Examining the Integration of Indian Knowledge Traditions and Values in NEP 2020: A Pathway to Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) heralds a paradigm shift in the Indian educational landscape, aiming to dismantle the remnants of oppressive colonial models and reconstruct a system deeply rooted in the Indian ethos. This paper critically analyzes the integration of Indian Knowledge Traditions (IKT) within NEP 2020, which is a vital strategy for addressing the developmental imperatives of the 21st century. Historically, Indian education sought more than academic proficiency; it aimed for a holistic vision of complete realization and liberation of the self. This study examines how NEP 2020 aims to bridge this historical disconnect by incorporating the fundamental pillars of IKT—*Jnan* (Knowledge), *Pragya* (Wisdom), and *Satya* (Truth)—into the modern curriculum. The paper argues that these values are essential for transitioning from rote learning to 'learning how to learn', a core competency required for a rapidly changing global ecosystem. Furthermore, the research explores the strategic alignment between these indigenous values and the Global Education Agenda, demonstrating how local traditions can fuel national aspirations for a *Viksit Bharat 2047*. The study concludes that incorporating these value systems is a structural necessity for fostering a vibrant, equitable knowledge society that cultivates unique student capabilities and national pride.

Keywords:

Indian Knowledge Traditions (IKT), Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), NEP 2020, Value-Based Education, Viksit Bharat 2047

Introduction:

The Sanskrit term *Bharat* is derived from *bha–ra–ta*, where *bha* signifies light or knowledge and *rat* denotes devotion, symbolizing a nation of seekers. Accordingly, *Bharatiya* (Indian) is understood as one who persistently seeks inner illumination to comprehend true knowledge and the ultimate purpose of life. Indian Knowledge Traditions (IKT) encompass a vast and ancient body of wisdom, including philosophy, sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, as well as the arts, ethics, and practices transmitted through classical texts like the Vedas and Upanishads, and sustained through oral traditions, such as the Gurukul

system. At its core, IKT emphasizes holistic living, spiritual insight, and sustainable solutions to life's challenges (NEP, 2020).

NEP 2020 imagines an education system firmly rooted in Indian values that contributes directly to India's sustainable transformation into an equitable, robust knowledge society. By ensuring access to holistic education for all, the policy aims to position India as a global knowledge superpower and realize the vision of *Viksit Bharat* by 2047. A central objective of NEP 2020 is to instil a deep sense of pride in learners for being Indian—intellectually, ethically, and spiritually—while cultivating knowledge, skills, and values that promote human rights, sustainable development, and global well-being.

The integration of IKT into NEP 2020 aims to shift the focus of education beyond a narrow emphasis on livelihood and employability toward holistic human development and responsible citizenship. The policy signifies a departure from the colonial educational framework established by Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* (1835), which prioritized English-medium instruction and Western knowledge systems over indigenous traditions. Recognizing the limitations of this approach, Indian reformers advocated a revival of Oriental and Vedic learning during the freedom movement. NEP 2020 echoes this reformist vision by reaffirming India's intellectual heritage and aligning education with both national identity and global citizenship.

Methodology:

The paper is based on a secondary analysis of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 document released by the Ministry of Education and an examination of existing literature from various journals on the Indian Knowledge System and the ancient education system. National and international data have also been utilized to identify patterns and gaps, as well as to examine the integration of IKT and values in NEP 2020.

Indian Knowledge Traditions and Indian Knowledge Systems:

Ancient Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) is a profound and integrative framework that unifies knowledge and science, material and spiritual understanding, action and ethics, as well as devotion and renunciation into a coherent worldview. IKT represents a living continuum of Indian wisdom, encompassing the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) along with unwritten, oral, tribal, and practice-based lived experiences—such as folk traditions, indigenous agricultural practices, and crafts—transmitted through generations. In contrast, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) refers to a holistic and multidimensional body of traditional Indian knowledge that includes philosophy, science, art, culture, language, health, and other aspects of life. The objective of IKS and local knowledge systems is to integrate this ancient wisdom into modern education, preserve it, and apply it to address contemporary challenges, thereby promoting sustainable, equitable, and holistic human development (Dadsena, 2025).

