaps, design specialized programmes, and develop the necessary skills to help nations increase social cohesion and economic prosperity. They also optimize workforce development in accordance to the changing demands of the economy, develop specific skill-sets, stimulate the skill supply, and boost productivity and growth. With a population of 1.4 billion people (The Economic Times, 2022), India is one of the world's most densely populated countries. In addition, India is well-known for its demographic dividend. India has consistently achieved success in education and has developed many good institutions like IITs, IIMs, NITs and central and state universities.

The National Education Policy has enabled India to emerge internationally (Raghu, 2020). The UGC is also striving to make it outstanding by developing implementation strategies and regulations. Notwithstanding the education reform policies, implemented after India's independence, higher education stayed fairly inward-looking. With approximately a thousand universities and forty-thousand colleges, India has the world's most expansive and comprehensive higher education system in terms of number of institutions, while ranking third in terms of diversity and scale (Raghu, 2020). However, India's contribution to the international education system has fallen woefully short of its true potential, which is still untapped.

## **2. Higher Education in Jammu & Kashmir: An Historical Perspective**

Jammu and Kashmir was once the hub of learning Sanskrit (Bazaz, 2018). Students and scholars from all over the country used to travel to J&K for higher learning. Maktabas and Madrasas provided both primary and secondary education under Muslim rule (Younis, 2022). During this time,

renowned institutions of higher learning such as Nalanda, Takshila etc. existed (Bhatnagar, 1990). The former state of Jammu and Kashmir was established as a result of the Amritsar Treaty, which Maharaja Gulab Singh signed with the British administration in March 1846 (Bhagat, 2013). The first sovereign of J&K state, Maharaja Gulab Singh, did not contribute much for education or the advancement of literature and art.

After Maharaja Gulab Singh's reign, spanning from 1846-1856 A.D., the throne was handed down to his son, Maharaja Ranbir Singh. He founded the state's first press, "Vidya Vikas Press," to translate texts into Sanskrit for Hindu scholars (Younis, 2022). He made significant contributions to school education, but Maharaja Pratap Singh prioritized higher education. In 1905, he established the the Annie Besant College in Srinagar and Prince of Wales College in Jammu. In 1916, Maharaja Pratap Singh established a special commission chaired by Mr M, Sharp, Education Commissioner, Government of India (Younis, 2022). This commission gave critical suggestions about college education. Under the chairmanship of K.G. Saiyidain, an education reorganization committee was formed in 1938. A teacher-training school was established in Srinagar based on the committee's recommendations. In 1950, a committee was formed to reorganize the education sector. A.A. Kazmini, the then Director of Education, was appointed as committee chairman. The Committee advocated for free education at every level, from early childhood to higher education. Based on the committee's recommendations, two women's colleges were established, one in Jammu and the other in Srinagar.

### **3. Status of Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir**

Higher Education set-up in any State/U.T. consists of central and state universities and a vast network of colleges. There are 11 universities in J&K. The University of Kashmir was founded in 1949, while the University of Jammu was founded in 1969. For a long period, higher education in Jammu and Kashmir was provided by these two universities. SKUAST Kashmir was established in 1982, and SKUAST Jammu was established in 1999 to cater towards agriculture development. The number of universities in J&K has increased significantly over the last two decades. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) was founded in Katra in 2004. In 2005, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri and the Islamic University of Science and Technology were founded. The former state of Jammu and Kashmir now has two central universities. The Central

University of Kashmir established in 2009, and the Central University of Jammu setup in 2011. Recently, two more universities, Cluster University Srinagar and Cluster University Jammu, have been established by merging 4-5 colleges.

