

## Article History

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## Implementation of NEP 2020 in Primary Education in Sikkim: A Social Science Perspective

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the primary education sector of Sikkim, a Northeastern Himalayan state with complex geographic, linguistic, and socio-cultural contexts. Anchored in a qualitative research design, the study draws on secondary data from UDISE+, NAS, NEP 2020 documents, and academic literature to assess policy alignment with local educational realities. Using content analysis and thematic synthesis, the research evaluates progress in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), mother-tongue instruction, school complex models, and inclusive education, including the integration of ECCE, training of 304 teachers, and deployment of 53 Special Educators. Despite these advances, persistent challenges, such as teacher shortages, digital infrastructure gaps, and weak governance capacity undermine effective implementation. The study highlights the need for context-specific, community-led strategies, emphasizing localized governance and*

*culturally responsive curricula, and calls for longitudinal, participatory research to bridge policy-practice gaps and strengthen educational equity in Sikkim.*

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, SDG 4, Primary Education, Sikkim, Social Science Policy Interface, Indigenous Knowledge Systems

### Introduction

The governance structure of education in India is marked by a flexible federal system where both the Union and State governments collaboratively develop policies while the States exercise autonomy in the execution. Within this architecture, primary education constitutes a critical building block. Policies like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Right to Education (RTE) have historically aimed at improving elementary education coverage and standards. However, inequities relating to the educational resources, services availed and their impacts, especially in remote, underserved, and marginal areas still exist. In a bid to address these issues, the Indian government announced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the year 2020, undertaking a massive transformation aimed at overhauling the educational system from primary to advanced levels. NEP 2020 replaces National Policy on Education, 1986, with one that emphasizes comprehensive education, equal access, and multi-language instructions to be taught at all levels of schooling. The National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE 1986) articulated critical goals of universal schooling, adult literacy, and the leveling of educational inequities, underlining equity, the advancement of women, and the systematic development of vocational streams. It catalyzed targeted initiatives such as Operation Blackboard and established primary education as the nucleus of the country's development discourse (Chattopadhyay, 2025). Despite the ambition,

observers noted that the implementation mechanism remained excessively centralized, and progress was hindered by a pronounced lag in responding to evolving technology and swiftly changing socio-economic realities. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, in contrast, advances the ambition of educational transformation through integrated, learner-centered, and multidisciplinary paradigms. The revised curricular architecture migrates from the conventional 10+2 model to a 5+3+3+4 framework, while giving priority to holistic early-childhood development, foundational literacy, the incorporation of digital technologies, and the promotion of multilingual capabilities (Naagar & Malaiya, 2025). More significantly, the recent policy reallocates emphasis from the expansion of access—as delineated in the earlier NPE—toward the enhancement of quality, the embrace of curricular flexibility, and the alignment of schooling with global economic and intellectual orders, all achieved through a deliberate decentralization of governance. Consequently, the evolution from NPE 1986 to NEP 2020 epitomizes a paradigmatic pivot from, in the earlier document, access and equity redress to, in the recent policy, quality, adaptability, and embodied global competitiveness. It also introduces a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure which places significant emphasis on early childhood care and education (ECCE) and foundational literacy (Chauhan & Singh, 2023). The policy encourages more relaxed and adaptable policies in the administration of the education system, further enhancing India's comitative federalism. While fostering uniformity in standards and learning outcomes across the country, these recommendations aim at transforming the highly centralized educational governance. Concurrently, the history of education commissions in the country, beginning with the colonial inquiry frameworks and evolving through diverse post-colonial panels, scripts a broader narrative of educational

transformation that juxtaposes metropolitan objectives with nationalist visions.