Essential Pillars of Indian Knowledge Tradition:

Indian civilisation has tendered vast significance to knowledge, as reflected in its immense collection of intellectual texts, which is the largest collection of manuscripts in the world, and a well-established tradition of scholars, thinkers, and schools across multiple domains. The *Mundakopanishad* classifies ancient Indian education into *para vidya* and *apara*

vidya, representing knowledge of the supreme reality, *Paramatma* or *Brahman*, and worldly or practical knowledge related to *aksara-Brahman*.

The evolution of these concepts culminated in the development of systematic disciplines such as philosophy, mathematics, and sociology; at the same time, it led to the emergence of skilled professions in architecture and metallurgy. This period also saw the introduction of structured guidelines for agriculture, medicine, and veterinary sciences, which eventually became codified through specialised scholarly literature and professional guidelines. Despite widespread historical loss and destruction, a consistent body of texts in many of these disciplines has endured.

The ancient Indian education system was organized around *Gurukul*-based residential institutions situated in tranquil environments away from urban centres. Teachers and students lived together, with learners residing as *antevasins* under the close guidance of the Guru. Higher learning was imparted through *Parishads*, where multiple teachers taught diverse subjects, while *Sammelans* served as scholarly assemblies for intellectual debates, often convened under the patronage of royalty.

Teaching during the Vedic period within Indian Knowledge Traditions relied primarily on oral transmission (*Shruti Parampara*). Learning occurred through *Shravan* (listening), *Manan* (reflection and discussion), and *Nididhyasan* (deep contemplation leading to realization) (Lal, 2024). These pedagogical practices were designed to cultivate strong cognitive, reasoning, and analytical abilities, resulting in high levels of concentration and memory retention.

Education was not viewed as a commercial pursuit but as a means of holistic human development. Rooted in the *Sanatana Jnana* tradition, it aimed at nurturing the complete personality through *Dharma, Artha, Kama,* and *Moksha*, equipping individuals with values, discipline, and refined *sanskaras* to become fully cultivated human beings (Mandvakar, 2025).

The key principles of the Indian Knowledge System focused by the IKS Division under the Ministry of Education (2025) are as follows:

1. Drsti (Perspective)**-** Drsti offers a distinct Bharatiya framework for addressing contemporary issues by merging spiritual, ecological, and scientific insights.

2. Parampara (Tradition & Continuity) - Parampara preserves human knowledge by bridging the gap between sacred texts, oral traditions, and lived experience with the immersion of an unbroken lineage.

3. Laukika-prayojana (Practical Utility) **-** Laukika-prayojana emphasizes the practical application of generational wisdom to resolve modern crises. It transforms theoretical insights into tangible solutions across critical domains, including healthcare, agriculture, architecture, and education.(IKS Division, 2021)

Figure 1: IKS Principles

(Source: https://iksindia.org)
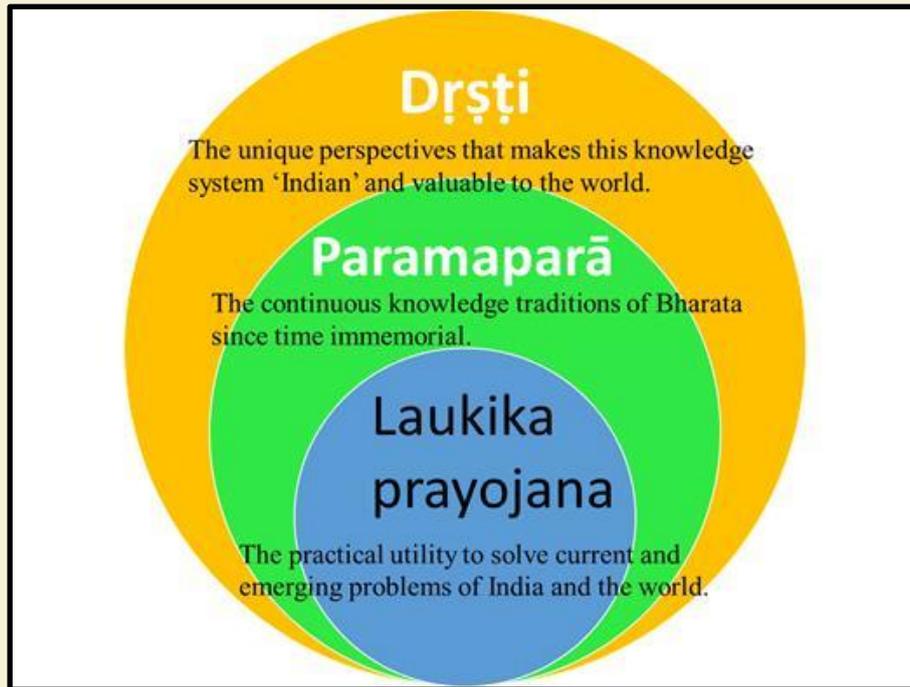
IKT and Indian Philosophy Values:

