

REVITALIZING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM IN THE LIGHT OF NEP-2020

REVITALIZANDO LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR A TRAVÉS DEL SISTEMA DE CONOCIMIENTO DE LA INDIA A LA LUZ DE LA NEP-2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a revolutionary turning point to the educational practices in the country, with a special focus on higher education and use of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). IKS is built on the existing cultural, philosophical and intellectual heritage of India and is all encompassing in nature targeting education, empowerment, development, leadership, and public service with infusing critical thinking, ethics and sustainable development. The purpose of the policy is to bridge the gap between the ancient teachings and modern requirements and develop an education system that is globally competitive and yet ethnocentric taking the best of teachings from the two systems. The National Education Policy 2020 within higher education institutions envisions integrating IKS, promoting research, cultural exchanges, and restructuring of teaching where traditional knowledge goes hand in hand with scientific knowledge as it exists. The attempt has been made in this article to describe the contribution of NEP 2020 to the improvement of higher education in India through incorporation of the Indian Knowledge System with a particular focus on the aspects of pedagogy, research and positioning of India in the knowledge economy. Such a policy which seeks to incorporate Indian knowledge systems IKS can bring about a cultural and educational renaissance and produce holistic graduates capable of dealing with the complexities of the 21st century while preserving the cultural ethos of India.

Keywords

Higher Education, Indian Knowledge System, Holistic Education, NEP-2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The educational system of India has evolved considerably at various points in time in its past, starting with the Gurukul system, to colonialism, and now to the aims articulated by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. One of the concerns articulated in the NEP is on the rejuvenation of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in higher education. The Indian Knowledge System is based on the ancient epics like the Vedas, Upanishads, Ayurveda and many classical arts and covers various subjects aimed at the art of living, preserving nature and producing ethical leader (Rishi, 2023). Such knowledge has promoted several academic disciplines including science, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, and philosophy. However, it is regrettable that such knowledge has been comparatively neglected, concentrating on Western forms of education mostly over time. The Western education system took over traditional Indian knowledge systems mostly as a result of colonial influence, which favoured Western methods and curricula to coincide with administrative and commercial needs under British control. The National Education Policy 2020 identifies cultural practices and systems as the Indian knowledge systems that can enrich modern education as well as increase affinity to the rich Indian heritage (Das, 2024). Additionally, NEP-2020 fosters interdisciplinary education, research, and Indian language revitalization, which makes it easier to incorporate IKS. It pushes colleges and universities to develop into inclusive, culturally relevant, and future-ready knowledge hubs. The goal of the policy is to close the gap between conventional and modern learning systems by integrating IKS into research, education, and curricula. Instead, the policy aims to establish a connection between ancient and new knowledge systems by incorporating IKS into higher education. This recovery is also seen as a reaction to contemporary concerns like leadership effectiveness, sustainable growth, and innovation, in addition to being a means of preserving the treasures of the past. In order to promote a more well-rounded and comprehensive educational experience, this research study aims to investigate how IKS might be revived and incorporated into modern higher education institutions.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM IN EDUCATION

IKS has been enshrined within the Indian culture since earliest times, rightly extending to the Vedic epochs (approximately 1500 BCE) which include the centuries in Chronological order of texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, their off-shot texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras among others (Kapoor, et. al., 2021). These are the primaries of Indian metaphysics that goes ahead to inquire into many issues such as existence of beings, the consciousness, and the relationship that exists between individuals and the universe among

other things. In addition, ancient Indian literature on subjects like mathematics (like those of Aryabhata), astronomy (for example, Surya Siddhanta), medicine (such as Ayurveda with works like the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita) and even building designs (Vastu Shastra) has enhanced the corpus of knowledge available in the world.