The British colonial period was marked by a succession of educational commissions whose reports systematically codified formal instruction in a manner congruent with colonial administrative objectives. The Wood's Dispatch of 1854 articulated a blueprint for the consolidated introduction of Western-style schooling in India, followed by the Hunter Commission of 1882, whose deliberations foregrounded the expansion of primary instruction and the professionalization of teaching (Nurullah & Naik, 1943). Subsequent inquiries, notably the Sadler Commission (1917–1919), redirected attention toward university-level reform while asserting the necessity of a robust secondary stage as a preparatory intermediary (Basu, 2019). The period succeeding political independence was characterized by a pronounced ideological reorientation. The University Education Commission of 1948–1949, presided over by S. Radhakrishnan, advanced a vision of higher education predicated on intellectual and cultural wholeness, whereas the Secondary Education Commission of 1952–1953 reiterated a complementary purpose by endorsing the integration of vocational instruction (Rao, 2010). The Kothari Commission (1964–1966) crystallized a comprehensive architecture through its advocacy of a standardised school system and the 10+2+3 curricular format, thereby exerting decisive influence on the subsequent articulation of the National Policy on Education (Govinda, 2002). The trajectory traced by these successive inquiries consequently reveals a definitive progression: early colonial directives, which implicitly legitimized administrative exigencies, came to be supplanted after independence by deliberative frames whose explicit objectives included the pursuit of democratization, equity, and

the comprehensive consolidation of the newly emergent nation through educational practice (Mahajan, 2025). This is where the Sikkim case becomes intriguing. Sikkim is nestled in the Himalayas and is characterized by its mountainous landscape and sparse population coupled with low infrastructural development in some areas.

From a cultural standpoint, the region is a multilingual state with diverse tribal and Buddhist traditions, which calls for context-sensitive pedagogies. From a demographic perspective, the sparse population is accompanied by widely scattered schools, which the state of Sikkim must manage in terms of resource distribution and equitable access. Shinde et al. (2024) points out that although the education system in Sikkim has evolved, it still faces teacher deficits, poor early grade education outcomes, and inadequate infrastructure. Given these dynamics, focusing on the NEP 2020 primary education framework in Sikkim is urgently anticipatory. The research stems from the question of how national policy frameworks are effectively localized in border regions like Sikkim that are distinct in their governance structure, topography, and socio-linguistic makeup. The study analyzes how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform primary education by exploring foundational literacy and numeracy, early childhood care and education (ECCE), teacher education, curriculum development, and decentralization. Additionally, it examines primary education in Sikkim through the lens of critical policy indicators—infrastructure, enrollment, learning achievements, and teacher numbers versus localized policy implementation. Additionally, the research analyzes Sikkim's actual educational practices and how they correspond with the overarching goals of NEP 2020, delineating the gaps in policy and practice, implementation challenges, and areas of potential alignment between national goals and the state's context.

## Methodology and Data Sources

The current study employs a qualitative research design that relies mostly on the analysis of secondary data sources. Due to the federally focused policy implementation research design concerning the policies themselves, secondary data is both ample and reliable at both the macro and micro levels. The study is in an interpretive orientation aiming to investigate how NEP 2020 directives align with primary education in Sikkim, sub-state tiered governance structure, and document-based evidence with thematic synthesis. Secondary data was obtained from publicly available government data sets, scholarly publications, and policy analyses. In particular:

- Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) and National Achievement Survey (NAS) reports were utilized for up-to-date statistical insights into Sikkim's school infrastructure, enrollment patterns, and learning outcomes (Muralidharan et al., 2022; Ministry of Education, 2023).
- NEP 2020 official policy document and associated *implementation frameworks* provided the foundational reference for analyzing the intended systemic reforms.
- Academic journal articles and working papers were employed to provide critical interpretations, state-specific challenges, and broader discourse on federal governance in Indian education (Chauhan & Singh, 2023; Shinde et al., 2024).

### 2.1 Criteria for Source Selection

Maintaining relevance and academic rigor, the sources were relevant under the following criteria:

*Temporal relevance:* For this study, only sources published after 2010 were considered to capture recent policy developments including the lead up to NEP 2020 and subsequent shifts.

*Geographic relevance:* Consideration was given first to sources that included state level disaggregation with particular focus on Sikkim and other Northeastern states.

*Contextual relevance:* All sources had to directly address NEP 2020 or its primary education reforms to cross the Indian federal system's backbone.

