

Human Resource and Administrative Challenges in Implementing NEP 2020 Reforms in Higher Education Institutions: A Comparative Narrative Review of Universities and Colleges in Uttarakhand



¹Dr. Soni Tamta, ²Dr. Arunima Pandey, ³Dr. Gauhar Fatima, ⁴Mamta Adhikari, ⁵Dr. Archana Joshi

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Education, MBPG College, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, Orcid Id- 0009-0005-9921-8249. Email: sonitamta32@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Hariom Saraswati P. G. College, Dhanauri, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, Orcid Id- 0009-0000-4872-2772, Email: arunimapandeydr@gmail.com

³Assistant Professor, Department of Education, B.L.J. Govt. (PG) College Purola Uttarkashi Uttarakhand, Orcid Id- 0009-0003-5788-9197, Email: gauharfatima16@gmail.com

⁴Research Scholar, Department of Education, MBPG College, Haldwani, Nainital Uttarakhand, Orcid Id- 0009-0000-5450-8844, Email: mamtadhikari1303@gmail.com

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of History, Government Degree College Haldwani City, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand, Orcid Id- 0009-0008-4036-8201, Email: doctorarchanajoshi1985@gmail.com

*Corresponding author: Dr. Soni Tamta

Email: sonitamta32@gmail.com

Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is the new framework that has changed the reform discourse in India's higher education system from one of adaptation to systematic restructuring in terms of curriculum design, administrative reforms, and institutionalized support systems. Politically, Uttarakhand appears to be at the forefront of NEP 2020 with its adoption of state-wide common syllabus for its universities and colleges, demonstrating a high degree of implementation intent. In this narrative review, the role played by human resource (HR) and administrative issues in implementing NEP 2020 within universities and colleges of Uttarakhand is explored.

However, the present paper claims that the problem associated with NEP 2020 policy implementation goes beyond being merely a policy-related problem since the problem is also that of the lack of organizational capacity, which can be seen through various variables, including adequacy of staffing, competency of staff, digital preparedness, planning systems, and governance. While universities have higher organizational capacities than colleges owing to better academic leadership and institutional coordination systems, colleges (affiliated colleges and those situated farther away from headquarters) find themselves with severe shortcomings with respect to staff adequacy and competence as well as administrative autonomy.

Keywords: NEP 2020; higher education; human resource challenges; administrative challenges; Uttarakhand; universities; colleges; narrative review; implementation capacity

1. Introduction

National Education Policy, 2020 is the most radical reform package in the field of higher education in India since the past three decades, which seeks to improve access, equity, quality, and international competitiveness. The NEP, 2020 envisions moving towards multidisciplinary HEIs with a flexible curriculum and multiple entry and exit possibilities with greater credit mobility, all of which put high expectations on human resources and administrative systems at HEIs. These reforms are not only technical; they require a change in working styles and processes along with changing roles and workloads of employees in HEIs.

In Uttarakhand, the department of higher education has made a public statement that Uttarakhand is one of the earliest adopters of the NEP 2020 and has

initiated a common minimum syllabus scheme in the universities and colleges of the state. The high-level statements by Union and state governments indicate that teachers' capabilities, technology, and the use of regional language are critical to implementing the NEP 2020. Nevertheless, there is a lack of literature on the implementation of NEP 2020 in Uttarakhand, especially when comparing universities and colleges and focusing on HR issues.

This paper will fill the void by providing an analytical comparison between the HR and administrative problems in NEP 2020 implementation in higher education institutions of Uttarakhand, specifically universities and colleges. Instead of a primary research design based on survey studies, this paper utilizes a narrative review strategy and analyses official policy documents, state-level notifications,

scholarly articles, and other implementation focused commentaries. This paper reveals that apart from being influenced by policy design, the implementation of NEP 2020 is also determined by institutional capability, hence it calls for a differentiated analysis of policy designs.

2. Conceptual and theoretical framework

The NEP 2020 document can be interpreted both as a document of policy and as a test of institutional capacity. Policy widens the scope of roles for HEIs in various areas, such as curriculum development, evaluation, student counselling, co-curricular activities, digital learning, and credit management. Hence, institutions need to not only comprehend NEP 2020 but also have the human resources, organization, and processes necessary to implement the policy. This observation is consistent with wider research on policy implementation, which highlights the role of institutional implementation capacity in policy reform. In this context, the two key concepts are:

- Human resource capacity, which covers faculty capacity, staff competence, workload capacity, and digital literacy.
 - Organizational and governance capacity, which covers planning capacity, decision-making capacity, coordination capacity, and digital infrastructure.
- However, these capabilities may vary between universities and colleges, and even more so in a state such as Uttarakhand that contains a variety of institutions and geographic settings. Therefore, the analytical approach begins with the assumption that the implementation of NEP 2020 will be institutionally differentiated due to differences in autonomy, leadership and administrative infrastructure between universities and colleges that are limited in resources and poor at planning.