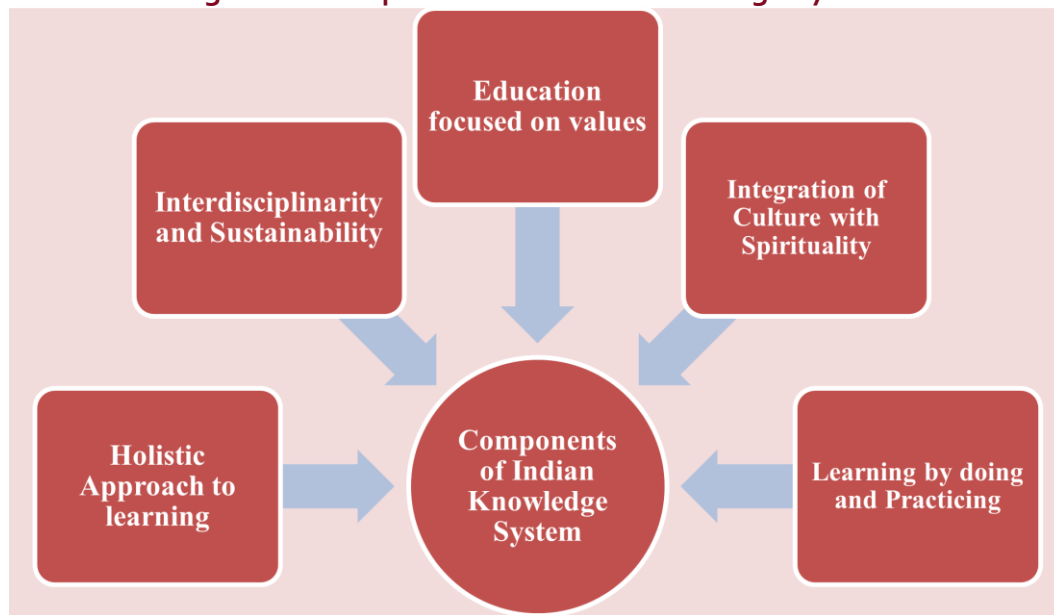
Before the advancement of British rule in India, the system of education was based on Gurukula system which was the students lived with the teacher and learnt not only the subjects such as philosophy, logic, mathematics, and sciences but also dealt deeply with the co-curricular activities for nurturing of values through theoretical and practical lessons. The effectiveness of the Gurukul structure relied on the aims of education which was positive, intellectual development and the cultivation of emotional and moral maturity. Knowledge was mainly oral with the ease of absorbing the cost in the day-to-day activities of the individuals to instil the responsibility of taking care of the society and nature in the individuals. Significant changes happened in India's educational system during British colonial administration in the nineteenth century. The colonial state's education policy gained significance, as it was both essential and sufficient for creating an effective command over the colony's administrative machinery and economic resources. This concept attempted to create a class of educated Indians who could help with governance and act as liaisons between British rulers and the Indian population, ensuring that the colonial system ran smoothly. Indian traditions embodied by old languages like Sanskrit and Persian gave way to English with an emphasis in education deviating from education par excellence to training for jobs. This created a situation where local knowledge systems started to be ignored and there – emerged an education system oriented to the needs of the British Empire, specifically for creating clerks and administrators. Over time, this has resulted in a disconnection between modern Indian education and its rich intellectual heritage.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this conceptual review study, secondary data has been collected from already published literature e.g. books, journals, government policy documents and analysed for deeper understanding of Indian Knowledge System and its incorporation into higher education system.

3.1. *Components of Indian Knowledge System*

The key components of Indian Knowledge System have been described in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Components of Indian Knowledge System

Source: Authors

3.2. *Holistic Approach to learning*

IKS considers knowledge as an integral part of life with no boundaries. While in modern education the subjects are often viewed in silos, IKS stretches the frontiers to incorporate understanding of science, philosophy, art, and ethics among many. This approach makes it possible to build not only the mind but the heart and the body as one whole unit.

3.3. *Interdisciplinary and Sustainability*

The most interesting aspect of IKS is that it is multi-dimensional. In the ancient Indian texts, civilization, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and other related fields of study were found closely knit and inter-related. Knowledge was not compartmentalized. This interdisciplinary focus is particularly relevant today, as modern problems such as climate change, health crises, and ethical dilemmas require multifaceted solutions (Mandavkar, 2023).