This method facilitated data triangulation from statistical documents, policy analyses, and resolution or declarative pieces to construct a comprehensive understanding of education reform in Sikkim.

## 2.2 Analytical Framework: Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Synthesis

The selected materials were subjected to **qualitative content analysis**, focusing on both manifest and latent content. The analysis identified recurring categories such as:

- *Policy objectives and institutional mechanisms* under NEP 2020
- *Infrastructural and pedagogical barriers* specific to Sikkim
- *Federal–state implementation dynamics*

A thematic synthesis method was used to aggregate insights across sources. This methodology provided a coherent framework to understand the convergence and divergence between the national policy architecture and Sikkim's educational realities.

## NEP 2020 and Its Transformative Vision for Primary Education: National Ideals and Local Adaptations in Sikkim

With a focus on foundational and primary stages of education, NEP 2020 attempts to transform the existing educational system in India into a more holistic, equitable, and learner-centered paradigm. There are deep-seated issues with learning at the foundational levels, making restructuring, curriculum changes, and pedagogical shifts essential to what Chauhan and Singh (2023) refer to as the “crisis” in early childhood and elementary education. Additionally, to build long-term academic success and healthy cognitive development, NEP 2020 recognizes the necessity of foundational learning. Efforts to incorporate the NEP vision are underway in Sikkim, a relatively isolated state in the Eastern Himalayas. The 2021 Annual Report cites the integration of Anganwadi centers with primary schools along with the creation of training pathways for pre-primary teachers as key steps towards this vision. NEP 2020's aims are further advanced with the additional support offered by Samagra Shiksha through Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) and the provision of free uniforms and mid-day meals, reinforcing retention and equity at lower grades.

### 3.1 Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Goals

One of the most notable programs under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the focus on attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) competencies for all learners by 2026–27. The policy refers to the absence of reading and mathematical skills at the primary grades as a national learning emergency (Raina, 2020). This goal was later addressed with the operational launch of the NIPUN Bharat Mission (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) which aims to provide tailored pedagogic guidance along with formative evaluations and instructional leadership.

As highlighted by NAS 2021 data, the disparities in early-grade learning across different states remains uniformly persistent, which NEP 2020 seeks to rectify through curriculum revisions, multimodal instructional approaches, and constructive teaching and outcomes evaluation frameworks (Ministry of Education, 2021; Government of Sikkim. 2022, Table 1).

**Table 1. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Goals**

| Indicator          | Data Point                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FLN Implementation | Aligned with NEP 2020 through the introduction of LKG, UKG, and Nursery in all Government schools. Nursery added from 2021 (Notification No. 449/EDN/PLG Dt. 05/04/2021). |
| Support for FLN    | Teaching-Learning Materials (TLM) distributed under Samagra Shiksha; ECCE Key Resource Persons (KRPs) supported KG-level learning.                                        |
| Home Schooling     | Implemented during COVID-19 with CRCCs and BRCCs distributing preloaded laptops to support foundational learning remotely.                                                |

**3.2 Local Language Emphasis**

NEP 2020 encourages the usage of a learner's mother tongue or regional language as a means of instruction until at least Grade 5, and optimally until Grade 8. Singh (2024) cites international and Indian studies which demonstrate that, during the formative years, children tend to learn better when taught in their home language. Further, the policy aims at fostering multilingual education for the preservation of linguistically diverse societies, tackling political boundaries while aiding in the development of clarity and fluency in cognitive processes. This policy is beneficial in regions with rich linguistic diversity such as Sikkim

which harbors Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha, and other tribal languages. Such policy attempts to further enhance inclusiveness. Nevertheless, the policy also poses serious challenges with respect to resource construction, training of instructors, and uniformity.