**Table 1:** University Profile in Jammu and Kashmir

<b>University</b>	<b>Year of Establishment</b>
University of Kashmir	1949
University of Jammu	1969
SKUAST Kashmir	1982
SKUAST Jammu	1999
SMVD University Katra	2004
Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri	2005
Islamic University of Science & Technology	2005
Central University of Kashmir	2009
Central University of Jammu	2011
Cluster University of Srinagar	2018
Cluster University of Jammu	2018

The number of Universities in Jammu and Kashmir is still less. J&K has only 1/10th of the Universities compared with other states like Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh having 76 and 73 universities, respectively. There are 142 Government Degree Colleges in Jammu and Kashmir. There are 72 colleges in the Jammu division. Jammu district has the highest number of colleges in the Jammu division, and Poonch district has the lowest number of colleges in the division.

**Table 2:** Government Degree Colleges in Jammu Division

<b>No.</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>No. of Colleges</b>
1	Jammu	18
2	Kathua	09
3	Udhampur	09
4	Rajouri	09
5	Poonch	04
6	Doda	05
7	Reasi	04
8	Kishtwar	04
9	Ramban	05
10	Samba	05
	Total	72

*Source: Department of Higher Education, J&K*

**Table 3:** Government Degree Colleges in Kashmir

<b>No.</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>No. of Colleges</b>
1	Srinagar	11
2	Baramulla	12
3	Anantnag	11
4	Budgam	07
5	Pulwama	06
6	Kupwara	08
7	Ganderbal	02
8	Kulgam	05
9	Shopian	02
10	Bandipora	06
	Total	70

*Source: Department of Higher Education, J&K*

There are 70 colleges in the Kashmir division. Baramulla district has the highest number of colleges in Kashmir (12), and Shopian has the lowest number of colleges in the division. Government institutions and colleges predominantly serve the higher education system in Kashmir. There are five private engineering colleges functioning in the U.T. of J&K. In addition, the state has one IIM, NIT, IIMC, IIT, NIFT, and more than twenty B.Ed. colleges.

#### **4. NIRF Ranking in Universities of Jammu and Kashmir**

According to the NIRF ranking 2022, two universities in Jammu and Kashmir are among the top 100 in India. The top 2 universities are the University of Kashmir (ranked 53 on the NIRF) and the University of Jammu (ranked 56 on the NIRF) (Kashmir Observer, 2022). In addition, according to the NIRF ranking, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University is ranked 101st. According to the most recent NIRF rankings, Kashmir University has dropped 5 spots, falling to 53rd place out of 100 top universities in India, while the University of Jammu has risen 10 spots (Tramboo, 2022). Furthermore, the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar and SMVDU have been named among the top 100 Engineering Institutions in the country. Improving the NIRF ranking in Jammu and Kashmir alludes to improving the quality of higher education. However, the slipping of University of Kashmir in 2022 reflects that improvements are inconsistent. Improvement in ranking is not possible in Jammu and Kashmir till there is improvement in 'Teaching, Learning & Resources', 'Research and Professional Practices', 'Graduation Outcome', 'Outreach & Inclusiveness', and 'Peer Perception'. These are areas of concern in the higher education in J&K.

#### **5. NAAC Accreditation and Colleges of Jammu and Kashmir**

One of the critical elements for the survival of higher education institutions in the nation is NAAC certification with a strong score. Through a thorough examination process, NAAC certification enables institutions of higher learning to understand their strengths, opportunities, and deficiencies. Additionally, NAAC identifies internal planning and resource allocation issues, and its accreditation provides financial bodies with unbiased data to enable them to take a decision about funding the higher education institutions. Additionally, the NAAC assessment supports implementing cutting-edge or current teaching

practices by educational institutions.

In Jammu and Kashmir, there are 142 Government Degree Colleges, including 50 that were established not so long ago. However, there are only 30 colleges that have been certified by the NAAC to date. Only three Degree Colleges have received an A-Grade (Very Good) from NAAC, while the rest have received B-Grade (Good) or C-Grade (Satisfactory), which is cause of concern. For quality higher education in J&K, the NAAC grade has to be relatively high and that can't happen without the significant improvement in various components of the higher education. For the continued sustainability of higher educational institutions in the country, the Higher Education Department has decided that all Government Degree Colleges need to be graded through NAAC as soon as possible. To effectively implement National Education Policy 2020, which calls for giving graded authority to all Degree Colleges by a specific deadline, the Higher Education Department has established NAAC accreditation committees led by Nodal Principals of the Jammu and Kashmir divisions.

