

**Indian Knowledge System and NEP 2020:
Reviving Heritage Through Education Policy****Dr. Lattakumari D. Sharma**

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in how India views and values its heritage. This paper reviews how NEP 2020 seeks to integrate the Indian knowledge System (IKS) into education. It discusses the vision behind this move, the steps taken to implement it, challenges faced on the ground and possible ways forward. The study highlights that while the policy has opened new doors to revive India's intellectual traditions, its success will depend on how effectively these ideas are brought to classrooms in a practical, inclusive and meaningful way.

Key Words:

Indian knowledge System (IKS), Historical Foundations of IKS, NEP 2020 and its vision for IKS integration, Institutional and Implementation Framework, Teacher education and capacity Building, Traditional Knowledge.

Introduction:

The purpose of knowledge is not just to gain information. The welfare of the entire human race is linked to knowledge, science and philosophy. India has a long and rich intellectual history, reflected in its languages, philosophies, sciences, arts, crafts and ways of life. This collective wisdom is known as the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Over countries, especially during colonial rule, these traditions were pushed to the margins and modern education became disconnected from India's cultural roots. The NEP 2020 aims to change this by bringing IKS back into mainstream education. This paper reviews NEP 2020's approach to IKS, its vision, implementation strategies, existing gaps and how this integration can shape a more holistic education system. Education in India has always been seen as more than just acquiring skills for employment; it has been a means of self-realization and social contribution. IKS nurtured this philosophy by focusing on the holistic development of mind, body and spirit. Over time, however, especially under colonial influence, education became detached from cultural roots and prioritized employability over deeper learning. NEP 2020 acknowledges this gap and envisions an education system where students remain rooted in their heritage while confidently engaging with global knowledge.

Education in Ancient India:

Being a scholar and being a king are not the same, a king is worshipped only in his own country while a scholar is worshipped everywhere. Such thoughts show the importance of the Indian knowledge system. The journey of education began with Gurukuls and Ashrams and transformed into universities. Ancient Indian Universities, such as Takshshila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and Valabhi, were renowned for their interdisciplinary education, which combined grammar, logic, medicine, astronomy, the arts and philosophy. Ayurveda texts like Charak Samhita and Susruta Samhita laid the foundation for holistic health care and surgical practices, while Aryabhata's Aryabhatiya advanced mathematics and astronomy significantly. These knowledge streams were deeply interconnected with ethical philosophy and daily life practices. Reintegrating such approaches into modern classrooms can enrich STEM, environmental studies, and mental health education with cultural depth.

Teaching methods were interactive and experiential, focusing on dialogue, debate and application. However, colonial education policies replaced these with western systems, leading to the erosion of India's indigenous knowledge and weakening its cultural confidence.

NEP 2020 and Its vision for IKS Integration:

The NEP 2020, recognizes the need to reconnect education with India's heritage. It proposes:

- Integrating traditional knowledge in school and higher education curricula.
- Establishing dedicated centers and institutions to study, research and promote IKS.
- Encouraging interdisciplinary learning rooted in India's cultural context.
- Ensuring that traditional knowledge is taught with critical thinking and a scientific temper, not just as rote cultural information.
- Inviting local artisans, craftspeople and community elders as resource persons to make learning experiential.
- Promoting multilingual education, preserving linguistic heritage alongside mainstream curricula.
- Student documentation systems to foster research projects on regional knowledge systems to foster documentation, critical inquiry and innovation.

These initiatives a shift towards recognizing communities as active knowledge holders rather than mere recipients of institutional education. The policy envisions making education more meaningful for Indian students while also sharing these traditions globally.

Institutional and Implementation Framework:**1. Establishment of IKS Division:**

The ministry of education has created an Indian Knowledge Systems Division to oversee research, resource development and curriculum integration. Universities are being encouraged to set up IKS centres of excellence.

2. Curriculum Integration Strategies:

NEP 2020 proposes including IKS in areas such as:

- Languages (Regional Language, Sanskrit)
- Traditional Arts, crafts and music
- Vedic Mathematics and indigenous sciences
- Ayurveda, yoga and wellness education
- Agricultural practices that are environmentally sustainable

UGC has mandated that under graduate and PG students take credit in IKS courses and new online courses are being developed with expert guidance. The AICTE has recently introduced elective courses on IKS for engineering students, covering ancient metallurgy, architecture and environmental technologies. (AICTE2021). IITs and NITs are developing research centers to explore how traditional knowledge can inspire modern solutions in sustainable materials, renewable energy models and biomimicry based designs.

Teacher Education and Capacity Building:

One significant challenge is that many teachers still perceive IKS as outdated or irrelevant. Overcoming this mindset requires:

- Integrating IKS modules in pre-service teacher education.
- Developing resource materials in multiple languages.
- Organizing in-service training and refresher courses.
- Developing new assessment framework that focus on creativity, reflection and application over rote learning (Bahera, 2022)
- Establishing mentoring networks to connect teachers with IKS scholars for continued professional development.

However, many teacher education institutes currently lack the expertise and structured programmes needed for effective training.

Challenges and Critiques:

- **Standardizations and Quality:** One of the major concerns is the lack of the clear, standardized curricula and textbooks. There is a risk of teaching traditional knowledge superficially, without critical depth or practical application.
- **Inclusivity:** Some scholars argue that the current approach focuses mainly on classical Sanskrit traditions, neglecting regional, tribal and folk knowledge systems. This can create new exclusions while trying to fix old ones.
- **Resources and Infrastructures:** Integrating IKS meaningfully requires well-trained faculty, quality resources and infrastructural support. Many institutions, especially in rural areas, face shortages in these areas. Beyond curriculum standardization, scholars argue that NEP2020 lacks clear monitoring frameworks to evaluate the effectiveness of IKS integration. Moreover, Without sustained funding and institutional autonomy, initiatives may remain policy directives without deep classroom impact.

The Way Forward:

- Develop IKS curricula with inputs from experts, local knowledge holders and scholars to ensure accuracy and depth.
- Include regional and tribal knowledge to make education inclusive and contextually relevant.
- Provide practical and engaging training for teachers to build their confidence in teaching IKS.
- Create open educational resources in regional language for wider reach.
- Promote research that explores the scientific relevance and contemporary applications of traditional knowledge.
- Establish innovation hubs to connect traditional wisdom with modern technological advancements.
- Formulate National IKS curriculum Guidelines through multidisciplinary and community consultations for authenticity and inclusivity.
- Launch interdisciplinary research fellowships bridging IKS with STEM, social sciences and humanities to foster culturally rooted innovation (Joshi & Kumar 2022).

Conclusion:

The NEP 2020 has created an opportunity to rediscover and revitalize India's intellectual heritage through education. Integrating IKS into the curriculum can make learning more meaningful, holistic and rooted in cultural identity. However, this requires careful planning, inclusivity, teacher empowerment and critical engagement to ensure it is not just a policy ideal but a lived educational reality. If done well, it can create a generation of learners who are confident in their roots and competent in the global world. Integrating IKS into education is not just about adding traditional topics, it is about nurturing students who understand where they come from, feel confident in their cultural identity and are equipped to think critically in a complex world. NEP 2020 has provided the vision; its success now lies in the implementation that is inclusive, rigorous and meaningful.

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