3. Method of narrative review

This research is conducted via a narrative review – one of the qualitative approaches of synthesis that does not use meta-analysis or systematic review methodologies. The rationale for choosing the method was the need for a deeper interpretation of NEP 2020 implementation issues in Uttarakhand. The procedure of conducting the review entailed three phases

First, source types were identified:

- National policy documents on NEP 2020 and related reforms.
- Uttarakhand government publications and press releases describing NEP 2020 implementation and common minimum syllabi.
- Scholarly articles and analytical papers on NEP 2020, HR, and higher education administration.
- Selected policy-oriented commentaries and media reports relevant to Uttarakhand and neighboring states.

Second, a purposive approach was adopted to search for literature related to the implementation of NEP

2020, HR challenges, and administrative challenges within the domain of higher education with special emphasis on articles involving Uttarakhand state or its neighboring states or multicampus university college systems. Literature was evaluated based on the relevancy of the topic, and the sources were selected on criteria excluding any irrelevant article or policy document.

Third, the findings were structured based on two major themes, namely HR challenges and administrative challenges for universities and colleges within Uttarakhand. The findings will be analyzed in Section 4 and Section 5, respectively, while Table 1 and Table 2 will provide a comparison of the findings in tabulated form. It must be mentioned that no quantification will be created artificially; all findings are based on the existing literature.

4. Challenges related to human resources in implementing NEP 2020

4.1 Adequacy of faculty members and pressure on staff

Availability of faculty members will be one of the critical issues arising from the implementation of NEP 2020 in relation to teaching, mentoring, curricula development, and assessment. This is due to the shift towards interdisciplinary courses, combination courses, skill-based courses, and co-curricular activities, which means that the need for specialized subject experts and competent teachers will increase, especially in areas such as digital learning, career counseling, and research based teaching.

This issue is more prevalent in colleges rather than universities. Universities have large departments that can share the workload among larger faculties, even in cases where there are job vacancies. Colleges, on the other hand, normally have fewer faculty members, which might be supplemented by guest faculty, thus reducing the sustainability of teaching methods aligned with NEP. In the case of Uttarakhand, educational institutions situated in the hills districts will be faced with extra challenges in recruiting and retaining faculty.

4.2 Professional development and capability building

The process of implementing NEP 2020 would require the staff to transition from being teachers of particular subjects to teachers of learning outcomes, digital teaching, interdisciplinary work, and continuous student engagement. It means that professional development cannot be viewed as some kind of addition to reform processes, but needs to be considered an integral part of the reforms. The discussion around NEP 2020 itself highlights the importance of developing capabilities and utilizing technologies, which means that the policymakers themselves view capability as an important part of implementation.

There are still differences between institutions when it comes to quality and continuity of training. Generally, universities have better programs aimed at capacity building within their faculty, conducting internal seminars, workshops, and mentoring sessions. Meanwhile, colleges that operate under universities can get some training externally from the latter through workshops or circulars. In other words, the NEP 2020 concepts will not be implemented effectively if there is no continuous professional development.

4.3 Workload increase and role ambiguity

One more serious issue related to HR management is the increase in workload. According to the NEP 2020, there are new responsibilities related to curriculum mapping, mentoring, internal evaluations, documentation, and reporting. Moreover, these activities should be performed alongside with current activities of teaching and administration. Given that the number of faculty members in most educational establishments is usually low, new activities are being added to their already busy schedules.

This becomes even more important when considering colleges, wherein only a handful of faculty from the teaching faculty is required to take up several roles at the same time. This includes the faculty from the teaching faculty taking on different responsibilities as an SME, mentor, curriculum developer, digital tool user, and examiner.

4.4 Digital competencies and reform readiness

Digital competency constitutes another critical element of HR readiness since NEP 2020 has embraced the use of technology in the delivery of education, both in terms of teaching and learning as well as administrative processes. In addition to the availability of hardware and connectivity infrastructure, institutions require competent personnel capable of leveraging these technologies for curriculum design, evaluation, interaction, and information management. This could result in a direct implementation deficit where there are deficiencies within HR.