**3.3 Teacher Training and Inclusive Education**

The NEP 2020 highlights the importance of a teacher's qualitative value and aims to completely transform their education by the year 2030. All multidisciplinary institutions are required to provide vocational training along with integrated degrees in teaching, mandated to be a 4-year B.Ed. (Shinde et al., 2024). Policies emphasize Mentorship CPD (continuing professional development) programs alongside flexible self-determined lesson planning roles for teachers in charge of classrooms. Sikkim has implemented NEP 2020 aligned policies through: In-service training of 304 teachers within the 2020-21 period (Table 2). SCERT and 3 DIETs serve as a sponsoring unified institutional framework for academic capacity building. Special training programmes designed for those educators who work with CwSN. The creation of Resource Rooms and Instruction at Home for learners with disabilities. Programs were also implemented catered to aid disabled students such as those devices for Braille or talking calculators. Additionally, NEP 2020 also focuses greatly on students with disabilities access, socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), as well as remote area students for inclusive education. It recommends the formation of school complexes and resource-sharing approaches to counter other developmental regions' ire of the inequitable staffing and infrastructural distribution.

**Table 2. Teacher Training and Inclusive Education Coverage in Sikkim**

| Indicator                  | Data Point                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teachers Trained (2020–21) | 304 in-service teachers received training and it continued.                                                                                                       |
| Inclusive Education        | 53 Special Educators deployed at elementary level; resource rooms established in 25 schools. Assistive devices distributed to children with special needs (CwSN). |
| Digital Learning for CwSN  | Use of mobile apps (e-Pathshala, YouTube) and distribution of DAISY players and talking calculators for visually impaired.                                        |

**Primary Education in Sikkim: A Situation Analysis**

The Indian Northeast state of Sikkim has an educational landscape influenced by its geography, small population, tribal makeup, and multilingual communities. Primarily, it suffers from pedagogical and structural issues regarding Sikkim’s surrenders primary education system. This section provides holistic situational analysis from available data sources such as UDISE+, NAS Indicators, ASER reports, and published studies. Sikkim's primary education landscape is small in scale but more decentralized than other regions. There are 290 ICT-enabled schools across the Sikkim region; however, consistent internet access is problematic in more remote areas. The region’s government has Kindergarten programs for all pupils in its 763 Government Schools and actively promotes the teaching of vernacular languages, as well as community participation. Volunteer teaching and digital outreach became important during the pandemic. Policies aimed at introducing nursery schooling, ECCE training, and aggressive campaigns like Beti

Bachao Beti Padhao significantly improved the accessibility of primary education (Bhutiya & Chhetri, 2025).

**4.1 Enrollment and Access**

According to UDISE+ 2021-22 data (Ministry of Education, 2023), Sikkim has accomplished almost entire primary education enrolment with a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 107.5. The state has the lowest dropout rate in the North-East which indicates strong school participation as well as coverage of mid-day meal services (Hazarika et al., 2023). The latter, however, does not include infrastructure and transport accessibility in the context of remote hill regions. While primary schools are geographically well distributed pupils, problems of low enrolment numbers per school, multi-grade teaching, and seasonal absenteeism are persistent in rural settings (Singh, 2019). Table 3 shows the results of spatial inequality in accessing educational resources and the learning outcomes across different districts in Singh’s econometric analysis. Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for SC students. ₹250/student free textbooks and ₹700/student free uniforms. Community and home-schooling during COVID-19 lockdown (Prakasam, 2021).

**Table 3 Enrollment trends (2020–21):**

| Level       | No. of Students |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Primary     | 57,694          |
| KGBV Hostel | 100 (upgraded)  |
| Vocational  | 18,070          |

| Level                                   | No. of Students                                               |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Girls Beneficiaries<br>(Uniform Scheme) | 50,289 children received free uniforms<br>(Rs. 700 per child) |

4.2 Learning Outcomes

Data from ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) and NAS (National Achievement Survey) indicates a considerable discrepancy in learning levels in comparison to school enrollment figures. As per NAS 2021, in Sikkim only 53% of Grade 3 students could read a passage of a text meant for their age, and less than 45% were able to perform grade-level basic operations in mathematics (Ministry of Education, 2021). Singh (2019) reported that educational outcomes in Sikkim were in negative relationship with teacher absenteeism and absence of social learning opportunities. The learning outcomes gender differentials did not show wide variations, but the rural–urban and tribal–non-tribal divides were stark. The highlighted disparities indicate imbalances within the system and reinforce systemic inequities that necessitate focused educational innovations.