- Ahimsa - The value for non-violence and extending compassion by minimising the harm to all living beings.
- Holistic Approach (Sarva) - This philosophy emphasises developing the 'whole child', who is intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually integrated, with unity between body, mind, spirit, and environment.
- Interconnectedness (Ekatmata) - It believes in the integration of all concepts about humans, nature and cosmos for the purpose of unity.
- Dharma (Duty/Righteousness) - The discipline of living ethically and responsibly for individual and universal welfare is deeply rooted in IKT with utmost priority.
- Naitik-Shiksha (Value-based learning) - It is based on character-building core principles for students, such as empathy, morality, truth, kindness, and discipline.
- Lok Vidya (Experiential Learning) - The knowledge gained through doing (practical application) and reflection (*Manana*) for lifestyle transformation and becoming a 'learned man'.
- Harmony with Nature - IKT has always emphasised the importance of respecting, preserving, and living in balance with the environment for a sustainable and resilient life for all.
- Community-based learning - The Gurukul-based education essentially focused on community-based learning methods for the holistic development of students.
- Self-Realization (Moksha) - The ultimate goal of understanding one's true self and achieving liberation/purpose.

Structure and Vision of NEP 2020:

NEP 2020, officially launched in July, 2020 by the Government of India, replaced the National Education Policy of 1986 (NEP 1986) and laid down a new framework for India's education system aligned with the goals of Viksit Bharat and the global education agenda, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4. As the first education policy of the 21st century, NEP 2020 aims to address the country's evolving developmental needs.

The policy framework is structured into four parts, namely -

Part I   - School Education (Chapters 1-8)
Part II - Higher Education (Chapters 9-19)
Part III - Other Key Areas (Chapters 20-24)
Part IV - Implementation (Chapters 25-27)

With a total of over 27 Chapters, ranging from Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) to higher education level changes, and focusing on holistic, equitable, and quality learning through new structures like the school education structure of 5+3+3+4, teacher development, and digital integration. It aims for a complete retrofitting of India's education system with an emphasis on foundational learning, skill development, and accessibility.

NEP 2020 emphasizes nurturing the creative potential of every individual, including India's rich traditional and cultural values. It recognizes that education should not only develop foundational literacy and numeracy, but also higher-order skills such as reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Equally important is the development of social, ethical, and emotional capacities. The policy places teachers at the center of educational reform, acknowledging their pivotal role in shaping future generations. NEP 2020 seeks to reinstate the status of teachers as highly respected and essential members of society. It also aims to inspire a deep sense of pride in Indianness while fostering values, skills, and attitudes that reinforce human rights, sustainability, and global well-being, thereby nurturing responsible global citizens.

Examining the integration of IKT and Values in NEP 2020:

The purpose of the education system envisioned in the policy is to develop ethical and capable individuals adept in logic, reasoning, and action, possessing empathy, courage, compassion, resilience, scientific vision, and creative imagination. This also focuses on cultivating engaged, productive, and responsible citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society, as underlined by our Constitution.