## **6. Teaching Faculty and Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir**

In J&K, there were 3501 assistant professors, 141 physical training instructors, 142 principals, and professors authorized to teach in the 97 degree-granting institutions. After the state was divided into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019, the higher education staff was also divided between the two Union Territories. As a result, 74 assistant professor positions were assigned to Ladakh U.T and 3427 assistant professor positions were given to Jammu and Kashmir U. T. via SRO 816. In 2019, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir approved 51 new degree programmes in remote parts of the U.T. However, only 208 positions were added as a result of Government Order No. 179, which was issued on February 14, 2020. There is a shortage of teaching staff in colleges which were established around 10 to 15 years back.

The Higher Education Department has calculated the need for 5500 Assistant Professor posts in Higher Education, with a ratio of 1:80 for the Science stream and 1:320 for the Humanities and Home Science stream. In the Higher Education Department, out of 3427 Assistant Professors, only 2663 Assistant Professors, 82 PTIs, and 74 librarians are currently employed; the other positions have been vacant for more than three years.

Additionally, from March 2018 to March 2021, approximately 224 assistant professors and principals departed from the Higher Education Department, and more than 100 will do so in 2021–2022. The Higher Education Department will experience severe human resource shortages in degree and engineering colleges. The approval of 51 new degree-granting institutions in 2019 gave residents living in remote places a hope to get higher education. The educated youth in that region aspire to receive high-quality education right at their doorsteps, but these universities must have the required teaching staff.

## **7. Gross Enrollment Ratio and Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir**

The GER measures the proportion of students enrolled in higher education to the total population between 18 to 23. A high GER typically denotes a high level of participation. In Jammu and Kashmir, there are approximately 14 lakh young people between the 18-23 age group (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, barely 5% of these 14 lakh young people are enrolled in institutions in J&K. Students from J&K are also registered in remote learning programmes, including IGNOU, MANUU, and Jamia Millia Islamia, as well as undergraduate programmes at outside colleges through the Prime Ministers Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS). Statistics show that just 31% of young people in the 18-23 age group are enrolled in higher education institutions. This is relatively low, and the J&K government is facing a significant challenge in raising the GER, as specified in the NEP-2020. By 2035, the higher education sector's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is expected to reach 50% (MHRD, 2020). J&K needs to make concerted improvements in different areas so as to meet this challenge. Due to lack of faculty and inadequate infrastructure, the current intake is minimal.

As a result of increased demand for admission, 6533 additional seats have recently been added to institutions throughout the Jammu Division. To further increase the GER in J&K, the J&K government must transform colleges into hubs of activities for students in addition to centres of excellence. Increased enrollment in remote colleges would enhance GER. Without improved infrastructure and effective faculty, this intake would not rise. The enhanced GER will guarantee continued supply of skilled human resources i.e better academics, researchers, and skilled workers who will help in the growth of the economy of J& K.



## **8. Digital Education and Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir**

The ICT revolution has made it possible to enhance teaching and learning processes and broaden educational services' scope and quality (Ganie, 2022). Digital education is the key to utilizing this enormous potential. Digital education has altered the global education paradigm by offering open access to simple online certification programs, skill development efforts, degree programs, remote resources, knowledge sharing, as well as anytime and any-place systems for attending classes. The development of the next generation of "knowledge workers" is crucial in today's knowledge society. With 12 million people and approximately 68% of the population under 35 years of age, Jammu and Kashmir should capitalize on its demographic-dividends by upskilling, upgrading, and reskilling its youth in contemporary technologies, reducing the gender and area-wise education disparities, building the foundational infrastructure for education, reviewing educational policies that place a strong emphasis on industry-tailored vocational programmes and the development of scientific aptitude in students.