4.3 Teacher Availability and Training

The most enduring problem in Sikkim’s primary education continues to be the lack of qualified teachers, especially within the remoter tribal blocks. Based on UDISE+ information, single-teacher administered schools comprise about 18% of primary schools in the state, and nearly 14% of teachers are non-qualified (Ministry of Education, 2023). In-service training programs are offered by the State Council of Educational Research and

Training (SCERT), but there are several unaddressed concerns pertaining to the monitoring and evaluation of the programs offered. Unaddressed Hazarika et al. (2023) indicates the absence of formal professional development opportunities. Multi grade teaching without sufficient pedagogical materials has been shown to hinder effective teaching and learning (Devi & Bakshi, 2022) (Table 4).

Table 4. Teacher Availability and Training (Devi & Bakshi, 2022)

| Category                | Number Trained (2020–21) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| In-service Teachers     | 304                      |
| Special Educators       | 59 (6 elementary level)  |
| ICT Instructors & Heads | 290 schools covered      |

\*Training covered new pedagogy, digital learning, ICT tools, NEP-aligned values, and child-centered education.

5Mapping NEP 2020 onto Sikkim's Realities

The National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to provide a comprehensive equitable and flexible Integrated Learning System for India. While the policy framework is crafted considering Indian objectives, the execution of the policy is bound to the state context, particularly in regions like Sikkim, which has unique operational difficulties in terms of its geography, demography, and institutional capacity. In this part of the paper, we analyze the overlaps and gaps between Sikkim's reality and NEP 2020's vision (Table 5). One key hurdle to achieving the goals for digital ambitions set out in NEP 2020 within Sikkim’s primary education system is the prevailing

digital divide, an inequity that limits access to resources and opportunities. Despite the increasing attempts to provide, approximately 43% of primary level institutions in Sikkim have smart classrooms which implies restricted in-school access to digital resources for multimedia teaching and learning. This problem is compounded at the household level because less than 30% of school age children are able to access digital devices or internet service at home, hindering the ability of learners, particularly those residing in rural and remote high-altitude regions, to take advantage of online educational tools. When the pandemic struck and the need for online learning arose, the state sought to address these difficulties by providing instructional materials offline via educational radio programming and print content packets. Although these efforts provided a base level of continuity, they highlighted the need for a more sustained commitment towards advancing digital equity, infrastructure, and locally relevant e-content to achieve the full promise of NEP 2020 in terms of digital learning.”

**Table 5. The area of Convergence and Divergence in Sikkim.**

| Areas of Convergence                             |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                |                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                                        | National Policy (NEP 2020)                                                                                                  | Reality in Sikkim                                                                                              | References                                   |
| <b>1. Implementation of FLN via NIPUN Bharat</b> | NEP mandates universal FLN for all children by Grade 3 under the NIPUN Bharat Mission coverage 65% and 781 teachers trained | Sikkim adopted ECCE and FLN strategies in line with NIPUN Bharat. 763 TLM kits for KG levels were distributed. | NCERT (2023); Sikkim Education Report (2021) |

| Areas of Convergence                            |                                                                                 |                                                                                                                     |                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                                       | National Policy (NEP 2020)                                                      | Reality in Sikkim                                                                                                   | References                                                     |
|                                                 | in FLN Pedagogy                                                                 |                                                                                                                     |                                                                |
| <b>2. Integration of Local Languages</b>        | Encourages use of mother tongue or regional language for foundational learning. | Sikkim promotes local dialects (e.g., Bhutia, Lepcha, Limbu) and supports bilingual education at the primary level. | Bhutia & Chhetri (2025); Annual Report, Govt. of Sikkim (2021) |
| <b>3. School Complex Model in Hilly Terrain</b> | NEP suggests school complexes for academic and administrative efficiency.       | Due to terrain challenges, school complexes have been reorganized using “cluster” models adapted for remote access. | NCERT Annual Report (2022–23); MoE Implementation Guide (2021) |
| Areas of Divergence                             |                                                                                 |                                                                                                                     |                                                                |
| <b>1. Capacity Gaps in Teacher Training</b>     | Emphasizes teacher development via NISHTHA and competency-based modules.        | Only ~20% of primary teachers received NEP-aligned training. DIETs in Sikkim lack subject-specialist trainers.      | NCERT Annual Report (2022–23); Government of Sikkim (2021)     |
| <b>2. Inadequate Digital Infrastructure</b>     | Digital platforms like DIKSHA and PM eVidya central to NEP implementation.      | Many hilly districts in Sikkim lack reliable internet; e-content reaches <40% of rural primary students.            | NCERT, 2023; Hindustan Times (2022)                            |

