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Indian Knowledge Systems in Curriculum: A Pathway to Decolonized and Inclusive Education

Divya Kala**Abstract:**

NEP 2020 is a transformative education policy with the potential to create a significant paradigm shift towards holistic education by incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems in the curriculum and teaching methods. The vision of the National Education Policy is to foster decolonized education, sustainable learning and inclusive education among learners at all levels of higher educational institutions. To achieve this, initiatives such as faculty development programs have been initiated to sensitize higher education educators to develop insight and value for IKS in education. The integration of IKS is introduced in top universities across India to enrich the educational experience of learners, with the potential to solidify national pride rooted in ancient, philosophical and historical traditions. IKS can potentially harmonize the globally admired, ancient wisdom of art, science, education and technology within a modern technological context for a sustainable future. This theoretical study, rooted in rich secondary data, seeks to critically examine the extent, effectiveness and challenges of integrating IKS in curriculum based on a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature, articles and journals to investigate the institutional efforts supporting its implementation.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems, Inclusive education, Decolonization of education

Abbreviations: NEP- National Education Policy, IKS- Indian Knowledge System

1. Introduction:

The Indian Knowledge Systems are deeply rooted in the country's ancient philosophical traditions, including Vedas, Upanishads and other classical texts. These systems emphasize holistic development, ethical values and a harmonious relationship between individuals and their environment. The integration of IKS into the curriculum is not merely an academic exercise but a way to reconnect students with their cultural heritage and foster a sense of pride and identity (Das, 2024; Sudhakar K, 2024). The integration of IKS into the curriculum also promotes cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. By exposing students to diverse knowledge systems, the policy aims to foster a more inclusive and interconnected global community (Maheshkumar .S & Mookiah Soundarapandian, 2024; Priya Soni Khare & Jitendra Kumar, 2025). IKS provides alternative solutions to pressing global issues such as environmental degradation, health crises and cultural fragmentation. By incorporating IKS into the curriculum, students can gain a deeper understanding of these challenges and develop innovative solutions that are rooted in traditional wisdom (Nath, 2024; Priya Soni Khare & Jitendra Kumar, 2025). Teachers are also expected to promote critical



thinking and creativity in the classroom. By incorporating IKS into the curriculum, teachers can encourage students to think critically about traditional knowledge and its contemporary applications. This approach is expected to foster innovation and creativity among students (Latika Tamrakar et al., 2024; Maheshkumar .S & Mookkiah Soundarapandian, 2024). One of the major challenges in integrating IKS into the curriculum is the lack of awareness about these knowledge systems. Many educators and policymakers are not familiar with the depth and breadth of IKS, which can hinder the effective implementation of IKS courses (Soumitro Banerjee, 2022; Sreeram Gopalkrishnan, 2023). The standardization of IKS curriculum is another challenge. Given the diversity of IKS, it is essential to develop curriculum frameworks that are flexible and adaptable to different contexts while maintaining the integrity of traditional knowledge (Maheshkumar .S & Mookkiah Soundarapandian, 2024). The integration of IKS into the curriculum requires collaboration with traditional scholars and experts. These individuals bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in IKS, which is essential for developing authentic and meaningful educational programs. Their involvement will ensure that the curriculum is rooted in traditional wisdom while being relevant to contemporary needs. Despite the policy's ambitious goals, challenges remain, including the need for innovative teaching methods and adequate infrastructure to support IKS integration.

2. Literature Review:

H. Vageeshan & D. Kamalakar(2025) examined the integration of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in education, analyzing policy documents, school reports, and student feedback to assess its impact on student development, creativity and cultural growth amidst government reforms and challenges in implementation.

Priya Soni Khare & Jitendra Kumar, (2025) explored the Indian Knowledge System's relevance in globalization, analyzing its potential to address modern global challenges through traditional wisdom, promoting holistic well-being and providing alternative solutions to pressing issues like sustainability and health.

Bhardwaj et al., 2024) stated that NEP 2020 emphasizes on inclusiveness, equity and quality with a focus on learning outcomes. It promotes learner-centric education and encourages the adoption of enriched curriculum rooted in Indian culture and knowledge systems.

(Manoj Sharma, 2024) highlighted that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India aims to reform teacher education by incorporating local knowledge, technology, and multidisciplinary approaches, with a 4-year integrated B. Ed. becoming mandatory by 2030, but faces challenges in infrastructure, quality assurance and societal perception.



Dr. Senapati Nayak & Dr. Sambit Kumar Padhi,(2024) found that the Indian knowledge system offers a relevant educational practice for today's educational scenario, incorporating ancient pedagogical methods and subject matter with the current Higher Education 2020 framework.

Nath, 2024) explored the philosophical dimensions of the Indian Knowledge System, examining key traditions and principles to uncover their relevance in addressing modern challenges, promoting holistic well-being and guiding sustainable development and cross-cultural understanding.

The literature review examines the overview of Indian Knowledge systems in NEP 2020, institutional support for IKS integration and challenges and considerations in inclusivity and decolonization of education.

3. Emergence of the Problem:

3.1 Research Gaps (Revealed from the Literature Review):

The existing literature reveals that integrating IKS enhances holistic development of student across cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The NEP 2020 provides a pragmatic framework for promoting IKS in education by offering traditional wisdom to address global challenges. However, integration of IKS faces challenges such as a lack of structured frameworks, limited institutional support and insufficient exploration of practical implementation strategies. Moreover, there is a need to raise public awareness about the benefits of IKS. A key concern is the limited guidance in the NEP document on implementing IKS in educational settings which may potentially cause ambiguity among the stakeholders. This study aims to explore the extent, effectiveness and challenges of IKS integration in higher education curriculum.