Digital education can potentially increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Jammu and Kashmir due to the growing number of internet users in the region. It can also improve quality of education by making it more accessible, inclusive, and affordable and can also assist in retraining the labor force for career advancement. The COVID-19 lockdown, which resulted in the discontinuity of conventional learning, has prompted a transition towards e-learning due to the availability of cost effective, adaptable, and fully accessible online educational materials and knowledge-sharing virtual portals. The learning paradigm is being dramatically transformed in higher education because of digital education. Due to its access to a large section of student population, low infrastructure expenses, and high quality, digital education is more affordable than traditional education. Online education is more advantageous due to its "anywhere, any time, and any pace" flexibility. While female literacy in Jammu and Kashmir is 56.43% and male literacy is 76.75% (Directorate of Economics & Statistics, 2013), e-learning has surfaced as a valuable instrument for closing the gender gap. The COVID-19 global lockdown, which forced the closure of traditional educational institutions, has compelled an immediate shift towards online learning, establishing it as an excellent option for learning in times of emergency.

To promote ICT and digital education, the Government of J&K announced in October 2021 that the Higher Education Department would give tablets to almost 75,000 first-year students enrolled in various undergraduate courses (Surbhi, 2021). Additionally, the Department of School Education will distribute tablets to 2000 more kids from tribal communities enrolled in schools in the Jammu and Kashmir region (Surbhi, 2021). Technology use improves students' employability, which is one of higher education's primary goals. Immediate intervention is required to increase literacy rates and eliminate racial and gender inequities in schooling. Achieving the highest levels of digital literacy among people is necessary. E-content must be multi-lingual in at least all of the Union Territory's official languages in order to cater to a diverse audience. Before beginning digital education programmes, proactive digital privacy safeguards must be implemented in addition to the strict application of cyber laws.

Any project for digital education must have uninterrupted high-speed internet access to succeed. Jammu and Kashmir should strive to create a knowledge-based economy by giving its people access to widespread digital education programmes that would help them develop market-relevant skills, and scientific temperament. Several issues must be resolved to ensure the success of digital education programmes, and to take advantage of the potential outlined in National Education Policy 2020.

## **9. Faculty Development in Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir**

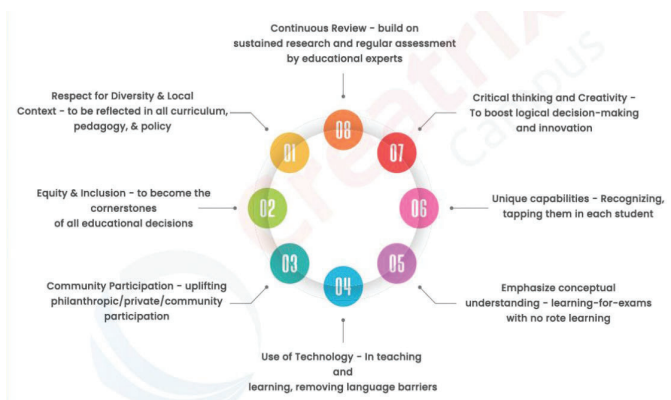
With the founding of academic staff colleges in 1986, the official development of faculty in higher education in Jammu & Kashmir had also started. Numerous universities in Jammu and Kashmir, including NIT, University of Kashmir, University of Jammu, etc., provide a variety of faculty development programmes, including orientation and refresher courses. Faculty members have been permitted by the Department of Higher Education to regularly attend these programmes even outside of the U.T. at different UGC-Human Resource Development Centers of several state and central universities.

The Higher Education Department struck an agreement with IIT Jammu in 2019 to give faculty development a fresh perspective and lay the groundwork for enhancing the quality of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir. According to the agreement, the IIT will share cutting-edge infrastructure and research resources with educational institutions to raise

the caliber of research in the area. The IIT Jammu’s expertise in several areas, which includes big data, cloud computing, machine learning etc. will expand the staff and students’ knowledge base. The agreement opens the door for enhancing the quality of higher education in U.T.