| Areas of Convergence               |                                                            |                                                                                                              |                                                      |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                          | National Policy (NEP 2020)                                 | Reality in Sikkim                                                                                            | References                                           |
| 3. Local Administrative Challenges | NEP assumes robust district-level monitoring and autonomy. | Limited local manpower, inadequate M&E systems, and multi-role headmasters hinder real-time policy tracking. | Scroll.in (2022); Government of Sikkim Report (2021) |

### A Critique of NEP 2020 in relation to federal structure

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is widely commended for its ambitious agenda, yet its implications for India's asymmetric federal structure invite sustained scrutiny. Owing to its assignment to the Concurrent List, education possesses a dual jurisdiction, vesting both levels of government with legislative sovereignty. Nevertheless, apprehensions have intensified around the policy's implicit centripetal orientation, manifest particularly in directives concerning curriculum architecture, medium of instruction, and regulatory apparatus (Mukhopadhyay, 2021). The mandatory three-language proposal, widely portrayed as an instrument of national unity, arguably intrudes upon long-established state prerogatives over linguistic plurality, catalyzing well-documented dissent from Tamil Nadu (Bhattacharya, 2021). The establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) further consolidates authority in a national apparatus, effectively curtailing the prerogatives of state councils and circumscribing the latitude of state governments to modulate higher education to local socio-cultural and economic exigencies (Tilak, 2020). Such structural adjustments, although couched in the discourse of decentralization, reveal a significant transfer of authority to

the Union, thereby modelling a variant of asymmetrical federalism. Smaller and fiscally constrained states, in particular, confront heightened vulnerabilities in the operationalization of centrally induced norms. The policy's declared intent of equity and inclusion, therefore, is contingent upon a reconciliatory architecture that harmonises, rather than hierarchises, Union and state mandates. Civil society and scholarly scrutiny remains indispensable to safeguard the delicate federal balance upon which the constitutional scheme is predicated.

### How Northeast States Can Have Reciprocal Closeness with the Rest of the Country

The Northeast region of India—comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura—has long endured systemic educational disparities shaped by geographic inaccessibility, intricate ethnic constellations, chronic infrastructural deficits, and historical socio-political marginalization (Baruah, 2020). The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP), while espousing an anodyne vision of inclusivity, cannot transcend these constraints without purposeful and regionally calibrated interventions. A foundational lever in this endeavor is the systematic adoption of multilingual education. The policy's directive to prioritize mother-tongue instruction in the foundational years is especially pertinent, given the region's linguistic plurality that encompasses dozens of mutually unintelligible speech communities (Government of India, 2020). Nevertheless, structural and symbolic integration with the broader national community will only be consummated by accelerating intercultural and educational exchanges. Initiatives such as reciprocal inter-university partnerships, organized student mobility programmers, and guided exposure tours are necessary for cultivating mutual confidence without erasing regional

identities (Biswas, 2023). The most recent data from the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+, 2022) indicates that Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland continue to exceed the 25:1 student-teacher ratio, a statistic that surpasses the national average of 23:1, while net enrolment ratios remain consistently inferior to those in mainland counterparts. Earmarking augmentative central financing through the Samagra Shiksha programme, alongside the development of digital platforms calibrated to the technical and infrastructural peculiarities of remote terrains, is critical. Equally essential is the systematized confrontation of social exclusion and implicit prejudice that Northeast students frequently encounter in universities on the mainland, as such experiences of discrimination negate the experiential foundation of confidence that trust and reciprocity otherwise require (Biswas, 2023). Consequently, the National Education Policy's enshrined objectives of equity and quality require deliberate contextual adaptation for the Northeast, which can be achieved by simultaneously advancing infrastructural enhancement, allowing policy elasticities, and embedding cultural attunement, thereby mediating alignment with the national educational mainstream while safeguarding regional identities.

