

# Revamping Higher Education in Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, India

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**Abstract:** Education system is considered as the backbone of any nation and higher education is particularly important for the growth of nation as it is a powerful instrument to build knowledge based society. The higher education in Jammu and Kashmir has undergone massive transformation with tremendous increase in number of institutions. Erroneously it is also looked upon as a lucrative business by some private players at the cost of its quality even in some crucial areas like medical education and engineering. The curriculum, teaching-learning and evaluation methods require revisions. The prevailing system is more oriented in generating educated unemployed youth rather than producing skilled manpower. The proportion of contractual lecturers is very high across all institutions of UT. Both technology and infrastructure in education require upgradation. The recruitment policies are not fool proof. Only the standard certification may be given credits for Career Advancement Scheme in higher education. Several institutions are marred with inefficient and corrupt administrators. There is no mechanism in place to seek feedback of educational administrators. The focus must shift from establishing more institutions to their consistent performance. The National Education Policy 2020 is to be implemented in its true spirit with focus to create vibrant multidisciplinary institutions.

**Keywords:** Transformation, Lucrative Business, Skilled Manpower, Multidisciplinary Institutions

## I. INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented development in every walk of life and globalization greatly influenced the education process of all societies. In modern society good education optimally contributes to the betterment of quality life of people. Education in Jammu and Kashmir is free up to the university level. The literacy rate of Jammu and Kashmir as per 2011 census is 67.16% and out of it male and female literacy is 76.75% and 56.43% respectively. After scrapping of Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir has been given the status of Union Territory (UT). Now it is viewed as a positive step towards the educational development of its people. The higher education department of Jammu and Kashmir Government frames relevant regulations and policies to improve the higher education in consonant with Union Government. It also reflects the objectives in its vision and mission statements. The department envisions to make Jammu and Kashmir a hub of academic excellence by providing equitable access to value-based and quality education by keeping in pace with the evolving socio-economic and cultural trends. In its mission it strives to promote quality through sustained efforts, convictions, dedication and raising institutions to new pinnacle of excellence. Jammu and Kashmir has 12 universities including professional, general multidisciplinary and non-multidisciplinary besides 10 institutes of national importance. Out of 12 universities two are central universities which are Central University of Jammu and Central University of Kashmir. There are 9 State Universities including University of Jammu and University of Kashmir which have been ranked by NIRF at 52 and 48 positions respectively. The Central Sanskrit University, Jammu is the only deemed university in Jammu and Kashmir. The Institutes of National Importance include All India Institute of Medical Sciences Jammu, All India Institute of Medical Sciences Srinagar, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Srinagar, IIT Jammu, National Institute of Technology Srinagar (Ranked 69 in NIRF Ranking 2021), Indian Institute of Mass Communication Jammu, Indian Institute of Mass Communication Srinagar, Indian Institute of Management Jammu and Indian Institute of Management Srinagar. At Gulmarg in Kashmir there is an Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM). There are 9 Medical Colleges including 3 Dental Colleges also. The UT has 2 each Affiliated Ayurvedic and Unani Medical Colleges, 7 Affiliated Engineering Colleges, 6 Affiliated Colleges of Computer Science, 136 Affiliated Govt. Degree Colleges, 24 Affiliated Private Degree Colleges, 3 Autonomous Degree Colleges, 153



Affiliated B.Ed Colleges including 2 Govt. B.Ed Colleges, 10 Affiliated Law Colleges, 2 Affiliated Colleges of Physical Education and 9 Affiliated Nursing and Physiotherapy Colleges. There are 4 Research Institutes including CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu and Kashmir Forest Research Institute, Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Research Institute. It also has 2 Affiliated Music and Fine Arts Institutes.