Ahimsa:

Ahimsa is inherently rooted in the IKT and IKS to promote fraternity, inclusiveness, and cohesiveness within society. To inculcate this essential value among the students, NEP

proposes the concept of *'Knowledge of India'* emphasizes ethical conduct and moral reasoning (doing what's right) and will provide a logical framework for deducing ethical decisions. It aims to make students familiar with constitutional values such as seva, ahimsa, sacrifice, tolerance, ethical conduct, gender sensitivity, respect for elders, and environmental awareness. These concepts and values are vividly explained in Chapters 4 and 11 of the NEP 2020.

Community-based learning:

The multifaceted aspects of community-based learning are included in the document, which encompasses community-based participation, engagement in pedagogy, and the promotion of community cohesiveness through curriculum structure. A primary priority is the extensive investment in a resilient public education infrastructure, complemented by the active encouragement of authentic philanthropic and community engagement.

Addressing the foundational learning crisis requires a unified effort; thus, NEP 2020 aims to mobilize trained community volunteers and implement diversified support systems to assist educators in their mission to achieve universal literacy and numeracy. Peer tutoring, digital libraries, and book clubs to facilitate and promote widespread reading and with the commitment to initiate diverse support programs for learners as part of a comprehensive nationwide mission to secure universal foundational literacy and numeracy.

To address the systematic challenge of dropouts during schooling, Chapter 3 lays the foundation for community and alumni/volunteers to take action for improving learning outcomes by providing one-on-one tutoring at schools.

For the effective sharing of resources and governance through School Complexes/Clusters, provisions are made for the consolidation of schools in Chapter 7. As per Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) 2016–17, a significant share of India's primary (28%) and upper primary (14.8%) schools had less than 30 students, with an average of only 14 students per grade, alongside over 1,08,000 single-teacher schools, mostly at the primary level.

Additionally, small schools hinder collaboration, weaken teaching and learning outcomes, and pose significant governance challenges due to dispersion, limited access, and misaligned administrative structures. The unutilized school infrastructure can be leveraged beyond school hours to support community social, intellectual, and volunteer activities, serving as a **'Samajik Chetna Kendra'** to strengthen social cohesion.

To enhance the community orientation of higher education, Chapter 7 mandates that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) implement flexible and innovative curricula. This includes the integration of credit-bearing courses and projects focused on community service, environmental stewardship, and value-based education. To create an optimal learning environment for students, regular opportunities for participation in sports, cultural clubs, eco-clubs, activity clubs, and community service projects are outlined in Chapter 7. Every higher education institution will partner with a network of public and private schools, enabling

prospective teachers to engage in student teaching and activities such as community service, adult education, and vocational training, thereby instilling a sense of community aspiration among them.

India remains a largely agricultural society and economy; however, specialized education in this sector remains disproportionately low. While Agricultural Universities constitute 9% of all Indian universities, student enrollment in agriculture and allied sciences accounts for less than 1% of the total higher education population. To integrate professional education with an emphasis on community needs, Chapter 20 mentions the provision for the inclusion of structural agricultural education and the revival of allied disciplines. To enhance the social impact of agricultural education, institutions will establish Agricultural Technology Parks (ATPs). These centres are designed to directly support local communities through technology incubation, the dissemination of modern research, and the promotion of sustainable farming practices

Dharma:

The value of dharma has been included in the NEP 2020 document to inculcate the virtue of righteousness in students, emphasizing their roles and responsibilities towards their society and nation. In Chapter 11, along with other humanistic values, the transcendent principles of truth, empathy, and righteous conduct (dharma) have also been included.

Lok Vidya:

NEP describes *Lok Vidya* (experiential learning) as an important vocational knowledge developed in India. NEP 2020 is providing comprehensive learning and vocational opportunities for all students through Grade 12 to guarantee educational equity. Central to this strategy is the expansion of the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools (SOS) curriculum. It will expand flexible pathways equivalent to the formal schooling system (Grades 3, 5, 8, 10, and 12) by integrating vocational training and adult literacy programs. These institutions will create a comprehensive ecosystem for lifelong learning and skill development. These will offer grade-equivalent, secondary, vocational, and adult education programmes, with states encouraged to expand delivery in regional languages through strengthened State Institutes of Open Schooling (SIOS).

