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NEP 2020: Integrating Indian Knowledge System in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

NEP 2020 aims at transforming the way we learn. It seeks to make the education system more flexible and focused on the student. The **Indian knowledge system (IKS)** is a part of this change. The IKS is about India's wisdom and traditional ways. This includes integration of traditional and cultural knowledge like Yoga, Ayurveda, sustainable living integral to Indian culture in curriculum and classroom practices. The NEP 2020 wants to associate traditional knowledge to modern knowledge systems thereby creating a balanced and inclusive education system along with building rootedness and pride in India. The paper highlights the scope of IKS, its integration in learning environment and challenges in its integration.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Multidisciplinary Education, Holistic Education, Integrating IKS

Introduction

Education is seen as the base of a progressive society, helping both individuals and the nation to grow. It shapes character, builds thinking skills, and supports overall development. Today, education goes beyond memorisation and focuses on conceptual understanding, encouraging creativity, and real-world use. India has long seen the need for major changes in education. In the digital age with the surge in technological advancements there was a need for a new education policy to address this transformation to information society. NEP 2020 was formulated in the backdrop of

challenges of technological transformation, rapid knowledge expansion that required new skills to traverse through and prepare future ready citizens. The policy supports a flexible, student-focused approach to education. The policy aims at preparing learners with not only disciplinary understanding but also critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, adaptability, ethical reasoning and problem-solving abilities. One of the key fundamental guiding principle as stated in the policy is 'a rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions'. This leads to the inclusion of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in regular education. IKS includes India's rich history in fields such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, the arts, architecture, and environmental studies. By including IKS, the policy aims to help students connect with traditional Indian knowledge.

In the past, Indian education followed Western models that often sidelined traditional knowledge and weakened students' ties to their culture. The new reforms aim to fix this by bringing together traditional wisdom and modern science. By associating traditional and indigenous knowledge to new knowledge, the policy aims to create a balanced and inclusive education system. This helps students better understand concepts connect them to their existing traditional knowledge base and appreciate and take pride in their culture.

Indian Knowledge System

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a plan to progressively change India's education system at every level, from early childhood to higher education. It aims to make learning increasingly inclusive, flexible, and aligned with global standards, while also preserving India's cultural values and traditions.

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a vast body of knowledge originating in India and evolving over centuries through experience and observation. It covers areas like Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, philosophy, literature, arts, and cultural practices. As Sharma (2021) notes, IKS is a rich source of traditional knowledge that has been built over generations.

Importantly, IKS extends past theoretical constructs and encompasses practical wisdom relevant to everyday life, nature, and society. It emphasises harmony between humans and the natural environment, ethical conduct, and holistic development of individuals.

Bringing Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into education means adding traditional knowledge to today's lessons and teaching methods. The goal is not to replace modern science, but to add to it and make connections with what already existed in Indian

traditions and culture. Thus helping students to connect new knowledge to their local context as well as instilling in them a feeling of pride for their knowledge and culture. This helps students see ideas from different angles and think more critically.

Teaching IKS alongside modern subjects helps students value their cultural heritage while building current skills. It is a continuum rather than a dichotomy. This approach also builds students' sense of identity and pride. It motivates them to learn about their roots and use traditional knowledge to solve today's problems.

Scope of the Indian Knowledge System within Modern Education

The scope of integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern education is extensive and multidimensional. It can be successfully applied throughout various levels of education and disciplines, thereby making learning effective. IKS can be integrated into many parts of modern education at all levels and across different subjects. This makes learning more meaningful, practical, and connected to real life. The areas of knowledge for example, indigenous water conservation techniques and herbal medicine systems are particularly relevant in dealing with contemporary global challenges, including climate change and societal health concerns.

In higher education, IKS gives many chances for research and new ideas. Students and researchers can study old texts and practices to see how they matter today. This can lead to new discoveries and solutions that mix tradition with modern science. IKS helps teach important values like respecting nature, working together, and acting ethically. These values are key to building a responsible and sustainable society which is also the aim of NEP 2020.

Another important dimension of IKS is its contribution to interdisciplinary learning. It connects varied fields of study and encourages learning. IKS also supports learning across different subjects. It helps students connect ideas from various fields. For example, architecture can combine modern engineering with traditional design, leading to buildings that are both sustainable, culturally meaningful and suitable to Indian climatic conditions. Their role in enhancing sustainable development and bolstering educational practices.

Adding IKS to education helps keep cultural heritage alive. It makes sure traditional knowledge is recorded, used, and passed on to future generations. IKS also encourages creativity and new ideas by mixing traditional insight with modern technology enabling students to find unique solutions to today's problems. IKS is not just about academics. It also covers social, cultural, environmental, and economic growth.

