



Towards Transformation: Investigating Contemporary Challenges in Higher Education of Jammu and Kashmir

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DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.21642378

Abstract:

This research paper embarks on an in-depth exploration of the dynamic higher education landscape with a particular focus on the unique challenges faced by educational institutions in the Jammu and Kashmir region. The overall goal is to deconstruct and analyze the web of complex issues that have emerged in the 21st century and affect the higher education system. The study adopts a comprehensive and inclusive approach that recognizes the various factors that contribute to the complexity of higher education in J&K. It examines the impact of technological developments and recognizes their role in shaping educational methods of the region. Financial constraints are another important aspect that is looked at. The paper will examine the financial challenges facing by the educational institutions in the specific region and tries to understand how limited resources can hinder the provision of quality education. In addition, this research moves through pedagogical change and recognizes the changing nature of teaching and learning methods. It examines how these changes are taking place in J&K.

Keywords: *Higher Education Challenges, Transformation, Resilience & Improvement.*

Introduction:

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized the ways for learning in the recent years. Technologies are being developed to enhance the efficiency of online learning. These technologies include block chain networks, VR, AI, machine learning, and more. Although the potential of online education is huge, the sudden shift to it has caused serious difficulties in providing education in many parts of the world.

Developed countries lag far behind the developing and underdeveloped countries in terms of internet connectivity, Adequate infrastructure, high internet speed, connectivity and reliability. COVID-19 epidemic has significantly expedited the adoption of technology in K-12(kindergartento 12th grade) and higher education, despite the fact that it has been increasing in recent years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated and accelerated the digital institutions. The

adoptions of digital technologies and the institutions digital educational readiness, as well as its resilience, are key success factors in this transformation. There are several areas in the education industry where AI (Artificial Intelligence) greatly enhances the learning experience. As information producers, higher education institutions (HEIs) play a key role in launching a public-private cooperation. Organizations are presently becoming a fundamental and at the same time energetic component of advancement and innovation based on the information economy. It empowers the inclusion of the full spectrum of the organizations on-screen characters in decision-making on improvement exercises.

Digital Transformation (DT):

In recent years DT has become an important phenomenon attracting the attention of practitioners and researchers. However, people currently do not have a comprehensive understanding of this transformation. At the macro level, digital transformation refers to changes that generally occur in organizations and society as a result of the use of new digital technologies (Vial, 2019). Rampelt et al. (2019), DT affects all activities related to higher education. It permeates all processes, places, forms and purpose of teaching, learning, higher education and research. The change includes the development of new infrastructure and increasing the use of digital media and technology in teaching and learning activities, research, support services,

management and communication, as well as the need for staff and students to develop new digital skills for their current work and future employment. Higher education institutions must define clear and precise digital transformation related objectives in their strategies. Universities need a strategic vision that enables the entire institution to join forces in the implementation of digital initiatives. This requires strong leadership and a dedicated team that can confidently articulate and execute plans. A clear vision makes the team and stakeholders more engaged and invested in DT (Rodrigues, 2017). Our generation has likely never experienced something as challenging as the COVID two years have been. Our capacity for adaptability, leadership, and organizational management in the face of major uncertainty and change has been put to the test by the pandemic-related catastrophe.

The current directions of Higher education reform information:

- Affordability and cost containment.
- Access and quality.
- The globalisation of human activity.
- Transformation of the employment sector.
- Development of core competencies for the 21st century.
- Ongoing growth and integration of technology.
- Shifting demands of students and their demographics.

Background:

Higher education landscape has undergone significant changes over the years due to changing societal needs, technological development and global trends. Understanding this background is crucial to solving today's challenges.

Higher education has a rich history spanning centuries, and universities have evolved from medieval educational institutions to diverse and professional institutions (Trow, M. 2006). The modern university system was formed from the 19th century to 20th century, with an emphasis on faculty and research. After World War 2, there was a global push to increase access to higher education, which led to an increase in student numbers and the creation of new institutions. The purpose of the expansion is to democratize education and meet the growing demand for qualified professionals. Higher education has been greatly impacted by globalisation, which has encouraged cross-border collaboration, student mobility, and the sharing of information and experiences (Deardoff, 2014). Universities everywhere are forming alliances and doing joint research to tackle global issues. Technology has completely changed higher education, making digital materials, online courses, and chances for lifelong learning are made possible by educational technology.

