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Integration of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into School and University Curricula in Context Of NEP-2020.

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformative shift in Indian education by integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into school and university curricula. Recognizing education as holistic, multidisciplinary and culturally rooted, NEP-2020 highlights IKS as a source of ethical, ecological and intellectual development. IKS spans philosophy, sciences, health systems like Ayurveda and Yoga, arts and ecological wisdom, offering learners both global competencies and cultural grounding. Yet despite strong policy advocacy existing scholarship and practice remain largely theoretical, with limited empirical research capturing how IKS is experienced and implemented by teachers, students and administrators.

This paper adopts a qualitative approach to examine the opportunities and challenges of integrating IKS in education. Findings suggest that IKS fosters cultural identity, ethical awareness and sustainability consciousness among students while major obstacles include inadequate teacher training, lack of authentic resources and unclear curriculum frameworks. The paper argues for multi-pronged strategies such as capacity-building programs, development of standardized yet flexible teaching materials and institutional collaboration with local knowledge holders. By amplifying the lived experiences of educators and learners this study bridges the gap between NEP-2020's vision and classroom realities contributing to broader debates on balancing global competitiveness with cultural rootedness in contemporary education.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), National Education Policy (NEP-2020), Curriculum integration, Holistic education, Multidisciplinary learning.

Introduction

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent a vast reservoir of indigenous wisdom, philosophies and sciences that have developed over thousands of years on the Indian subcontinent. Rooted in foundational texts such as the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Puranas*, alongside diverse oral traditions, IKS covers wide-ranging domains including philosophy, ethics, health sciences, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, linguistics, ecology, agriculture and the arts. Unlike fragmented disciplinary approaches, IKS embodies a holistic worldview, emphasizing the interconnectedness of intellectual growth, moral development, ecological balance and social well-being.

Historically India's centers of learning such as *Takshashila*, *Nalanda* and *Vikramashila* were global hubs where practical skills were integrated with philosophical inquiry. Traditional models like the *Gurukula* system prioritized experiential learning, ethical formation, and close teacher-student bonds. India's contributions to world knowledge such as the decimal system and zero in mathematics, Ayurveda in medicine, Yoga in health and well-being and classical treatises like the *Arthashastra* and *Natya Shastra* demonstrate the dynamic and adaptive character of IKS, which evolved continuously in dialogue with society and culture.

In the modern era, colonial education policies marginalized indigenous traditions by privileging Western knowledge systems leading to a disconnect between learners and their cultural heritage. Although post-independence efforts attempted to revive IKS, mainstream curricula largely retained Eurocentric orientations. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 however marks a turning point by advocating for the integration of Indian languages, philosophies and sciences into formal curricula. Such integration is not about reverting to the past but about leveraging indigenous wisdom to address contemporary challenges such as climate change, mental health crises and cultural alienation. By harmonizing tradition with modernity, IKS can help build an inclusive, sustainable education system that produces learners who are "rooted in India and ready for the world." Some of the keywords defined briefly below:

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):

A body of indigenous wisdom, practices, and philosophies that evolved in India over millennia, covering domains such as philosophy, ethics, sciences, arts, health (Ayurveda, Yoga) and ecology. IKS emphasizes holistic, value-based and context-sensitive approaches to knowledge and life.

National Education Policy (NEP-2020):

The Government of India's education reform framework introduced in 2020, which envisions holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary and culturally rooted education. It emphasizes integrating IKS into curricula to develop learners who are both globally competent and culturally grounded.

Curriculum Integration:

The process of embedding knowledge, skills and values from diverse domains into formal education frameworks. In the context of IKS, it refers to incorporating indigenous traditions, philosophies, and practices into school and university curricula.

Holistic Education:

An approach to learning that nurtures intellectual, emotional, ethical, social and spiritual dimensions of the learner. It seeks to develop well-rounded individuals rather than focusing solely on academic or vocational outcomes.

Multidisciplinary Learning:

An educational approach that brings together insights and methods from multiple disciplines to provide a broader, interconnected understanding of knowledge. NEP-2020 promotes multidisciplinary learning by encouraging integration of sciences, arts, humanities and indigenous knowledge.

Qualitative Study:

A research methodology that explores meanings, experiences, and perspectives through non-numerical data such as interviews, focus groups and observations. In this study it is used to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers, students, and administrators regarding IKS integration.

Importance of Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Curricula

1. Ethical Awareness and Value-Based Education

IKS emphasizes ethics, moral reasoning, and value-based living. Traditional systems such as the *Gurukula* and texts like the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita* focused on character-building, discipline, and duty (*dharma*). Integrating these values can counter issues like moral decline and social alienation, producing not just skilled graduates but empathetic citizens. NEP-2020 also highlights the need to nurture learners with compassion, courage and resilience.

2. Environmental Awareness and Sustainability

Indian traditions recognize the interdependence of humans and nature. Practices such as sacred grove conservation, mixed cropping, and traditional water harvesting reflect ecological wisdom. Introducing these into curricula can instill ecological literacy and sustainability. With climate change and biodiversity loss posing global threats IKS-inspired practices offer practical, locally relevant solutions.

3. Cultural Awareness and Identity Formation

IKS embodies diverse arts, literature and oral traditions that help learners appreciate India's pluralism. Teaching traditional crafts, music, and regional languages fosters creativity and cultural pride. At the same time, it helps learners stay rooted in India's civilizational ethos while engaging confidently with global cultures, reflecting NEP-2020's vision of being "rooted in India and ready for the world."