The higher education in Jammu and Kashmir has undergone massive transformation in the last two decades with the tremendous increase in the number of universities, institutes of national importance and colleges both private as well as Government aided. Though there is substantial number of institutions of higher education in the UT but several of these institutions are of recent origin. There is no doubt that this expansion of higher education has lead to its reach to the much needed deprived areas. There is also a dark side of this expansion in the form of its marketing as a lucrative sector by profit seekers seen in the mushrooming growth of private colleges of education, engineering and elementary teacher training institutes. When the tertiary education is looked upon as a lucrative business obviously the quality is compromised. Many private players in this sector have been doing this business at the cost of quality even in the crucial sectors of medical education and engineering. Quality is the degree of excellence of the educational exercise. It is the delivering on the needs and aspirations of the society and the judgment about the level of goal achievement. In this context the quality of higher education becomes a primary concern. The prevailing higher education system in UT is more oriented towards generation of educated unemployed youth rather than focusing on skill development and professional manpower augmentation. The expansion in tertiary education without taking care of its quality leads to growing unemployment of educated youth. There are a lot many colleges which have been established just because of political pressure only to please the vote bank of regional leaders. Many such colleges have very poor enrolments. They are functioning without adequate teaching faculty and even from primary or middle school buildings. The deterioration in the academic standards is the serious problems of our education system.

The objective of National Education Policy 2020 is to revamp the higher education system, create world class institutions across the country and to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio to at least 50% by 2035. Indian higher education system is becoming aware of the need for quality education. There is an urgent need of taking concrete steps to improve quality in the higher education system of UT and some organized efforts are required to achieve the goal.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research article is based on both the primary and secondary data. The data has been acquired from different research reports, journals, websites, research papers, higher education institutions, Government reports and policies. The research is based on the study of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education institutions, courses and programmes of teaching offered, existing infrastructure, available faculty positions, research, teaching practices, e-learning, teaching-learning resources, internship programmes, student placements, NAAC accreditations and implementation of NEP 2020 in both urban and rural institutions of Jammu and Kashmir UT. The data acquired during the period of study also includes interactions with faculty, students and other stakeholders. The information was recorded from 50 faculty members and 300 students of different higher education institutions besides conducting student satisfaction surveys, placements and employment opportunities after attaining tertiary education in both the professional and non-professional institutions.

## III. SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Curriculum Development:** The existing curricula in higher education institutions of Jammu and Kashmir need to be innovative and progressive in nature. As per UGC guidelines the new Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has been implemented in the UT at undergraduate level from 2016, students have been given the option to choose the subject combinations of their choice. As a result numerous subject combinations are available thereby making the curriculum more flexible. English is not among the compulsory subjects to the students. Students from rural background are usually not proficient in English language. The students are very poor in language and they cannot even write an application for the issue of Bonafide Certificate and similar other requirements in various offices. English should also be compulsory for all the students at the undergraduate level by doing necessary reforms in the curriculum. As per the National Education Policy 2020

the lacuna in the existing curriculum should be removed by the essential revision of curriculum at all levels of higher education keeping in view the changing requirements of society.

