

1. Title of the Practice

Holistic Adoption of National Education Policy, 2020 at University of Kashmir

2. Objectives

National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) outlines a transformative vision for Higher Education in the country. University of Kashmir is one of the first institutions to implement the policy in principle with an aim to transform the institution by fostering holistic development, promoting equity, and emphasizing critical thinking and creativity. University of Kashmir has aligned its practices with NEP-2020 to create a vibrant and inclusive learning environment for students and foster a culture of critical and constructive thinking. By recognizing NEP-2020 as an institutional best practice, University of Kashmir strives to mark a transformative impact on society and create citizen-leaders of tomorrow to take the nation forward.

3. The Context

Implementation of National Education Policy 2020 entailed addressing regional dynamics, infrastructure needs, equity in access, faculty training, curriculum reform, technological integration, stakeholder engagement, quality assurance, and financial sustainability.

Balancing national standards in the local context while ensuring equitable access to education has been one of the key challenges in implementation of the policy. Devising and adapting a well envisioned curriculum, enhancing faculty capacity, and leveraging technology amid connectivity issues owing to demographics and topographical challenges has been crucial. Implementation of NEP 2020 was done in a manner to optimally utilize manpower and infrastructure resources while proactively engaging stakeholders. Long-term outcomes have also been outlined and means to secure them are being constantly identified, which are essential for its successful implementation.

4. The Practice

NEP Cell was established at University of Kashmir as per the directive of UGC in March, 2022 primarily to facilitate the successful transition from the earlier education system to that of National Education Policy, 2020. Since its inception, NEP Cell has been proactively organizing numerous general awareness programmes on NEP-2020 themes including introduction of Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) with participation of Heads of the affiliated colleges and Academic Counsellors of all departments of the University. The Cell organized workshops, conferences around the prominent dimensions of NEP-2020 like Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), option

of Multiple Entry Exit, Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Additionally, theme-based orientation workshops have also been organized including a recently concluded 2 Day workshop on formulation of an Instrument for conduct of Academic Audit and mechanism for its implementation at University of Kashmir. Besides this, a national level conference revolving around various sub-themes of NEP 2020 was also organized.

The policy offers a unique proposition and has been favourably considered as an institutional best practice. A few distinctive features of NEP 2020 in the context of University of Kashmir include:

- *Multidisciplinary Education:* NEP 2020 has laid strong emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach, allowing students to choose courses across disciplines. This move has encouraged the University of Kashmir to conscientiously introduce and offer a diverse range of courses and programs, fostering holistic learning and skill development.
- *Flexibility and Choice:* The policy advocates for flexibility in curriculum design, allowing for tailoring of programs according to the needs and interests of students. 'Design Your Degree' programme was launched as a landmark concept in this direction. This flexibility empowers us to adapt our offerings to market and student requirements thus fostering inclusivity and relevance.
- *Integration of Vocational Education:* NEP 2020 integrates vocational education into mainstream academic programs, aiming to bridge the gap between education and employability. This integration equips us to offer a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, enhancing graduates' readiness for the corporate workforce.
- *Technology Integration:* The policy advocates for integration of technology in education delivery, assessment, and administration. We at the University of Kashmir have optimistically seized this aspect by leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes, ensuring greater accessibility and efficiency.
- *Emphasis on Research and Innovation:* The policy places strong emphasis on research and innovation, thereby, encouraging us to prioritize these aspects in our academic endeavours. This emphasis also fosters a culture of inquiry, creativity, and problem-solving, contributing to both academic excellence and societal development.
- *Environmental Sustainability:* NEP-2020 lays special significance on environmental sustainability and ecological consciousness in educational practices. The University of Kashmir, being situated in a region of ecological significance, is committed to integrating environmental education in curriculum at all levels that includes research practices in campus operations thereby fostering environmental stewardship and resilience.

- *Internationalization*: A critical area promoted by NEP-2020 is the internationalization of higher education which is aimed at facilitating collaborations with foreign institutions and encouraging academic exchange programs. This aspect is opening avenues for the University of Kashmir to engage with global partners, enriching our academic environment and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

By holistically adopting the various outlined parameters and verticals of National Education Policy, 2020 including the ones highlighted above, the University of Kashmir is creating unique opportunities to enhance the quality, relevance, and inclusivity of higher education, thereby contributing to the nation's overall growth and development.

5. Evidence of Success

The implementation of NEP-2020 at University of Kashmir is the dawn of a new age of holistic development and learner-centric approach, and its positive effects are encouraging. The success resulting from the choice of NEP-2020 as a best practice is evident from the following broad indicators:

- NIRF ranking of University of Kashmir improved from Rank 53 in 2022 to Rank 33 in 2023.
- The quantum of complaints received from affiliated colleges where NEP-2020 has been implemented at UG level has reduced drastically thereby indicative of the success of NEP-2020 implementation for the past 2 years.
- NEP-2020 has emerged as a powerful vision policy for the University of Kashmir since new and hitherto unattended areas are being actively explored including Industry-Institution linkages, meaningful MoUs with corporates and other institutions for internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job trainings etc., focus on research and innovation, fostering creativity and entrepreneurial acumen. Results of improvement are evident from cordial atmosphere on campus, greater student satisfaction, scholarly engagement among other indicators. Pertinently, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of patents granted to students in the past years which was unheard of earlier.

6. Problems encountered and resources required

Successful implementation of NEP-2020 is an exhaustive yet exciting journey and cannot be adopted overnight. Having embraced such a pioneering trajectory has presented several challenges that include:

- *Infrastructure and Resources*: A major challenge is lack of adequate infrastructure and resources, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and technological facilities, necessary to support the implementation of the policy's recommendations effectively.

- *Faculty Development:* NEP-2020 lays great emphasis on the need for faculty to be trained in innovative pedagogies, multidisciplinary teaching methods, and new technologies. However, ensuring comprehensive faculty development programs and overcoming resistance to change continues to pose a challenge that is being aptly addressed.
- *Curriculum Reforms:* Implementing a multidisciplinary approach and flexible curriculum design advocated by NEP-2020 requires regular curriculum reforms. This process does face resistance from traditional academic structures and administrative hurdles in updating and aligning curricula with the policy's objectives. However, the NEP Cell has been regularly and effectively monitoring and ensuring cooperation from all concerned quarters.
- *Equity and Inclusivity:* Kashmir's unique socio-economic, cultural, demographic and topographical dynamics need to be considered while addressing the requirements of equitable access to education, inclusivity across socio-economic, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. However, the challenges of existing disparities in infrastructure, resources, and equitable opportunities pose an exceptional challenge.
- *Quality Assurance:* Maintaining and enhancing academic quality while expanding access and promoting autonomy poses a significant challenge. Ensuring that educational standards are not compromised during the implementation process requires robust quality assurance mechanisms and continuous monitoring and evaluation which is being actively considered.

These challenges are being regularly reviewed and appropriate action is being taken to address them effectively. In this way, the University of Kashmir is constantly striving towards holistically realizing the vision and goals outlined in NEP-2020, thereby making its adoption as a successful institutional best practice.