Indian Knowledge System and Core Principles of NEP 2020

- Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education

The multidisciplinary education has a deeper purpose of making learners understand the interconnectedness of knowledge. Holistic education goes beyond academic integration and seeks to develop learner as a whole. It focuses on the overall development of learners by addressing their cognitive, social, emotional, ethical, physical and creative dimensions of learning. While multidisciplinary education integrates knowledge across subjects, holistic education ensures balanced development of the learner as a whole. The policy emphasises on holistic education for all by integration of cross-cutting themes of environmental education, value education, inclusive education and Indian knowledge system. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) inherently fosters holistic education by promoting balance and harmony in all aspects of life. Traditional systems such as the Gurukul model focused not only on academic learning but also on discipline, character formation, and the development of essential life skills.

In addition, multidisciplinary education enables students to interact with multiple subjects and knowledge systems, blurring boundaries between disciplines and helping to explore broad interests. Such flexibility promotes creativity, critical inquiry, and innovation, aligning education with the changing needs of the modern world.

- **Value-Based Education**

Value-based education seeks to instill moral and ethical principles in students, guiding them toward responsible and meaningful lives. Indian philosophical traditions have long emphasised values such as honesty, respect, compassion, and social responsibility.

Classical texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Panchatantra provide timeless knowledge of ethical conduct, decision-making, and human behaviour. These teachings serve as valuable tools for nurturing moral awareness and integrity among learners. By integrating these values into education, institutions can foster responsible citizens who actively contribute to societal well-being.

- **Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning refers to the process of acquiring knowledge through direct experience, observation, and active engagement. NEP 2020 promotes this learner-centered approach to make education more interactive, practical, and meaningful. Students tend to understand and retain concepts more effectively when they are involved in activities such as projects, experiments, fieldwork, and problem-solving tasks. This approach is deeply rooted in traditional Indian education, where skills and knowledge were often transmitted through hands-on practice and real-life application.

Such methods not only enhance understanding but also build practical competence and confidence among learners.

- **Promotion of Indian Languages**

Language plays a fundamental role in the learning process. NEP 2020 emphasises the use of the mother tongue or regional languages as mediums of instruction, particularly in the early stages of education. Learning in one's native language enhances comprehension, expression, and cognitive development. It also strengthens the learner's connection with cultural identity and heritage. Furthermore, a significant portion of IKS literature is preserved in Indian languages. Promoting these languages is therefore essential for accessing, preserving, and transmitting traditional knowledge to future generations.

- **Scientific and Critical Thinking**

The development of scientific temper and critical thinking is a key objective of NEP 2020. Students are encouraged to question assumptions, analyse information, and evaluate evidence logically and objectively. In the context of integrating IKS, it is essential to present traditional knowledge in a rational and evidence-based manner. This approach helps avoid uncritical acceptance and instead promotes informed understanding. By combining traditional wisdom with scientific inquiry, education can cultivate balanced thinkers who appreciate cultural knowledge while remaining committed to reason and innovation.

Role of Teachers in Integrating IKS

Teachers play a pivotal role in effectively integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern education. As facilitators of learning, they guide students in understanding, interpreting, and applying both traditional and contemporary knowledge in meaningful ways.

To successfully incorporate IKS, teachers must adopt innovative and learner-centered pedagogical approaches. Methods such as storytelling, group discussions, project-based learning, and activity-oriented instruction can make the learning process more engaging and relatable. These approaches also help contextualize traditional knowledge within students' everyday experiences. The role of the teacher is to help form connectedness between modern knowledge systems and the indigenous knowledge systems that the students are already familiar with. It is the role of the teacher to base new knowledge in students local contexts so that they do not feel alienated and also take pride in their traditional knowledge systems.

Furthermore, teachers should actively encourage students to think critically and engage in inquiry. By fostering an environment where learners feel comfortable asking

questions and engaging in dialogue, teachers can promote analytical skills and deeper understanding. This is particularly important when presenting traditional knowledge alongside modern scientific perspectives.

Teacher training and professional development are essential for the successful implementation of IKS. Educators must be equipped with adequate knowledge, appropriate teaching resources, and a clear understanding of how to integrate IKS into existing curricula. Continuous training programs and workshops can help teachers stay up to date and confident in their instructional practices.

Additionally, teachers are responsible for creating an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Such an environment encourages open expression, mutual respect, and collaborative learning, allowing students to explore ideas freely and develop a holistic perspective.

In essence, teachers act as a bridge between traditional wisdom and modern education, ensuring that IKS integration is both meaningful and effective.

Integrating IKS in Contemporary Learning Environments

The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into education can be effectively demonstrated through a range of practical, application-based approaches. These examples highlight some of the ways in which traditional knowledge can be meaningfully incorporated into contemporary learning environments. One significant example is the inclusion of Yoga in the curriculum. Yoga contributes to both physical and mental well-being by helping students manage stress, enhance concentration, and maintain overall health. It's a regular practice that supports holistic development and aligns with the objectives of modern education.

Similarly, Ayurveda can be introduced to create awareness about healthy lifestyles and natural healing practices. It encourages preventive healthcare and promotes a balanced way of living, which is highly relevant in today's fast-paced world. Indian contributions to mathematics can also be integrated into the curriculum by highlighting the work of renowned scholars such as Aryabhata and Brahmagupta. Their discoveries and methods can enrich students' understanding of mathematical concepts and provide historical context to modern theories. Environmental education can incorporate traditional ecological practices such as rainwater harvesting, organic farming, and sustainable resource management. These indigenous methods offer practical solutions to contemporary environmental challenges and promote sustainability.

