



National Education Policy and Jammu & Kashmir: A Post Article 370 Assessment

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Abstract:

The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 marked a significant constitutional and administrative shift in Jammu and Kashmir, resulting in greater alignment with national policy frameworks. In this context, the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 assumes particular importance, as it represents a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at transforming India's education system in terms of Access, Equity, Quality and Governance. This paper presents a conceptual assessment of the National Education Policy in Jammu and Kashmir in the Post Article 370 period, focusing on the changing structures of educational governance and policy integration. Drawing on constitutional provisions, policy documents and existing scholarly literature, the study examines how the removal of special status has reshaped the institutional environment for education in the region. The paper conceptually analyses key components of NEP related to school education, higher education and discusses emerging opportunities and challenges within the regional context. The study emphasizes the importance of context-sensitive implementation of national education reforms and identifies the need for future empirical research on educational outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key words: National Education policy, Article 370, Educational Governance, Jammu and Kashmir

Introduction:

Education has long been recognized as a critical instrument for social transformation, economic development and nation building. In India, educational planning and policy formulation have evolved in response to constitutional principles, socio-political contexts and developmental priorities. Jammu and Kashmir, owing to its special constitutional status under Article 370 of the Indian constitution, followed a distinct administrative and policy framework for several decades, including in the domain of education. This special status allowed the region a degree of autonomy in policy implementation, which significantly shaped its educational governance and institutional structures.

The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 marked a historic constitutional change, leading to the re-organization of Jammu and Kashmir and its increased integration with national administrative and policy frameworks. This transformation coincided with the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a comprehensive reform initiative aimed at restructuring the Indian education system in line with contemporary global and national demands. The simultaneous occurrence of these two developments has created a unique policy environment for the education sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

While the NEP envisions uniformity in educational standards across the country, the distinctive geographical, socio-cultural and institutional realities of J&K necessitate a careful examination of how national policy frameworks interact with regional contexts. Existing literature has largely focused on the political and constitutional dimensions of Article 370, with limited attention to its implications for sector-specific policies such as education. Moreover, most studies assessing educational change in the region are empirical in nature, leaving a gap in conceptual understanding of policy integration and governance restructuring. In this context, the present paper undertakes a conceptual assessment of the National Education Policy in J&K in the Post-Article 370 period. It seeks to analyze how changes in constitutional and administrative arrangements have reshaped educational governance and policy implementation, while highlighting opportunities and challenges emerging from the integration of NEP within the regional context.

National Education Policy 2020: An overview

The policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new education system that is aligned with the needs of 21st century. The implementation of previous policies on education has focused largely on issues of access and equity. The unfinished agenda of the National policy on Education 1986, modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92), is appropriately dealt with in this policy. A major development since the last policy of 1986/92 has been the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 which laid down legal underpinnings for achieving elementary education.

Key features of NEP 2020 includes:

1. Universal access to education from early childhood to higher education.
2. Emphasis on Foundational literacy and numeracy.
3. Integration of vocational education and skill development.
4. Multidisciplinary and holistic education.
5. Promotion of regional languages and mother tongue as medium of instruction at the foundational level.
6. Use of Technology in education through digital platforms.
7. Teacher empowerment and professional development.

NEP 2020 envisions an education system that fosters critical thinking, creativity and innovation while ensuring equity and inclusion across diverse social groups.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF NEP2020: The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) aims to transform India's Education system, emphasizing holistic development inclusivity and lifelong learning. It focuses on shifting from rote learning to critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity. The policy also aims to integrate technology into education and promote multilingualism and Indian languages.

I. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education:

- Focus on Holistic Development: The NEP 2020 focuses on allround development of the individual including cognitive, socio-emotional, physical and artistic skills, aiming.
- Multidisciplinary Approach: For flexible and integrated learning experience students are encouraged to explore different disciplines and subjects.
- No Hard Separations: The policy aims to remove traditional barriers between Arts, Sciences and Vocational Streams.

II. Inclusive and Equitable Education:

- Universal Access: The NEP 2020 aims to ensure that all childrens irrespective of any discrimination on the basis of caste, color, creed, sex and especially those from the marginalized and disadvantaged groups have access to quality education.
- Targeted Support: The policy provides special provision for those students belonging to socially and economically weaker sections, children with disabilities and girls.
- Equitable System: The NEP 2020 endeavor to create equitable education system where all students have the opportunity to access education.