## 8. Policy Challenges, Opportunities and Recommendation

The execution of NEP 2020 in Sikkim's primary education system highlights a difficult balance of deep-rooted challenges and new possibilities. Some factors like challenging topography, budgetary constraints, and low student-teacher ratios are exacerbated by Sikkim's strong policy commitment. To make matters worse, most of the state's educational budget is allocated towards teacher salaries, which limits spending on digitization and other infrastructure improvements. Additionally, seasonal inaccessibility to remote tribal areas, multi-grade teaching, and

“teaching to the middle” impede educational quality. Compounding these issues, retention rates, and learning outcomes, especially for tribal groups, fall languidly behind the intended targets because of a lack of appropriate supportive materials and navigable language frameworks. On the other hand, NEP 2020 also offers exciting new opportunities. Financial and structural assistance are provided by central schemes like Samagra Shiksha, which promote more liberated planning of foundational learning, ECCE, and even pupil teacher ratio-enhanced teacher-training modules. So far, the school complex model demonstrates promising resource optimization in low-density regions. Pilots in East Sikkim have reported encouraging results. In addition, NEP's emphasis on teaching from within the community's culture promotes the integration of tribal knowledge systems into the curriculum, making education more meaningful and engaging. With active community participation and strategic planning, Sikkim can overcome its policy-practice gaps and move towards the transformational vision of NEP 2020. To properly localize NEP 2020 in Sikkim, SCERT must develop micro-plans for each district which address the state's cultural, linguistic, and geographic features. Strengthening the SCERT and DIETs is important for regional curriculum development, teaching, and for producing quality instructional materials in multiple languages. There should be evidence-based planning using UDISE+ and NAS, where active monitoring paired with real-time feedback systems enhances activities. Instruction using the mother tongue must be scaled with bilingual speakers and locally-engaged fluent teachers to ensure greater retention through improved learning in the early grades. Public-private-community partnerships should be formulated for promoting digital equity as well as localized pedagogy and indigenous knowledge integration to promote tribal education sustainability.

## 9. Conclusion

Sikkim's enforcement of NEP 2020 reveals strong integration concerning FLN via NIPUN Bharat, early childhood education, and mother tongue instruction which has inclusively reached more than 57,000 students. Inclusiveness also covers the appointment of 53 Special Educators and the training of 304 teachers. However, some of the concerns include an inadequate digitized rural NEP-specific environment with 18% of schools single-teacher operated. While home schooling showcased adaptability, sustained adaptability requires localized policy frameworks, enhanced pedagogy, improved regional ICT, and decentralized educational oversight.

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## **Legal Rights for the Transgender Community: Issues and Challenges**

**\*Shubham Gautam<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Nayim<sup>2</sup> Sunil Kabia<sup>3</sup>**

**Abstract:** *Transgender individuals have historically faced systemic discrimination, denial of basic rights, and social exclusion. The study analyses landmark legal developments such as the NALSA v/s Union of India Judgment (2014) and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019), highlighting both achievements and persistent challenges in implementation. It also examines global best practices, international human rights frameworks, and comparative legal approaches in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Latin America.*

*Beyond legal analysis, the paper emphasizes the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of transgender lives, including barriers in healthcare, education, employment, and family acceptance. Drawing on census data, case studies, and narratives, it illustrates the lived realities of the community and the urgent need for inclusive reforms. Bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness, inadequate legal aid and intersectional discrimination are major challenges of transgender. This paper explores the evolving legal rights of the*