A pivotal feature of this framework is the integration of IKT within the experiential learning requirements outlined in Chapter 16. This chapter prioritizes vocational specializations derived from a precise mapping of local industrial opportunities and existing skill gaps. To lead this integration, the National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE) will unify ministerial expertise with industry leadership, ensuring traditional crafts and modern technologies are harmonized. By expanding the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to align with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, the system validates the practical knowledge and expertise of practitioners outside the formal sector. This credit-based approach re-engages dropouts by aligning their academic value with their lived experiences, fostering seamless mobility between vocational mastery and general education.

Harmony with Nature:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates for the seamless embedding of ecological consciousness and sustainable development within the school system. As detailed in Chapter 4, the framework ensures that environmental education encompassing resource and water conservation and hygiene is no longer an isolated subject but a core curricular theme. This approach addresses environmental challenges at multiple scales, from immediate local community issues to broader national and global crises.

Holistic Education:

Indian traditional education is based on the comprehensive multidimensional development of students. Therefore, pedagogy focused on NEP 2020 aims to expand the horizon of education towards a more practical, comprehensive, inquiry-driven, innovative, student-centred, discussion-based, and flexible learning environment. The curriculum focused on NEP 2020 talks about inclusion of arts (visual and performing), languages, literature, culture, and values, with inclusion of crafts, humanities, sports, and games, in addition to mathematics and science.

The concept of a holistic education has been infused with focus on its following multidimensional aspects, such as -

- The holistic development of students in both academic and non-academic spheres, with identification and promotion of unique capabilities for each student.
- To ensure the coherence of the learning experience, the curriculum adopts a multidisciplinary approach that bridges the natural sciences with the arts and social sciences. It emphasizes the inherent unity of knowledge rather than fragmented departmental learning.
- Holistic education encompasses the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and physical education to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge.
- The holistic strengthening of students' fitness by ensuring physical and psychological well-being, with special attention to the development of cognitive abilities,
- The introduction of a holistic progress card will be a game-changer, reflecting progress in a comprehensive, 360-degree, and detailed manner. The map assessment will be redesigned to honour the individual profile of every student across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

This comprehensive evaluation model moves beyond traditional testing to incorporate self-reflection, peer review, and instructor appraisals. Furthermore, it tracks student development through various methodologies, including inquiry-based projects, collaborative group tasks, portfolios, and role-playing exercises, providing a dynamic view of progress.

In alignment with these objectives, Chapter 4 proposes to establish PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as the National Assessment Centre. It is tasked with harmonizing educational standards that aim

to ensure the Ministry of Education's directives and evaluative norms are uniformly implemented across all state and central school boards throughout India. (PARAKH, n.d.)

Interconnectedness:

NEP 2020 seeks to instil a deep-rooted connection to the nation's identity across all dimensions of a learner's life, from intellectual pursuits to ethical deeds. By developing specific competencies and moral dispositions, the policy prepares students to become responsible global citizens. This includes a firm dedication to sustainable living, the promotion of international well-being, and an unwavering respect for human rights.

Self-Realisation:

NEP 2020 seeks to instil the knowledge of India with diversified social, cultural, and technological needs, its inimitable artistic, language, and knowledge traditions, and its strong ethics in India's young people are considered critical for purposes of national pride, self-confidence, self-knowledge, cooperation, and integration, and ultimately transforming into self-realization. The ultimate purpose of IKT inclusion in the structural education system is to enable students to identify their core self and fulfil not only their material needs but also their spiritual ones.

Naitik – Shiksha:

The inclusion of value-based learning/education is the ultimate principle of NEP 2020. The framework, primarily articulated in Chapter 4, identifies the infusion of ethical and constitutional virtues as a cornerstone of value-based learning. The curriculum moves beyond obsolete instruction to instil a lived sense of empathy, environmental stewardship, and a spirit of service (*Seva*). By harmonizing personal etiquette and civic duties—such as respect for public property and a patriotic commitment—with the democratic ideals of justice, equality, and pluralism, the policy aims to cultivate a principled and responsible citizenry.