III. **Technology Integration and Skill Development:**

- **Integrating Technology:**The NEP 2020 encourages to integrate technology in education to enhance teaching and learning and to make it effective and interesting for the learning.
- **Developing 21st century skills:** The policy aims to equip students with the skills necessary for 21st living including problem solving ability,creativity and critical thinking.
- **Vocational Training:**The NEP promotes vocational education and training,preparing students for opting different careers.

IV. **Teacher Empowerment and Quality:**

- **Quality Teacher Training:**The NEP emphasizes the importance of high-quality training and professional development.
- **Recruiting Top Talent:** The policy aims to recruit and retain talented and professional teachers by ensuring fair remuneration,respect and autonomy.
- **Robust Assessment:** The NEP proposes reforms in assessment, moving away from rote memorization and towards more holistic and engaging evaluation methods.

PILLARS OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY (NEP2020)

- ACCESS:** Ensuring that everyone has access to quality education at all levels-pre primary to higher education.
- EQUITY:** Promoting inclusive education and ensuring that all students, including those from marginalized groups have equal opportunities.
- QUALITY:**Focusing on high-quality education that is relevant to the needs of the students and the country.
- AFFORDABILITY:**Making education accessible to all,regardless of their socio-economic background.
- ACCOUNTABILITY:**Ensuring that educational institutions are accountable for the quality of education they provide.

STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION ACCORDING TO NEP 2020:

This policy envisages that the previous 10+2 structure in school education will be modified with a new pedagogical and curricular framework consisting of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18 years.

Stages	Age Group	Duration	Classes
Foundational	3-8 years	5 years	Ist and 2 nd class along with 3 years of pre-primary.
Preparatory	8-11 years	3 years	3 rd , 4 th and Fifth classes
Middle	11-14 years	3 years	6 th , 7 th and 8 th classes
Secondary	14-18 years	4 years	9 th , 10 th , 11 th and 12 th classes.

Main Features of NEP 2020's (5+3+3+4) structure:

- Holistic Development:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic development of learners,equipping them with 21st century skills and promoting critical thinking.It encourages students to explore diverse subjects and connect knowledge across disciplines.
- Experiential learning:**NEP 2020 provides Activity based and first hand learning experiences.
- Flexibility and choice:** NEP 2020 provides students with increased flexibility and choice in selecting subjects and fostering personalized learning experience.
- Emphasis on Early childhood Education (ECCE):** NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of fist five years of a child's development.
- Integration of Technology:** NEP 2020 promotes the use and integration of technology in teaching and learning for making it effective and interesting.

- vi. **Skill-based learning:** NEP 2020 emphasizes that vocational education should start from the middle stage .
- vii. **Reduced Curriculum content:** NEP 2020 reduced the burden of traditional curriculum content and focuses on essential concepts and ideas that promote critical thinking and inquiry based learning.
- viii. **Vocational Education:** NEP 2020 introduced vocational education from grade 6, providing students with practical skills and preparing them for future careers.
- ix. **Inclusion and Equity:** NEP 2020 emphasizes equitable and inclusive education, with special attention given to marginalized groups and regions.

Article 370 and the Educational framework of Jammu and Kashmir:

Article 370 granted special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir, allowing it to have its own constitution and legislative powers in various domains, including education. Prior to its abrogation, the education system in Jammu and Kashmir operated with certain regional adoptions and policies distinct from the rest of India.

While this autonomy allowed for region-specific decision-making, it also resulted in limited integration with national educational reforms. Variations in curriculum standards, governance mechanisms and funding patterns often affected the overall growth and modernization of the education sector. The abrogation of Article 370 facilitated the direct extension of central education policies and schemes to Jammu and Kashmir, thereby creating conditions for uniformity and greater institutional support.

1. **Integration with National policies:** Full implementation of central laws such as Right to Education Act and National Education Policy 2020.
2. **Standardization of Curriculum:** Alignment with National standards like NCERT. Greater uniformity in syllabus, evaluation and academic structure.
3. **Increased Funding and Schemes:** Direct access to central funding for infrastructure development, Digital learning initiatives and Teacher training programs.
4. **Expansion of Higher Education:** Establishment of new institutions such as IITs, AIIMs ,central universities. Increased collaboration with national bodies like UGC and AICTE.