3.4. *Education focused on values*

Concerning IKS, moral living and character progression is a predominant theme. Knowledge-transmitted institutions like Gurukuls did not only focus on teaching the pupil, but also on the pupil's growth and development, which includes values such as respect, discipline,

empathy and concern for the world. The Gurukul system was a vital component of ancient Indian education, emphasizing holistic human development in a close, caring setting under the supervision of a Guru. Students lived with the Guru in an ashram, which instilled discipline, humility, and mutual respect. This approach extended academic learning to include moral, spiritual, and practical education, emphasizing principles like self-reliance, community living, and mindfulness. The Guru's intimate closeness allowed for specialized attention, mentorship, and the transmission of experiential knowledge, resulting in well-rounded individuals who excelled in the personal, social, and intellectual spheres.

3.5. Integration of Culture with Spirituality

IKS also forms a considerable part of the spiritual and cultural life in India. It stresses on the need for people to relate with their culture on a deeper level, spiritually. As the current world is increasingly globalized and there is danger of cultural imperialism and erosion of cultures, IKS becomes useful since it seeks to uphold cultural richness and diversity as well as promote spirituality (Mahadevan et al., 2022).

3.6. Learning by doing and Practicing

Ancient Indian education was mostly practice oriented and very little of theory. It did also not matter if it was Ayurveda or Yogic or Architectural studies, the knowledge was put into practice, encouraging practical intelligence. For example, disciplines such as Ayurveda, architecture (Vastu Shastra), metallurgy, and agriculture were taught using apprenticeship models, in which students learned by seeing, practicing, and perfecting techniques under the supervision of experienced mentors. Similarly, artistic traditions such as music, dancing, and crafts were passed down via diligent practice and embodied learning. This system also ensured that knowledge was not only memorized, but profoundly understood and implemented, resulting in the development of expertise, inventiveness, and problem-solving skills that are critical for personal and societal advancement.

4. INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS)

The National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 which has been initiated by the Government of India is a paradigm shift in the education system of the country. NEP 2020 seeks to break the barriers of compartmentalized education and broadens the scope of learning, and therefore, gives utmost importance to the embedding of the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in today's education framework (Gaur, 2024). This has been prompted by the increasing realization that Indian culture, traditions, and ethos have high potentialities to contribute towards the

contemporary education system, especially with regards to the processes of curriculum design and the ways teaching and learning take place (Kumar, 2023, 2024).

Some important aspects of NEP 2020 concerning IKS are:

4.1. Curriculum Integration

Integration of IKS in Higher Education Curriculum is one of the major pursuits of NEP 2020 and covers also the areas such as:

- Ancient Indian Sciences: Familiarizing students with aspects of the ancient Indian Sciences like Ayurvedic medicine, Yoga, mathematics (Vedic math), Jyotisha (astrology), and metallurgy.
- Philosophy and Ethics: Teaching the Ethics and Philosophy of Indian religions by studying the great Indian classics such as the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Buddhist scriptures, etc. designed to build one's self individualistic yet ethical critical morality beyond cultural norms.
- Art, Music, and Culture: Preserving and propagating Indian art music dance culture etc. to enhance innovation and creativity and help respect the rich culture of India.
- Environmental Sustainability: 'Green' practices and respect for nature through the lens of Indian texts like Vrikshayurveda which describes ancient Indian tree and plant sciences.

Figure 2 – Integration of IKS in Higher Education



Source: Authors

4.2. Multilingualism and Classical Languages

In the context of NEP 2020, advocates classical heritage languages such as Sanskrit, Tamil and Pali to be taught. It also calls for multilingual education right from early childhood since language is central for every culture and every way of knowledge. There is particular emphasis on 'Sanskrit' in NEP where it states that Sanskrit will be the key to a vast treasury of knowledge where collected works on philosophy, sciences and literature will be found. Thus, as a way of allowing students engage with classical languages, foundational premise of Indian Knowledge System in NEP 2020 enables them to engage with works that bear primary sources of information, which helps in understanding the traditional knowledge in a more comprehensive and best way possible.