- **Adhoc Faculty:** The colleges in UT have witnessed a rapid expansion over the period of two decades whereas the higher education in the colleges is plagued with serious problem of the shortage of teaching faculty as majority of the peripheral colleges have handful of the permanent faculty and as such these colleges are mostly functioning with adhoc arrangement by the working of contractual lectures. In many colleges about 70-80% of the teaching faculty is being run by these hired teachers and even in some colleges 90-95% of the teaching faculty is of adhoc arrangement. This practice is also prevailing even in the universities and professional colleges. Though the action has already been initiated to mitigate this issue yet it has not been accomplished and a lot more is to be done.
- **Faculty Recruitment:** The recruitment of teaching faculty in the higher education institutions should be efficient and transparent. It is usual practice to appoint familiar faces in universities and other institutions. Often the researchers of highly influential guide are appointed to such positions. The political interventions in the selection process are not uncommon. Only the meritorious, competent and excellent researchers shall be recruited. Similar approach may be followed for the appointment of educational administrators including Vice Chancellors, Directors and Principals besides their appropriate orientation and training in order to make them able administrators and educational leaders. Several institutions are marred with inefficient and corrupt administrators. There is no mechanism in place to seek the feedback of administrators.
- **Methods of Teaching:** Lecture method has been extensively used to cover the syllabus from examination point of view. As such students are not involved in the teaching and learning process due to paucity of the time. The focus is only to complete the syllabus well before the examination. Other important teaching and learning activities like the conduct of seminars on the concerned subject are not being carried out for the students in the classroom. Moreover, individual attention cannot be given to each and every student due to the pressure of syllabus and shortage of lectures. With the introduction of CBCS system the conventional methods of teaching do not hold good quality education. Now it has become very essential that every classroom be equipped with smart interactive whiteboards and LED panels with long power backups.
- **Evaluation Methods:** Evaluation plays a critical role in the teaching-learning process. As an integral part of teaching and learning evaluation should be planned concurrently with instruction and get integrated into the learning cycle. The methodology employed in evaluation in higher education is diverse and must be appropriate to the purpose for which the evaluation is being used. The qualitative methods like surveys, focus groups and direct observation are as important as qualitative methods which produce numerical data. The current examination system gauges the ability of students to memorize and to learn the study material related to the course. The students have to pass the courses of study usually in single final examination. The designing and incorporating a continuous and creative appraisal system as seen in most western countries seems to be the need of hour. About 80% of the students appearing in first semester examination at the undergraduate level are among the failures. This figure is not insignificant and as such can neither be ignored nor may the blame be shifted to the school education. It can only be redressed by the much needed reforms either in the curricular framework or in the evaluation system or else the rotten-lot (80% failures) will be the waste of youth talent. Some useful tools like homework, projects, participation in classroom discussion and presentations as envisioned in the NEP 2020 can prove very effective.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Majority of institutions in the UT have deficient infrastructure in different forms including insufficient buildings such as classrooms, library blocks, examination blocks, sports complex, dispensary, laboratories and browsing centre. Lack of equipments, scientific material, apparatuses and qualified technicians also hamper qualitative teaching. The upcoming of modern high-tech labs seem to be a distant dream in many institutions of higher learning. In order to boost the infrastructural development it requires to substantially increasing allocation of funds to the institutions of higher education.
- **Insufficient Funds:** Almost all the universities in India are starved with funds. Similar plight of the higher education is witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir UT. Most of the budgetary outlay is spent on the salary component and superannuating benefits. Therefore, meager resources are left for the upkeep and

development of the institution. The allocation of funds by the Government to various colleges is insufficient. Therefore, most of the government colleges have been facing a financial crunch which severely hampers the quality of higher education. There are stringent guidelines associated with the utilization of allocated funds which need revision for the optimal, transparent and timely utilization of funds. The corrupt practices at the level of unequal allocation of funds to the institutions need to be identified and checked.

- **Introduction of Vocational and Applied Subjects:** The focus of higher education should shift from traditional subjects to skill development and vocational or applied subjects. In order to remove the mismatch between education system and employment opportunities industrial personnel should be associated with curriculum designing and development. Industry related courses should be introduced to expose and train the students to industrial problems and requirements. Companies should be sought out for organizing placement drives in the educational institutions. This will help in linking our education system with employment and thereby generating the much needed motivation among the students.
- **Teacher Assessment and Training:** Teacher assessment is the appraisal of the ability of the teacher. It includes collection, analysis, interpretation and use of information which forms evidence for the quality development of teaching and learning process. The assessment is more than a measurement which involves issues of value, quality and effectiveness. Several different criteria and standards of excellence are required for different faculty members. The motivation of faculty members changes as they progress through different career stages and aim for different achievements. Moreover, faculty members conduct their work in different ways. Therefore, diversity and not uniformity is the key of their evaluation. No single piece of evidence can adequately represent complex faculty performance. The sources of evidence can be oneself, faculty colleagues, administration, students, former students and other stakeholders. The techniques for the collection of feedback may involve rating scales, observations, interviews, written appraisals and online feedback systems. The existing system of faculty training requires complete overhauling. Special emphasis is to be given for regular updating of faculty through dynamic training processes including online training through SWAYAM and DIKSHA portals. Only the standard certification may be given credits for Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) for placement of teaching faculty in higher education.
- **Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC):** In order to internalize the quality inputs, all the government colleges have established IQACs. Their main responsibility is to maintain quality standards of higher education within the institution. But for reasons better known to the administration these cells are not functioning optimally in most of the institutions. The functioning of IQAC is directly related to the activism and coupling action of both the head of institution and IQAC coordinator. The preferences and hidden interests of institutional heads often hamper its functioning. The usual practice of time pass is a common phenomenon. The activism of IQAC seems to be very imperative for the better quality of higher education.
- **Integration of Technology:** Digital India Campaign is helping to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Similarly, technology plays an important role in the improvement of educational processes and outcomes. There is lack of sufficient technology at all levels of curriculum delivery in the UT. The e-learning requires further promotion at all levels. The development and delivery of teaching-learning e-content and also the newly introduced learning management system (LMS system) are still at its infancy. Their benefits are not properly getting to the desired stakeholders. There is also the need to popularize and integrate technology-based education platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM across all the higher educational institutions of the region.
- **Implementation of New Education Policy (NEP-2020):** In the back drop of the prevailing education system including the existing curricula at various levels of education and their implementation it is very crucial to implement new National Educational Policy 2020 framed at the national level keeping in mind the present and future needs of society aiming at the development of multidisciplinary universities focussing on high quality research and education. States may set up apex state level bodies for education which may be called Rajya Shiksha Aayog or State Education Commission to ensure coordination and synergy between itself and Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (National Education Commission), the apex body headed by Prime Minister of India. The current set up has been designed to ensure excellence of execution and attainment of education across the