NEP 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir: Post Article 370 scenario:

The post Article 370 period marks a new phase in the educational governance of Jammu and Kashmir. The implementation of NEP 2020 in the region has the potential to bring several positive changes:-

1. **Governance and Policy integration:** Direct central governance has enabled smoother implementation of national schemes such as Samagra Shiksha, Digital education initiatives and higher education reforms. Institutional alignment with national regulatory bodies is expected to improve accountability and standardization.
2. **Access and Infrastructure Development:** NEP 2020 focus on universal access aligns with the needs of remote and rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir. Improved infrastructure, school consolidation and digital connectivity can help bridge educational gaps, especially in hilly and border regions.
3. **Curriculum and Pedagogical Reforms:** The shift towards competency-based learning, multidisciplinary education and vocational training can enhance employability and relevance of education for youth in Jammu and Kashmir.
4. **Higher Education and Research:** The establishment of multidisciplinary higher education institutions and encouragement of research and innovation may strengthen the academic ecosystem in the region.

Challenges in Implementation:

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of NEP 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir faces several challenges:-

- Infrastructural Limitations in rural areas and conflict-affected areas.
- Technological gap and limited internet accessibility.
- Lack of connectivity in harsh winter areas.
- Shortage of trained and well qualified professional teachers.
- Socio-Political vulnerability and trust issues among stakeholders.
- Need for implementation and contextual adaptation of national policies.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for the effective realization of NEP 2020 objectives in the region.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the key features and objectives of National Education Policy 2020.
- To assess the implications of the National Education Policy 2020 for the education system of Jammu and Kashmir in the Post-Article 370 scenario.
- To identify the opportunities created by the implementation of NEP 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir.
- To explore the challenges and constraints in implementing NEP 2020 in the region.
- To suggest measures for effective and context-sensitive implementation of the Policy in Jammu and Kashmir.

Review of Related Literature

The Government of India(2020) conceptualize NEP 2020 as a comprehensive reform framework aimed at restructuring the Indian education system through flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, and skill integration. The policy seeks to address long-standing issue of access, equity and quality.

Tilak(2021) critically argue that while NEP 2020 presents a progressive vision, its implementation is constrained by financial limitations and institutional capacity.

Mehrota (2021) emphasizes that systemic inequalities-particularly in rural and marginalized regions-poses serious challenges to equitable implementation. These critiques indicate that NEP 2020, despite its transformative intent, requires context-sensitive execution strategies.

Bhat(2018) identifies infrastructural deficits, teacher shortage, and limited access in remote areas as persistent barriers to educational development.

Ahmad and Hussain (2019) highlight regional and gender disparities in educational participation, emphasizing the uneven distribution of resources. Studies such as Shafi (2020) also point to disruptions in schooling due to socio-political instability, which have adversely affected learning continuity and outcomes.

The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 marked a shift towards centralized governance and policy uniformity. According to Khan (2022), the transition enabled the direct implementation of central schemes and policies, potentially improving resource allocation and administrative efficiency.

However, Raina (2021) argues that the rapid restructuring also created institutional challenges ,including administrative adjustment and capacity-building requirements. The literature reflects a dual perspective-while integration offers opportunities for development, it also necessitates careful adaptation to local contexts.

Recent studies have begun to explore the intersection of NEP 2020 and the post-Article 370 context. Dar(2022) suggests that NEP could significantly enhance educational quality in jammu and kashmir through digital initiatives, vocational education, and curriculum reforms.

Conversely, Mir(2023) critically argues that the success of NEP implementation depends on addressing contextual constraints such as digital divide, infrastructural gaps, and socio-cultural diversity. Similarly, Bano (2022) emphasizes the importance of balancing central policy directives with local participation to ensure inclusive and sustainable educational development.

Research Gap

The review of literature reveals that while substantial research exists on NEP 2020 at the national level and on educational issues in jammu and Kashmir, there is a lack of integrated and critical analysis that examines NEP implementation in the post –Article 370 governance framework. Most studies remain either policy-centric or region-specific, without adequately addressing their intersection. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the practical challenges of policy adaptation in conflict-affected and geographically diverse regions. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by offering a contextualized and critical assessment of NEP 2020 in J&K, focusing on both opportunities and constraints in the post-Article 370 scenario.

Methodology

The present study is qualitative and conceptual in nature. It is based on a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the relevance and implications of National Education Policy 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir in the Post-Article 370 context. The study relies entirely on Secondary data collected from a variety of credible sources, including:-

- Government reports and policy documents(especially NEP2020)
- Research articles published in journals
- Books related to educational policy and reforms
- Reports and publications on Jammu and Kashmir's education system
- Online academic databases and official websites.