4.3. Emerging Trends in Research and Development in IKS

In accordance with the provisions of NEP 2020, there have been calls for the establishment of research centres and institutes whose primary focus is IKS. It further underlines the importance of conducting research on Indian knowledge systems as well as modern science and technology. In this regard, there is a need to bridge the gap between the modern scientific discourse and the traditional Indian concept of knowledge dissemination. IKS and its practical usage in sectors like health care, eco-friendly agribusiness, building designs (Vastu Shastra), etc. is encouraged. It also aims at promotion of Indocentric studies and encourages scholars both Indian and abroad to interact on the role of IKS in innovation and knowledge creation.

4.4. Education with Integration of Values

As one of the elements of NEP 2020, is the aspect of value-based education which is drawn from the Indian ethos of values and moral teachings. The ancient Indian knowledge systems have been compatible with the concept of development in its entirety—physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. NEP 2020 hopes to do this by improving modern education through the incorporation of values like character building, ethical leadership, appreciation of differences, and social accountability.

4.5. Removal of Colonization in Education

The National Education Policy 2020 is also an expression of a wish to decolonise education by restoring the pride in India's intellectual tradition. For many years now, the education system in India has mainly been based on Western ways resulting in little or no emphasis on local content. NEP 2020 seeks to limit or rather reverse this approach by revitalizing traditional Indian subjects, reintroducing ancient Indian texts and methodologies into mainstream education, and balancing modern scientific knowledge with traditional teachings.

Thus, the policy has the objective of improving the education system in such a way that it is more cultural and traditional to the people of India, without necessarily compromising on the global advancement.

5. INCORPORATION OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM IN PRESENT DAY HIGHER EDUCATION

India's traditional wisdom, practices, and principles are unique and rich. Therefore, it can be rightly said that, native knowledge systems have received acceptance for use in modern educational systems. The increasing trend can be attributed to the growing awareness of the weaknesses that accompany the 'One-Size-Fits-All' West-based systems of education where focus is mostly placed on technological advancements and economic growth, while human beings and the environment are often overlooked. In India, the National Education Policy, NEP 2020 calls for the need to move back to IKS and putting it back into the system. The figure-2 depicts the different areas for Incorporation of Indian Knowledge System in present day higher education system in India.

Figure 3 - Areas of Incorporation of Indian Knowledge System in Present Day Higher Education

Curricular Reforms	Teacher Training	Research and Innovation	Centres of Excellence	Student Engagement
Courses on IKS	IKS-trained educators	Research on Ayurveda	Dedicated IKS departments	Active project participation
Historical aspects	Pedagogical skills	VastuShastra in architecture	Collaboration with traditional knowledge	Field trips to sites
Applications in Ayurveda	Knowledge transfer	Interdisciplinary ideas	Promotion of IKS	Practical courses in crafts
Philosophy of India	Modern educators collaboration	Addressing current challenges	Research activities	Enhancing appreciation of IKS

Source: Authors

5.1. *Curricular Reforms*

This is one of the most obvious, clear-cut and practical ways in which the importance of IKS can be incorporated into the education system of the upper universities. In addition, universities can create courses on IKS covering its historical aspects, its applications in such popular forms as Indian Ayurveda or Vedic Math or other arts, and philosophy of India. IKS based science and technology also could be explored in the form of courses. As an example, if it is academia on sustainable living, some references may be taken from ancient Indian literature which stresses on living in harmony with nature.

5.2. *Teacher Training*

The hallmark of enhancing the stature of IKS, within the context of higher education, is a predominance of IKS-trained educators. Such personnel should not only have pedagogical skills but also command the relevant IKS body of knowledge. As part of the process of re-education, teacher improvement activities should aim at providing trainers with both substantial knowledge of IKS and the skills of addressing this knowledge to present generation of students. The modern educators and the custodians of traditional knowledge (such as Sanskrit, Ayurveda or Indian philosophy) should work together in order to make the process richer.

5.3. *Research and Innovation*

Further, the importance of higher education institutions encouraging research in IKS's pragmatic aspects, geared at solving current challenges cannot be overemphasized. For example, Ayurveda studies might help the debate on sustainable healthcare on a global scale. Also, Vastu Shastra could help modern architecture, and even urban structures. Promotion of this kind of research shall not only rejuvenate IKS in India but also enable the country to harness interdisciplinary innovative ideas however.