country involving all sections of people. It is being partially implemented across all the institutions of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir UT which may not serve the purpose of developing skilled manpower which can contribute to the national development in a better way.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

In order to successfully meet the future challenges in tertiary education, the government must accord prime importance to it and provide as many facilities as possible. The physical infrastructure in higher education institutions requires drastic improvements. A transparent and efficient system of recruitment of both teaching faculty and administrators of institutions should be in place. Local Government of UT should also earmark on a substantial expenditure in higher education. The practice of contractual engagement should be stopped as early as possible. The National Education Policy 2020 is not being implemented in its true spirit. There shall be at least one multidisciplinary higher education institution at each district of UT. The focus must shift from creation of institutions to their consistent performance. E-learning must be encouraged at all levels of tertiary education including both the teachers and taught. The skill development initiatives are to be given impetus. By enabling open access to remote resources, knowledge sharing, easy online certification and degree programmes and any-where, any-time, any-pace mechanisms for attending classes the digital education may revamp the prevailing scenario of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir UT to bring youth to contribute actively in national development.

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### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest either in conduct, manuscript preparation or publication of this research work. All the contents of this article including methodology, results and discussion, suggestions, conclusion and figures are based on the original research work of the author.

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**Table-1: Universities in Jammu and Kashmir UT**

Name of University	State/Central	Discipline	Est. Year
Central University of Kashmir	Central University	Multidisciplinary	2009
Central University of Jammu	Central University	Multidisciplinary	2016
Central Sanskrit University, Jammu	Deemed University	Sanskrit	2002
University of Kashmir, Srinagar	State University	Multidisciplinary	1949
University of Jammu, Jammu	State University	Multidisciplinary	1968
Cluster University of Jammu	State University	Multidisciplinary	2016
Cluster University of Srinagar	State University	Multidisciplinary	2016
Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Science and Technology, Jammu	State University	Agricultural Science and Technology	1999
Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Science and Technology, Srinagar	State University	Agricultural Science and Technology	1982
Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra, Jammu	State University	Multidisciplinary	2004
Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Dhanour, Jammu	State University	Multidisciplinary	2005
Islamic University of Science and Technology, Kashmir	State University	Multidisciplinary	2005

**Table-2: Higher Education Institutions in Jammu & Kashmir UT**

Central Universities	02
State Universities	09
Deemed to be Universities	01
Institutes of National Importance	10
Research Institutes	04
Affiliated Medical Colleges	06
Affiliated Dental Colleges	03
Affiliated Ayurvedic Colleges	02
Affiliated Medical Unani Colleges	02
Affiliated Nursing/Physiotherapy Colleges	09
Affiliated Engineering Colleges	07
Affiliated Computer Science Colleges	06
Affiliated Govt. Degree Colleges	136
Autonomous Degree Colleges	03
Affiliated B.Ed Colleges (Private)	151
Affiliated Govt. B.Ed Colleges	02
Affiliated Music & Fine Arts Institute	02
Affiliated Law Colleges	10
Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering	01
Affiliated Physical Science Govt. Colleges	02
Affiliated Degree Colleges /Oriental Colleges (Non-Govt.)	24