Relevant literature and documents were systematically reviewed to understand the key provisions of NEP2020 and the educational scenario of Jammu and Kashmir before and after Article 370.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and examines the implementation and implications of NEP 2020 after the abrogation of Article 370.It is limited to a conceptual and policy-level analysis rather than field based empirical investigation.

Limitations of the study

1. The study is based on secondary data and does not include primary field data.
2. Findings are interpretative and may vary with future empirical evidence.
3. Regional diversity with in Jammu and Kashmir may not be fully captured.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides a conceptual understanding of how a national level education reform interacts with a region undergoing constitutional and administrative transformation. It contributes to policy discourse by highlighting region-specific considerations essential for inclusive educational development in jammu and Kashmir. The study provides insights into the implementation of the NEP2020 in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370.It helps policy makers understand how national level reforms

can be adopted to a region with unique socio-political and geographical characteristics. The study highlights how changes in governance and administrative structures influence the education system. It provides a deeper understanding of the transition from a semi-autonomous educational frame work to a centrally designed system. By analyzing both the prospects and constraints of NEP 2020 implementation, the study helps stakeholders recognize areas of improvements such as infrastructure, digital access, teacher training and policy execution. The findings of the study can assist educational planners, administrators and institutions in adopting context-sensitive strategies to ensure the successful implementation of NEP 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis of literature and policy documents, the following key findings have emerged:-

1. The National Education Policy 2020 has significant potential to transform the education system of jammu and Kashmir by promoting holistic, multidisciplinary and skill-oriented learning. It aligns well with the need for modernization and quality enhancement in the region.
2. The Post-Article 370 scenario has enabled the direct implementation of national policies and schemes, leading to greater policy uniformity and administrative integration in the education sector of jammu and Kashmir.
3. NEP 2020 emphasizes universal access and equity, which can help address long-standing issues of educational access in remote and underprivileged areas of jammu and Kashmir, particularly through digital and infrastructural initiatives.
4. Despite policy advantages, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, digital divide, teacher shortage, and difficult geographical terrain continue to hinder effective implementation.
5. The finding indicate that a uniform policy approach may not be fully effective in J&K. There is a strong need for localized strategies that consider socio-cultural diversity and regional specificities.
6. While NEP promotes digital learning, limited internet connectivity and technological resources in many parts of J&K restrict its full utilization.
7. The shift in governance post-Article 370 has improved access to central resources and schemes, but it has also created institutional adjustment challenges at the local level.
8. A significant gap exists between the ambitious goals of NEP 2020 and the practical realities of implementation in J&K, highlighting the need for phased and adaptive execution.

Suggestions/Recommendations

1. While NEP 2020 provides a uniform national framework, its implementation in J&k should be adapted to local socio-cultural, geographical, and linguistic contexts. Region-specific planning is essential for meaningful outcomes.
2. The government should prioritize the development of basic educational infrastructure, especially in remote and hilly areas. This includes improving school buildings, transportation facilities, electricity supply and learning resources.
3. Special efforts are needed to enhance digital connectivity and access to technology. Provision of internet facilities, digital devices, and offline learning alternatives can ensure inclusivity in technology-driven education.
4. Continuous professional development programs should be organized to equip teachers with skill required for competency-based and technology-integrated teaching as envisioned in NEP 2020.
5. Vocational education should be integrated at school and higher education levels, focusing on local skills, crafts and employment opportunities to enhance youth employability in the region.
6. Active involvement of local communities, parents and educational institutions is essential to build trust and ensure smooth policy implementation. Participatory approaches can make reforms more effective and acceptable.

7. Special measures should be taken to support marginalized groups, girls and students from economically weaker sections to reduce disparities in access and achievement.
8. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems should be established to track progress, identify gaps and ensure accountability in policy implementation.
9. Higher education institutions in J&K should be encouraged to engage in research, innovation, and collaboration to strengthen the academic ecosystem and align with NEP goals.

Conclusion

The National Education policy 2020 presents a transformative opportunity for strengthening the education system of Jammu and Kashmir in the Post-Article 370 era. Policy integration and increased institutional support offer promising prospects, successful implementation depends on addressing infrastructural, socio-cultural and regional challenges. A balanced, inclusive and context-sensitive approach is essential to ensure that NEP 2020 contributes meaningfully to educational equity and development in jammu and Kashmir.

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