Convergence of IKT and Sustainable Development Goals with NEP 2020:

The global education development agenda reflected in the Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seeks to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by 2030 whereas NEP 2020 promotes comprehensive, equitable, and quality education for all and Indian Knowledge Traditions (IKT) complement this vision by offering holistic, value-based approaches rooted in sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility. The analysis table 1; below has deduced that all IKT and values have found their place in the NEP 2020, either in letter or in spirit, or both. With special focus on community-based learning, holistic education and value-based learning. In the table 2, the convergence of IKT and SDG 2030; especially SDG 4, within NEP 2020 contextualizes global goals through indigenous wisdom, fostering culturally grounded and globally relevant education for sustainable development.

Table 1: Analysis of the convergence of IKT with NEP 2020

IKT Values	NEP 2020	Significance
Ahimsa	- Basic Principle	De-colonise the Curriculum (*Vi-aupaniveshikaran*)
Community-Based Learning	- Chapters 4 and 11	
Dharma	- Basic Principle, - Chapters 2, 3, 7, 15 and 20	
Lok Vidya	- Chapter 4, 5, 9, 11, 15, 17, 10, 21& 22	Bridge the Skill Gap (*Kaushal-Antaral ko Patana*)
Harmony with Nature	- Basic Principle - Vision, - Chapter 11	Promote Sustainability (*Dharaniya Vikas*)
Holistic Approach	- Basic Principle & Objective	
Interconnectedness	- Basic Principle & Vision, - Chapter 4, 11, 16& 22	
Self Realisation	- Basic Principle	Complete Development (*Purna- vikas*)
Naitik-Shiksha	- Chapter 4	

Table 2: Analysis of the NEP focussed IKT Values with SDG 2030

IKT Values	SDG 2030	Significance
Ahimsa	- Target 4.8: Build and Upgrade Inclusive and Safe Schools - Goal 16: Peace and Justice	Culture of Peace and Compassion for Cohesive Education
Community-Based Learning	- SDG 4: Quality Education - SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Development of Community Oriented Education
Dharma	- Target 4.5: Eliminate All Discrimination in Education	Fostering Responsible and Dutybound Citizens
Lok Vidya	- Target 4.3: Equal Access to Technical, Vocational, and Tertiary Education.	Nurturing Young Indian Demography for Viksit Bharat 2047
Harmony with Nature	- All SDG Goals	Preservation of Nature with Ensuring Development
Holistic Approach	- Target 4.3	360-degree Development of Student Personality
Interconnectedness	- SDG 17: Partnerships	Intersectional Support for Education Growth
Self Realisation	- Goal 3: Well Being, - Target 4.6: Universal Literacy and Numeracy	Student Core Enrichment
Naitik-Shiksha	- Target 4.7: Education for Sustainable Development	Ethical and Human Rights Focused Education

Conclusion:

This paper examined the integration of Indian Knowledge Traditions (IKT) and value-based education within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, highlighting its revolutionary potential in shaping India's educational and developmental trajectory. Drawing upon India's civilizational ethos, NEP 2020 moves beyond a utilitarian view of education by emphasizing holistic human development, ethical grounding, social responsibility, and experiential learning. The deliberate incorporation of core IKT values, such as ahimsa, dharma, community engagement, harmony with nature, self-realization, and holistic learning, reflects a conscious effort to align education with India's cultural wisdom while addressing contemporary societal challenges. NEP 2020 aims to develop such a robust educational institution where each student is provided with a safe and nurturing learning environment that offers varied educational experiences and ensures the availability of appropriate facilities and resources for effective learning.

With the inclusion of such values across the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and governance, NEP 2020 seeks to nurture learners who are intellectually competent, morally grounded, environmentally conscious, and socially responsive. The emphasis of policy on inclusivity, community participation, and lifelong learning resonates strongly with the global education agenda, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4. This convergence ensures that global aspirations are grounded in local realities, thereby enhancing their relevance and sustainability.

Consequently, the integration of IKT and values in NEP 2020 positions education as a powerful instrument for nation-building. By cultivating responsible citizens equipped with knowledge, skills, and values, the policy lays a strong foundation for achieving *Viksit Bharat*—a developed, equitable, and resilient India by 2047. The success of the vision, however, will depend on effective and monitored implementation, continuous capacity building of educators, and sustained institutional commitment to translating policy intent into practice.

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