Higher education is supported differently across the world. Public funds, tuition fees, and private contributions are the main sources of funding for educational institutions that frequently

face budgetary restrictions. Both the availability and quality of education are impacted by funding schemes. From conventional lecture-based techniques to more students centered experiential learning models, educational models, educational practices have changed over time. The development of critical thinking, practical skills and problem-solving are now prioritized. Different nations have different higher education policies, laws, and governance systems, which have an effect on institutional autonomy, academic freedom and accountability (Amaral, A., 2014).

Comprehending these facets serves as the foundations for examining the current obstacles. This facilitates the development of knowledge-based initiatives for change and improvement and enables academics and policy makers to contextualize challenges within the larger frame work of higher education.

Jammu and Kashmir:

Higher education offers a unique perspective for exploring and appreciating Jammu & Kashmir and its distinct challenges and complexity.

The UT of Jammu & Kashmir, which is in northern India, has a distinctive terrain that extends beyond its scenic scenery. Despite having a strong cultural history, the area has certain distinct challenges, especially with regard to the higher education system. The difficulties that Jammu & Kashmir encounter are affected by historical events, societal subtleties, and geopolitical settings. These

difficulties provide the landscape of higher education a degree of complexity that calls for careful investigation. The implications of Jammu and Kashmir geopolitical position for educational institutions are extensive. Territorial conflicts and political upheaval impact possibilities for collaboration, institutional growth and educational access (Schofield,2003).

Jammu & Kashmir sociocultural framework fosters an outstanding learning environment. In order to effectively address the obstacles of higher education, one must have a grasp of regional and cultural diversity, linguistic variances, and local customs (Bashir et al.'s 2016).

Jammu & Kashmir educational infrastructure has been influenced by historical causes, including conflict eras and their repercussions (Chitralekha, 2011). Development and reconstruction play a significant role in the endeavors to enhance the higher education system. The research, which focuses on Jammu & Kashmir, aims to shed light on the unique difficulties that the region's educational institutions confront.

Research on these issues seeks to offer insightful information that guide focused initiatives for improvement and guarantee that higher education in J&K satisfies individual requirements and preferences.

Purpose:

This study's primary goal is to conduct a thorough investigation of the difficulties facing higher education in J&K. The objective is to employ a

comprehensive strategy to interpret and examine the intricate web of problems that have emerged in this region's educational system, particularly in the twenty-first century.

Methodology:

The methodology is qualitative in nature and uses secondary data for study. Sources of secondary data include government publications, websites, articles, research papers, journals and different studies. Experts in the field of higher education are consulted for the research.

Barriers for E-learning:

- Cost
- Technology
- Time
- Attitude

The four primary categories that emerged from the literature research and identification of the major problems, facilitators, and obstacles. Notably, one of the main obstacles to online learning is generally acknowledged to be expense. The choice to integrate e-learning and its consequences on the organization are the barriers to implementation. Online learning implementation is similar to the traditional implementation paradigm of various information systems, including: planning, design, integration and improvement. The integration step is when the system is put to use in the organization (i.e. organizational implementation). The last step of improvement can only be carried out when the implications on the organization, i.e. the impact on

organizational goals, the impact on learning process, and the influence on organizational culture have been examined. Technical critics are always arguing for a balanced perspective of any technology, but they rarely discuss the risks, difficulties, and harm that technology bring about. Although the emphasis on hurdles may be seen negatively, the goals are not to dissuade businesses or individuals from adopting learning strategies. Instead, the objective is to raise consciousness and comprehension of the overall nature of the problems that online learners encounter. Because of the enormous promise, investment and exponential growth that e-learning carries, this kind of study is essential.

Time management issues, language barriers, attitudes towards online learning, students favor passive or active learning are the most often reported personal obstacles. Infrastructure development and enhancement, lack of technical assistance are a few examples of technological barriers. Organizational barriers include lack of knowledge about e-learning, lack of commitment from management, shortage of strategic organizing and guidance, lack of training materials and lack of incentives and reliability. The term e-learning is relatively new and has limited implementation and adaptation among organizations and educational institutions in J&K.