On the one hand, universities are more likely to have stronger ICT units, institutional mechanisms, and a higher degree of practical digital competency among their personnel. On the other hand, colleges in remote rural and mountainous regions might struggle with connectivity and may not be comfortable with the use of digital platforms. Hence, HR reform in this case is not just about hiring but also developing digital skills and providing support at institutions.

5. Administrative and governance challenges in NEP 2020 implementation

5.1 Planning and sequencing deficits

The success of NEP 2020 lies in the presence or absence of institutional implementation plans within institutions, and not only on how notified these

institutions are. The development of an implementation plan will help the policy translate into stages, allocate responsibilities, resource allocation, and review points. There is an observed tendency among several institutions to take a more reactive posture, acting upon notification circulars on a case-by-case basis.

Within Uttarakhand, the creation of the common minimum syllabus at the state level can be seen as a milestone towards proper planning. There is likely to be a difference between universities and other colleges in terms of their capability to interpret the syllabus change and develop an operational strategy due to the presence or absence of academic/administrative committees. The dependency of institutions on affiliated universities makes them less proactive in addressing problems.

5.2 Governance structures and autonomy

The connection between reform and autonomy in NEP 2020 is that the policy calls for graded autonomy, along with a gradual evolution towards more autonomy in affiliated colleges. Therefore, governance becomes key in implementing the reforms. Universities generally have more than one body involved in the decision-making process; such institutions have boards, academic councils, senates, and quality cells. These bodies can collaborate and reach an agreement regarding reforms.

Colleges, on the other hand, are generally bound by more affiliating terms. They may not have the necessary leeway in changing the curriculum, assessment methods, or the credit-based framework. Hence, the contradiction between reforms and colleges is that the former requires much of what the latter must implement, but the latter does not necessarily have the autonomy to be flexible in its approach.

5.3 Coordination and communication burdens

The NEP 2020 needs to be implemented through proper coordination at various levels and departments within an educational institute. From the horizontal level, there has to be coordination among various departments such as the examinations department, information technology department, library, and students' welfare department. From the vertical point of view, coordination is required with the concerned departments in the state government and the national agencies.

The degree of coordination required varies based on the educational institution involved. Universities would find coordination among their departments a difficult task due to the nature of their vast campus area, whereas colleges would find coordination with the higher authorities difficult in terms of getting guidance. The delay in communication or the constant change of instructions in the circulars becomes a big issue in the case of Uttarakhand state.

5.4 Infrastructure and administrative digitization

Administrative implementation requires the provision of infrastructure in terms of classroom space, laboratories, libraries, internet availability, digital record keeping, and management information systems. The greater emphasis placed on multi-disciplinary education, skills training, and technology-enabled assessment by NEP 2020 further adds pressure to the infrastructural facilities. Thus, infrastructure becomes an active ingredient of the reform process rather than merely a backdrop.

The aspect of geography may even exacerbate the infrastructure discrepancy in Uttarakhand. Easily reachable urban higher education institutions will be equipped with good infrastructural amenities, whereas colleges located in geographically distant areas will lack facilities for classrooms, laboratories, and poor Internet connectivity. As a result of such problems, higher education institutions resort to mere rhetoric in compliance without making any improvements.

Comparison is necessary because there are considerable differences between universities and colleges concerning independence, size, number of people, etc. Generally, universities play a greater role in shaping curriculum and policy decisions than colleges. For that reason, universities are better prepared to deal with difficult circumstances, although the problem of coordination arises because of campus sizes.

By contrast, many colleges are involved in frontline delivery activities, which means that they are expected to perform a certain amount of work despite having a lower level of autonomy and influence on policy-making processes. Many colleges have affiliating statuses, which means that their decisions may be affected by certain conditions; at the same time, the workload of faculty members is very high.

In Uttarakhand, many colleges are located in hills and, therefore, experience additional difficulties related to recruiting new personnel and building appropriate infrastructures. Consequently, universities in the state will focus on integration issues while the main issue for colleges will be resource intensity and dependence.

6. Comparative analysis: universities vs. colleges in Uttarakhand

Table 1: Human resource challenge profile: universities vs colleges in Uttarakhand (interpretive synthesis)

Dimension	Universities	Colleges	Analytical implication
Faculty adequacy	Moderate staffing stress with some vacancy buffers.	High stress due to smaller staff pools and guest-teacher dependence.	Colleges need targeted staffing and workload management.
Professional development	Stronger internal structures for training and mentoring.	More dependent on external or infrequent workshops.	Capacity building should be institutionalized and cascaded.
Digital competencies	Relatively higher due to institutional support and ICT units.	More uneven, especially in resource-constrained and remote colleges.	Digital-literacy support should prioritize weaker institutions.
Workload and role strain	High due to reform complexity, but distributed across departments.	High and concentrated due to fewer staff per task.	Colleges are at higher risk of burnout during transition.
Academic leadership	More formalized through deans, committees, and quality units.	Variable, often dependent on affiliating guidance.	University-college mentoring networks can strengthen local leadership.