Storytelling is another effective pedagogical tool for integrating IKS. Through stories rooted in cultural traditions, teachers can impart moral values, ethical lessons, and social awareness in an engaging and relatable way. Additionally, the inclusion of arts

and crafts in education fosters creativity and strengthens cultural awareness. It allows students to explore traditional forms of expression while developing artistic skills and appreciation for heritage.

These examples demonstrate that integrating the Indian Knowledge System is practical and can be implemented across various subjects, thereby making education more holistic, relevant, and engaging.

Importance of Integrating IKS

IKS helps develop cultural awareness and identity. It helps students understand their traditions and values, creating a sense of pride and belonging. It promotes holistic development and supports students' overall growth, including intellectual, emotional, physical, and moral aspects. It improves learning outcomes making education more meaningful and relatable, leading to better understanding and retention.

Integrating IKS in the classroom leads to holistic development of the learner. It encourages innovation helping students to combine traditional knowledge with modern science to develop new practical solutions to everyday problems. It also enhances critical thinking and creativity. Students learn to analyse and think deeply, as highlighted by Kapoor (2019). Including practices like yoga and natural living promotes mental and physical well-being of learners and helps improve health and reduce stress. It also prepares learners for global challenges and equips them with skills to face modern problems while using traditional wisdom.

Integration of IKS also helps preserve cultural heritage and ensures that traditional knowledge and practices are passed on to future generations. It promotes sustainable living by promoting eco-friendly practices and respect for nature, helping solve environmental issues pertaining to local context. It helps connect learners to their roots and maintains a balance between modern education and cultural values.

Challenges in Integration of IKS

- **Lack of proper study materials:** There is limited availability of well-structured and standardised textbooks or resources on the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), making it difficult to teach effectively.
- **Inadequate teacher training:** Teacher Training Programmes need to be updated to keep pace with the NEP 2020. Pre service training programmes are still running according to the old curriculum framework and hence fresh trainees have no knowledge as to how to integrate IKS in classroom. In-service trainings must be organised to sufficiently equip teachers with IKS and its integration.
- **Need for scientific validation:** Traditional knowledge must be presented in a scientific and logical manner to ensure academic credibility Sharma (2021).

- **Balancing traditional and modern knowledge:** Integrating IKS with contemporary education requires careful curriculum planning to maintain relevance and accuracy.
- **Risk of romanticising traditional knowledge:** There is a possibility of presenting traditional practices without proper evidence, which can lead to misconceptions. A balanced and evidence-based approach is essential.
- **Curriculum and policy challenges:** Designing a curriculum that meaningfully incorporates IKS without overloading students can be complex.
- **Lack of awareness and acceptance:** Some educators and institutions may lack awareness or may be hesitant to adopt IKS due to misconceptions about its relevance.
- **Resource and implementation constraints:** Limited institutional support, funding, and infrastructure can hinder effective integration.
- **Language barriers:** Many traditional texts are in classical or regional languages, making them less accessible to all learners.
- **Need for interdisciplinary coordination:** Successful integration requires collaboration across subjects, which can be difficult to manage in practice.

Conclusion:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative step in reshaping the Indian education system to meet the needs of the 21st century. By emphasising flexibility, inclusivity, and holistic development, the policy aims to move beyond traditional rote learning and create a more dynamic and meaningful learning environment. One of its most significant contributions is integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into teaching and learning, offering a balanced approach that combines traditional wisdom with modern scientific knowledge.

The inclusion of IKS in education helps in reconnecting learners with India's rich cultural and intellectual heritage. It enables students to understand the relevance of traditional knowledge in contemporary contexts and encourages them to apply it in solving real-life problems. This integration not only strengthens cultural identity but also promotes values such as respect, responsibility, sustainability, and ethical living.

However, the successful implementation of this vision requires continuous efforts from all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and institutions. Proper teacher training, development of quality learning materials, and the use of technology are essential to effectively integrate IKS into the curriculum. It is also important to ensure that traditional knowledge is presented in a scientific and logical manner so that it remains relevant and credible. Looking ahead, the integration of the Indian Knowledge

System has the potential to transform education not only in India but also globally. As the world increasingly values sustainability, holistic well-being, and cultural diversity, India's traditional knowledge systems can offer valuable insights and solutions.

Overall, NEP 2020, through the integration of IKS, aims to create an education system that is deeply rooted in Indian culture while being globally competitive. It envisions the development of knowledgeable, skilled, and ethically responsible individuals who can contribute to the progress of society and the nation. Thus, blending traditional wisdom with modern education is a powerful approach to building a strong, self-reliant, and future-ready India.

Therefore, the integration of the Indian Knowledge System under NEP 2020 represents a transformative step toward establishing a culturally rooted and globally competent society.

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