Collaborations in academia, research, administration, and consulting are included in the agreement. This collaboration would lay the groundwork for strengthening cooperation to improve faculty expertise in degree colleges, faculty development programs in various disciplines for already working faculty members, youth employment, and knowledge sharing to improve faculty members' skill set. They will collaborate to improve faculty members' skill sets by offering multiple academic staff development programs year-round, preparing them with progressive teaching methods and research competence to provide quality education to students.

## 10. National Education Policy 2020 and Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir



**Figure 1:** Principles of National Education Policy

The National Policy of Education from 1986, which had been in place for 34 years, was superseded on July 29, 2020, by National Education Policy 2020, which aims to stimulate a radical reform of the Indian school and higher education systems. The report prepared by a committee chaired by renowned space scientist Dr Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, served as the foundation for NEP-2020. To help India become a global knowledge superpower, National Education Policy 2020 aspires for an education system that is firmly ingrained in Indian culture and ideology and actively

contributes to India's long-term transformation into a just and interactive knowledge - based society. Our institutions' curricula and instructional practices, according to this policy, must instill in students a profound admiration for "basic duties and constitutional principles", a sense of affiliation to one's country, and an understanding of their responsibilities and obligations in a rapidly evolving world.

The primary goal of the NEP-2020 is to revolutionize the country into a flourishing knowledge - based society by restructuring the school and higher education systems to include humanistic and constitutional value systems, critical thinking and problem solving skills, utilizing advanced technology, and community participation, To nourish and develop each student's unique abilities, NEP-2020 recognizes that the approach to education used in the Indian educational system must transform in order to make education quite experiential, thorough, consolidated, objective, discussion-based, versatile, and entertaining.

In contrast to the earlier education policy, which was primarily concerned with challenges of accessibility and equity, the NEP-2020 is based on the fundamental ideas of accessibility, accountability, reliability, significance, affordability, and impartiality. It is also consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted in 2015 by India and all United Nations Member States. NEP-2020 envisions establishment of more institutions of higher education across different states in India along with faculty and organizational autonomy, and the redesign of curriculum, teaching methods, and student support systems at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (MHRD, 2020).

J&K is also preparing to recognize the aims and goals of NEP-2020 by visualizing itself as a new knowledge center by developing human capital as well as institution building in higher education and creating a positive eco-system for the formation of state-of-the-art learning institutes of national and global significance. It is crucial for J&K to strive for a skilled, culturally competent, and critically sensitive human capital capable of contributing to the country's scientific, cultural, and human development in all areas.

The government of J&K has already made commendable progress in the field of education, establishing a commission to implement the NEP-2020 in September, 2022. J&K ranks first among the country's northern states and union territories in terms of literacy (67%). J&K's higher education

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 30.9% is higher than the national average of 26.3%. While J&K has 47 NAAC-accredited colleges, an additional 100 are awaiting accreditation (Bhat, 2020) aligned with the government's NEP-2020 objectives.

To support and promote entrepreneurship, design innovation and incubation centers should be set up at all degree colleges. The J&K government's recent establishment of the Centre for Invention, Innovation, Incubation, and Training (CIIT) at Govt. Polytechnic College, Baramulla, is a substantial step in this direction (Bhat, 2020). It aims to improve industry-academia partnerships while also improving students' competencies so that they can compete and achieve success in global markets.

NEP 2020 hopes to increase the GER in higher education, which include vocational education, from 26.3% to 50% by 2035 by providing over 3.5 crore new seats to higher education institutions across the country (Bhat, 2020). As a result, NEP-2020 requires all higher education institutions to take a more proactive approach in implementing this policy. In addition to infrastructure and other requirements, the primary focus of reforms should be on the teacher, the student, and the curriculum. To implement NEP-2020 and advance as world-class institutions of higher learning, a paradigm shift is needed in our thinking, attitude, aspiration, passion, as well as in goal-setting.

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