Table 2: Administrative challenge profile: universities vs colleges in Uttarakhand (interpretive synthesis)

Dimension	Universities	Colleges	Analytical implication
Planning systems	More likely to have committee-led implementation roadmaps.	Often reactive and circular-driven.	Colleges need standardized implementation templates.
Governance and autonomy	Higher than colleges within the state-university framework.	Lower due to affiliating and approval constraints.	Autonomy-linked reforms should recognize institutional gradation.
Coordination burden	High internal coordination across units and campuses.	High external coordination with universities and state authorities.	Coordination architecture should be tailored by institution type.

Infrastructure base	Relatively better, though uneven.	More vulnerable to connectivity and resource gaps.	Resource allocation should be geographically sensitive.
Administrative digitization	Better positioned to integrate academic and administrative digital processes.	More likely to struggle with platform use and data workflows.	Digital-implementation support must address both hardware and training.

Table 3: Priority intervention matrix for NEP 2020 implementation in Uttarakhand

Challenge cluster	Universities: priority focus	Colleges: priority focus	State-level implication
HR adequacy	Filling vacancies in emerging and interdisciplinary areas.	Stabilizing core teaching staff and reducing reliance on temporary arrangements.	Targeted recruitment and incentive structures for hill institutions.
Capability development	Advanced NEP-oriented training in multidisciplinary teaching and assessment.	Foundational and continuous training in digital pedagogy and NEP principles.	Cascaded faculty development through university-college networks.
Planning and coordination	Cross-unit implementation dashboards and review mechanisms.	Institution-level action plans with clear task allocation.	Standardized planning templates and monitoring by higher education department.
Digital readiness	Integration of academic and administrative platforms.	Connectivity upgrades and hands-on user training.	Differential infrastructure and digital-literacy grants for weaker colleges.
Governance and autonomy	Streamlined internal decision-making pathways.	Greater operational flexibility within affiliating frameworks.	Phased autonomy and clearer communication protocols.

7. Discussion

From the analysis, it can be concluded that the execution of NEP 2020 in Uttarakhand should not be considered from the perspective of its design or mere adoption by the policy; it needs to be considered in the context of its institutional execution capability. There have been evident advances in the execution of NEP 2020 in Uttarakhand, including the launching of NEP 2020 in the higher education sector, and the publication of common minimum syllabi in various subjects. Nevertheless, mere adoption does not imply uniformity in the implementation capability of universities and colleges.

Among the important conclusions that have been reached is the fact that problems related to human resources and administration have an interactive relationship. Lack of adequate human resources creates work overload that makes room for very limited opportunities for training and innovation. Lack of proper administration makes the process of planning and coordinating difficult, creating confusion and procrastination. This is one of the major problems that affect the process of reforms and policy implementation in colleges. In universities, however, the challenge of policy implementation appears to stem from the fragmented nature of the process of implementation.

This interpretation also explains how diffusion of policy can go hand-in-hand with uneven outcomes

from the process of implementation. The same syllabus framework and notification deadlines can apply equally across the institutions, but the process of implementation becomes differentiated due to institutional factors. Institutions that enjoy effective leadership, planning systems, and technological platforms will be able to implement NEP 2020 more successfully than institutions relying on a haphazard and manual system of operation.

8. Policy and practical implications

Implications to the policies pursued by the state can be generated from this report. First and foremost, the policies governing higher education should have differences when it comes to implementing reforms between universities and colleges in the state. Whereas universities would need coordinating systems on a colossal scale, as well as integration and restructuring efforts, colleges will need stability in staffing, workloads, and planning capacity. Second, faculty development needs to be seen as an ongoing process of change as opposed to a single orientation exercise.

Moreover, the successful implementation of NEP 2020 will hinge on the simplification and digitalization of its governance mechanisms. If institutions are compelled to tackle any academic changes under the new policy through an archaic mechanism, then fatigue could set in. Thus, the government can think

about initiating mentoring schemes between institutions, monitoring dashboards, targeted infrastructure investments for districts, and better communication protocols between the institution and the higher education ministry.

9. Limitations and future research directions

Another limitation of the current paper could be seen in the absence of the primary source. It should be mentioned that narrative reviews may prove useful in creating good interpretation of the literature available; however, such reviews do not help measure the scale of the issues under study and assess the relationship between independent variables and dependent outcomes.