5.4. *Creation of Centres of Excellence*

The creation of IKS dedicated departments in the universities for the relevant further research and promotion of IKS can work as verticals for knowledge transfer and enhancement. In such centres the holders of traditional knowledge will work hand in hand

with practitioners of modern science allowing for the inclusion of IKS in wider educational and research activities.

5.5. *Student Engagement*

IKS incorporation into students' educational process does not remain a passive activity. Participation in projects aimed at learning IKS, for example, will also include such activities as: active involvement in educational and recreational field trips to culturally and historically relevant sites as well as in practical courses teaching some weighty professions such as crafts, agriculture, medicine etc. will aid a student in bridging the gap between the theory and practice. These 'real world' learning opportunities will enhance their appreciation of IKS and the role it plays in addressing current issues.

6. CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

While the integration of IKS into higher education offers numerous benefits, it is not without challenges. Some of the key challenges include:

6.1. *Lack of Awareness*

A good number of teachers and students have little or no idea on what IKS is and its importance in the contemporary world. The foregoing ignorance may equally predispose them against the incorporation of IKS in the curriculum. It is therefore important that steps are taken to inform the public on the importance of IKS, and the role it can play in education today.

6.2. *Standardization and Authenticity*

Because of its rich and geographic bound aspect, integration of IKS in modern educational systems is not easy. Dependency on conventional knowledge systems runs the risk of oversimplifying or misrepresenting culture and its associated knowledge. For this, it is essential that the educational institutions engage the traditional knowledge holders and their respective educators in the teaching and learning of IKS.

6.3. *Limited Resources*

Incorporating IKS into the syllabus entails a lot of additional heavy expenditure on resources, training and facilities. All concerned level of universities and governments should come up with adequate budgets to fund the program development, teacher training, and research activities on IKS.

6.4. Access and Outreach

Ensuring access to IKS education for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, is another critical challenge. Digital platforms and outreach programs may play a key role in overcoming this barrier, but equitable access to technology and resources will be essential.

Despite these challenges, the revitalization of higher education through IKS is a promising avenue for creating a more balanced, holistic, and sustainable educational system. By drawing on India's rich intellectual heritage, educational institutions can foster a new generation of thinkers and leaders who are well-equipped to address the complex challenges of the 21st century.

7. CONCLUSION

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is seen as lying in the heart of the intellectual underpinning of Indian history; this gave NEP 2020 a chance to bridge important legacies and transform the academic society into a platform inclusive of different environments and self-sustaining in nature. Although NEP 2020 was meant to offer the most visionary framework, the necessity arising out of its implementation cannot permit curriculum changes only but rather needs a cultural shift within education institutions. It calls on the transformation of approaches to teaching and learning; respect for indigenous knowledge would flow through society alongside systems for assessing the rigor that allowed traditional systems to engage their global counterparts critically. Conversely, the set of genuine enhancement actions in higher education classically tries to fall into the trap of romanticization of the past or simply inserting ancient concepts into modern syllabi. Rather, the realization of the concept should strongly be an impromptu integration of these past insights to complement present-day research and enhance their solutions to the future. The challenge lies here in maintaining a certain academic rigor, offering opportunities for interdisciplinary research and being flexible enough to prevent ideological thinking that could dilute the value or authenticity of traditional knowledge. On this view, institutional commitment, faculty training, and peer-reviewed resources need to be created for the legitimation and delivery of IKS in academic formats-if this revitalization is to succeed. The need is also pressing to bring together the scholars of classical traditions and modern sciences in a co-creation of knowledge that is rooted yet globally pertinent. Implementation of IKS, if carried out with intellectual honesty,

academic insistence, and cultural sensitivity, holds the potential to overhaul the higher education landscape of India. It stands such a chance because it can improve activities and the relevance of learning and take India to become a world leader in the creation of knowledge from a position where it can base itself on civilizational wisdom and contribute meaningfully to present-day challenges.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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