4. Bridging Tradition and Modernity

IKS is not outdated but complementary to modern science. Ayurveda offers preventive health insights, traditional architecture promotes sustainable design and Indian mathematics laid the foundation for global systems. Integrating such knowledge fosters interdisciplinary learning, innovation and problem-solving by linking the past with the present.

5. Development of Global Competencies

IKS is globally recognized through contributions like Yoga, Ayurveda, and Indian philosophy. Embedding these in curricula builds global competencies while preserving cultural confidence. Learners gain the ability to contribute to international debates on ethics, sustainability and innovation, making them globally competitive yet culturally grounded.

6. Promoting Holistic Development

Unlike fragmented subject-based learning, IKS integrates philosophy, science, art, and spirituality. Texts like the *Natya Shastra* and *Vedic Mathematics* encourage creativity, aesthetics and problem-solving. This aligns with NEP-2020's call for experiential, skill-based and holistic education.

7. Addressing Contemporary Challenges

IKS provides tools to address pressing issues: ethics for combating corruption, ecology for tackling climate change, cultural values for social cohesion, and Yoga for mental health. Embedding IKS into curricula makes education more relevant and equips learners to face global challenges with resilience.

Challenges and Institutional Barriers in Implementing IKS

1. Limited Teacher Training

Most teacher education programs remain rooted in Western frameworks, offering little exposure to indigenous traditions. As a result teachers often lack both content knowledge and pedagogical skills to effectively teach IKS, leading to superficial or avoided implementation.

2. Lack of Authentic Resources

Despite the richness of indigenous knowledge in texts, oral traditions and community practices much of it remains undocumented or inaccessible. The absence of standardized textbooks, digital content and teacher manuals hinders classroom adoption with existing resources restricted to select institutions.

3. Unclear Curriculum Design

There is ambiguity over whether IKS should be taught as a separate subject, integrated across disciplines or included as co-curricular content. This lack of clarity results in inconsistent implementation ranging from token inclusion to avoidance due to already dense curricula.

4. Institutional Resistance

Colonial legacies and Western dominance in education foster skepticism with some stakeholders perceiving IKS as outdated or irrelevant. University structures and rigid disciplinary silos further limit curriculum reform and slow integration efforts.

5. Weak Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Although IKS is inherently holistic institutional silos restrict collaboration across disciplines. This limits opportunities for innovative research and curriculum development that could meaningfully embed IKS.

6. Policy-Practice Gap

While NEP-2020 promotes IKS integration execution is constrained by inadequate funding, weak institutional support and poor monitoring. Many initiatives remain confined to pilot projects or elite institutions leaving mainstream schools untouched.

7. Documentation and Standardization Issues

IKS is region-specific and largely preserved in oral traditions, making systematic documentation difficult. Striking a balance between standardization for national curricula and flexibility for local diversity remains a persistent challenge.

Strategies for Effective Integration of IKS in Schools and Universities

1. Teacher Training and Capacity Building

- Incorporate IKS-focused modules into pre-service teacher education programs (B.Ed., M.Ed.).
- Conduct regular in-service workshops, seminars and online training sessions.
- Facilitate collaboration between teachers, IKS scholars and community practitioners to enrich pedagogy.

2. Development of Authentic Resources

- Prepare standardized textbooks, teacher manuals and digital content rooted in authentic sources.
- Translate classical texts into accessible language and integrate regional oral traditions.
- Build open-access digital repositories for wide dissemination of IKS material.

3. Curriculum Innovation and Flexibility

- Integrate IKS across disciplines such as science, arts, social sciences and environmental studies.

- Promote project-based and experiential learning connected to community practices.
- Design curricula that maintain national coherence while accommodating regional diversity.

4. Institutional Support and Policy Action

- Allocate dedicated funding and grants for IKS-related teaching and research.
- Establish IKS cells or centers in schools and universities to coordinate initiatives.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess progress and outcomes.

5. Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- Introduce joint courses and research projects across diverse academic departments.
- Encourage co-teaching models combining modern specialists with IKS practitioners.
- Strengthen links between academia, industry and communities for applied IKS learning.

6. Bridging the Policy–Practice Divide

- Pilot innovative projects and scale up successful models across institutions.
- Align assessment frameworks with holistic learning goals instead of rote evaluation.
- Foster collaboration between policymakers, educators and local communities.

7. Documentation and Knowledge Preservation

- Record oral traditions, folk practices and indigenous knowledge through student-led research.
- Utilize digital tools such as apps, portals and MOOCs for preservation and accessibility.
- Engage artisans, healers and community practitioners in teaching and knowledge-sharing.

8. Building Awareness and Positive Attitudes

- Organize cultural festivals, exhibitions and awareness drives showcasing IKS relevance.
- Highlight global contributions of IKS in sustainability, health and ethics.
- Position IKS as complementary to modern knowledge fostering holistic development.

Conclusion

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into education, as envisioned by NEP-2020, is essential for creating learners who are both globally competent and culturally rooted. By fostering ethical values, environmental consciousness and cultural identity, IKS provides holistic solutions to contemporary challenges such as climate change, mental health and social alienation. However effective implementation requires overcoming barriers of teacher preparedness, lack of authentic resources and institutional resistance. Strengthening teacher training, developing standardized yet flexible curricula and documenting indigenous knowledge can bridge these gaps. Collaborative efforts between policymakers, educators and communities are vital to ensure sustainability and inclusivity. Ultimately embedding IKS in curricula not only revives India's intellectual heritage but also equips students with the wisdom and resilience needed for the future.

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