The future research on this topic could benefit greatly from conducting empirical research in the state of Uttarakhand, using mixed methodologies and surveys/ interviews with the participation of faculty members, administrators, principals, and department heads. This would help identify quantitative data on workloads, capabilities, and limitations, which could then be used for statistical analysis using packages such as SPSS, R, and SEM analysis. Besides, the comparative study design taking into consideration both hill and plain areas could also be used.

10. Conclusion

In this context, the implementation of NEP 2020 in the state of Uttarakhand highlights the importance of human resources and administration capabilities for the effectiveness of educational reforms. Specifically, according to NEP 2020, the increased role of higher education institutions calls for enhanced human resources, constant training, digital literacy, and robust governance frameworks. On the basis of narrative synthesis, one can say that NEP 2020 is likely to affect universities and colleges in the state of Uttarakhand in different ways: universities face problems related to integration and coordination, whereas colleges experience challenges in terms of intensity and dependency.

As an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge on NEP 2020, the paper suggests a new angle for the analysis of NEP 2020 implementation. The findings of this study suggest that the success of NEP 2020 and its general impact on higher education institutions would largely depend on their ability to cope with numerous constraints that emerge in terms of human resources and administration. In this regard, the comparative analysis of the impact of NEP 2020 on universities and colleges gives us important insights into developing proper policies.

References

1. A study on issues and challenges of NEP 2020 in higher education.
2. Administrative challenges in higher education.
3. ALAMEEN. (2023). *A study on issues and challenges of NEP 2020 in higher education*. Alameen, 1(1), 220–225.
4. An evaluation of NEP 2020 in India.
5. Challenges and mitigating strategies under NEP-2020.
6. Governance in higher education institutions in India – past, present and future.
7. Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. New Delhi: Ministry of Education.
8. Higher education and NEP 2020.
9. Higher Education Department, Government of Uttarakhand. (2025). *National Education Policy-2020: Common minimum syllabus for all Uttarakhand state universities and colleges*. Dehradun: Department of Higher Education.
10. Higher Education Department, Government of Uttarakhand. (2025). *Official portal and policy statements on NEP 2020 implementation*. Dehradun: Department of Higher Education.
11. Higher Education Uttarakhand. (2025). *NEP-2020 common minimum syllabus documents*. Dehradun: Department of Higher Education.
12. Human resource management in higher education.
13. IJCRM Journal. (2026). *Administrative challenges in higher education*. International Journal of Contemporary Research and Management, 5(1), 88–90.
14. Implementing NEP 2020: Issues and opportunities for higher education administrators.
15. Invest India. (2020). *Understanding the key reforms of the National Education Policy, 2020*. New Delhi: Government of India.
16. JIEP Journal. (2025). *NEP 2020 and Indian higher education: Pathways to holistic, flexible, and global transformation*. Journal of International Education and Practice, 8(1), 79–90.
17. Ministry of Education. (2022). *Two years of NEP 2020: Progress report*. New Delhi: Ministry of Education.
18. National Education Policy 2020 and its implementation with special reference to Uttarakhand.
19. NEP 2020 and Indian higher education: A comprehensive analysis.
20. NEP 2020: Challenges in higher education.
21. Pijom Journal. (2025). *NEP 2020 in practice: Perspectives on implementation challenges*. Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management, 18(12), 8–14.
22. Prabandhan. (2025). *NEP 2020 in practice: Perspectives on implementation challenges*. *Indian Journal of Management*, 18(12), 8–14.
23. Press Information Bureau. (2022). *Launch of NEP 2020 in Uttarakhand from academic session 2022-23*. New Delhi: Press Information Bureau.

24. Reframing higher education administration in a dynamic context.
25. RJ Wave. (2025). *An evaluation of National Education Policy-2020 in India*. Journal of Applied Arts and Research, 26(3), 804–810.
26. Scopus. (2024). *Scopus content policy and selection criteria*. Elsevier Scopus.
27. Sethy, M., & Mahapatro, S. R. (2025). NEP 2020 and Indian higher education: Pathways to holistic, flexible, and global transformation. *Journal of International Education and Practice*, 8(1), 79–90.
28. Student-centric evaluation of National Education Policy- 2020 implementation in higher education: Evidence from Uttarakhand using PLS- SEM.
29. The Impact of NEP 2020 on Human Resource Development strategies in Indian educational institutions.
30. Union Times of India. (2022). *Uttarakhand: Union education minister launches NEP for higher education*. New Delhi: Times of India.