Challenges of Digital transformation in higher educational institutions in J&K:

- **Lack of digital literacy:** Lack of knowledge and abilities among academic staff and students, as well as the possibility that they lack the necessary information to utilize the many digital services, are all considered aspects of digital literacy.
- **Resistance to change:** People in colleges have a propensity to follow set routines and are hesitant to step outside of their comfort zones. Academic culture is a challenging and gradual process. Furthermore, slack relationships- a hallmark of an academic identity may be yet another barrier to cultural transformation.
- **Lack of Adequate IT infrastructure:** The impediment to digital transformation is often attributed to inadequate IT personnel and information technology infrastructure. HEIs must have appropriate IT architecture, IT infrastructure and a dependable high-speed internet connection in order to begin the process of digital transformation.
- **Budgetary constraints:** According to research, digital transformation necessitates significant up-front cost outlays. The primary barriers to digital transformation for HEIs are budgetary issues and financial limitations brought on by rising educational expenses and falling governmental funding.

- **Attitudes and beliefs:** Individual internal characteristics, such as views and opinions about one's skills and the utility of technology are associated to barriers to change.
- **Integration of digital technologies in educational systems:** Investments in essential tools and educational technology take up a large portion of the budget, yet most educational institutions find it difficult to implement educational technology because their staff is unwilling or unable to accept it.
- **Inadequate informational technology support services:** All services related to higher education must have sufficient and continuous technological assistance. Many new technologies are involved in the digital transition. Therefore, there has to be sufficient technical assistance if employees are to be proficient and self-assured users of digital technology.
- **Lack of Agility:** The capacity to swiftly adjust to change is known as agility, particularly in a dynamic and unpredictable environment.
- **Lack of institutional policy and Bureaucratic culture:** Even colleges with strategic plans struggle to change strategy action plan and culture is called one of the most important obstacles to digital transformation.

Youth challenges and opportunity in J&K:

The fast-changing field of IT presents a variety of possibilities and difficulties for the youth of J&K.

- **Limited infrastructure:** The smooth adoption of technology is impeded in some parts of Jammu and Kashmir by the difficulty of obtaining contemporary IT infrastructure and dependable internet connectivity.
- **Lack of Knowledge:** A lot of young people might not be completely aware of the advantage and career options that the IT industry can provide, which could restrict their interest and engagement.
- **Lack of skills:** Because technology is developing at a quick rate, current skills are necessary. The expectations of the IT sector could not be entirely satisfied by the existing educational system.
- **Digital divide:** Refers to the unequal distribution of opportunities caused by inequalities in rural and urban areas access to technology and digital skills.
- **Joblessness:** While IT presents prospects, not all IT graduates will find work in the field, which result in unemployment.

Opportunities:

- **Remote Education:** Information technology system make it possible for students to get high quality instruction remotely, which help to close the achievement gap.

- **Global market access:** Technology facilitates freelance employment and remote work, allowing Jammu and Kashmir youngsters to overcome regional boundaries and access global job market places.
- **E-governance:** By streamlining government processes and increase citizen accessibility, IT enhances public services and governance.
- **Digital literacy:** Emphasizing digital literacy, young people may be empowered to use online resources wisely and traverse the digital world with assurance.
- **E-commerce:** Using e-commerce platforms, local companies and craftsmen increase their revenue and reach a larger client base.
- **Government initiatives:** One example of how the government is supporting the development of information technology and creating a growth friendly atmosphere.
- **E-learning:** Online learning environments can provide specialized courses to close skill gaps and get young people ready for demands of the workforce.
- **Innovation hub:** The creation of information technology parks and innovation hubs foster the exchange of information and the advancement of research and development.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the research highlights the multi-faceted challenges that higher education faces in the J&K region, and

highlights the need for an in-depth comprehension of the region's socio-cultural nuances and historical context. The study highlights the transformative power of digital technologies, but also highlights the major obstacles to their successful integration, including infrastructure constraints, resistance to transformation, and budget constraints.

In addition, the research highlights the main obstacles to e-learning, such as costs, technology, timeliness, and mindset, and looks at the wider challenges of e-learning in higher education in the context of the digital transformation in Jammu and Kashmir. The complex socio-economic situation of J&K necessitates specific initiatives for improvement.

The study also discusses the challenges and opportunities facing youth in the region. It highlights challenges such as infrastructure constraints, knowledge gaps, and digital divide, but also highlights the potential for remote learning, global market integration, e-governance, and digital literacy.

The creation of innovation hubs and IT parks is considered as a key factor for socio-economic development, which opens up doors for entrepreneurship, inclusion, and co-development. To take advantage of these opportunities, legislative reforms, infrastructure upgrades, education reforms, and capacity building initiatives are recommended, pointing the way forward for J&K to succeed in the fast-changing IT environment.

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