3.2 Objectives of the Study:

- i) To study the extent of Indian Knowledge System in higher education curriculum.
- ii) To evaluate the effectiveness of Indian Knowledge System in reforming curriculum and teaching methods.
- iii) To identify the challenges of integrating Indian Knowledge System into higher education curriculum.

4. Methodology of the Study:

This qualitative and theoretical study critically analyzes the secondary data including research papers, websites, articles, e-journals and other published works on National Education Policy, Indian Knowledge systems and its integration into contemporary educational setting at higher level-



5. Findings Revealed from the Study:

This result of this qualitative study has been comprehensively analyzed based on documents, articles, papers and journals. The findings are presented below:

5.1 Integration of IKS into NEP 2020:

Indian Knowledge system refers to the traditional knowledge and techniques of Bharat¹ based on the scholarly, well-experimented and researched writings of rishis and munis² documented as ancient scriptures, describing in detail various disciplines such as Ayurveda, yoga, Vedanta, astronomy, metallurgy, mathematics and other indigenous knowledge systems³, where it promotes holistic and sustainable understanding by developing critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills with depth in character and evolving personality of the learner for delivering a unique perspective and solutions to deal with existing local and global problems.

5.2 Reforming the Curriculum and Teaching Methods:

The educational institutions are designing inter-disciplinary programs that harmonize IKS with modern curriculum. IKS courses have been introduced in universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Banaras Hindu University (BHU), University of Delhi (DU), Panjab University (PU), and Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) facilitating students to engage and connect with Bharatiya⁴ intellectual heritage in various fields such as mathematics, science, living a wholesome life through the lens of Vedas in modern context, astronomy and medicine. They are also establishing special training centers for the educators and faculty members to sensitize them with the importance of IKS, familiarizing them with various approaches of understanding and implementing IKS in real-life

¹ Bharat- The real, cultural and historical name of India, which defines the deep-rooted, rich and universal culture of this great land and has kept the foreigners curious about its rich legacy for millenniums.

² Rishis and Munis- the spiritual scientists who lived a dedicated spiritual life based on scriptural values and gifted the newer generation context-based practical and profound knowledge of their well-researched scientific works. They are spiritual scientists who lead disciplined lives guided by strong values. They acquired knowledge and wisdom through the guru-shishya tradition and practices such as austerity and penance. They shared their insights and scientific findings as tools for knowledge, skills and values, documenting them in a practical context to benefit future generations and contribute to society's well-being.

³ Indigenous Knowledge Systems- Traditional knowledge and practices developed and passed down through generations by indigenous communities, which carry forward the culture, spirituality spiritual values, environmental management, medicine, agriculture and cultural heritage Indigenous communities develop and pass down traditional knowledge and practices through generations, preserving their culture, spiritual values, environmental management techniques, medicine, agricultural practices and heritage.

⁴ Bharatiya- The people of Bharat, an ancient land rich in culture, history and scientific achievements, are now referred to as Indians, a name that originated during British rule. However, the term 'Bharatiya' represents this great nation's deep-rooted, vibrant and universal culture, which has captivated foreigners and sparked their curiosity about its rich legacy for millennia.



setting. A standard teacher training and mentoring development model will also be implemented to enhance the quality of classroom teaching in IKS classrooms.

5.3 Implementation of IKS in Curriculum for Decolonization:

In order to educate students about the complete and accurate history with supporting documentation and citations, efforts are being made to create a curriculum that incorporates IKS with decolonized ideas in disciplines taught in classroom settings. Different documented knowledge systems must be integrated and balanced with practical institutional support for the policy to be effective. The substantial relations of students to their prosperous, diverse and all-encompassing heritage are reinforced, and a sense of identity and belonging is promoted when IKS is integrated into the curriculum. However, obstacles to change and problems with implementation could impede development. These challenges must be overcome for educational reform to reach its full potential.

5.4 Impact of Subjective and Colonized Education:

The calculated disinterest in Bharatiya Gyan Parampara⁵ in modern education has upheld students disconnected from its intellectual legacy and boosted a colonized mentality and cultural inferiority. Modern curricula repeatedly overlook the significant contributions constructed by ancient Indian scholars to medicine (Charaka Samhita), mathematics (Aryabhatta's calculus) and holistic sciences (Yoga Sutras), to name a few, in favor of Western epistemologies which further ignited colonial mindset within the learners. Colonial rule inhibited IKS transmission which solidified resistance to IKS and presented it as "backward" or "unscientific" with systematic teaching-learning methods in educational institutions. The scientific and philosophical depth of texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads was erased when they were dismissed as mere legends. Modules of Ayurveda, Niti Shastra, Vastu Shastra or Nyaya philosophy are missing from the current curriculum, which lacks structured IKS integration and reduces it to symbolic references. The superiority of western knowledge is sustained by the colonial mindset, which oftentimes propels disinterest in cultural, ancient, scientific and intellectual history.

5.5 Worldwide Efforts to Integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems

- i) **Canada:** Canada encourages a more profound understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, which advances inclusivity and decolonization by integrating Indigenous history, languages, and cultural practices into public school curriculum.

⁵ Bharatiya Gyana Parampara- The Indian Knowledge System encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including mathematics, Yoga and science, metallurgy, philosophy, economics, medicine and surgery, space exploration, agriculture and architecture. It aims to address the cognitive, affective and conative domains of learners, promoting holistic learning and overall development.



- ii) **South Africa:** Indigenous wisdom is being incorporated into regular education in South Africa, especially in resource conservation and sustainable development, by emphasizing how crucial conventional ecological knowledge is to solving environmental issues.
- iii) **Namibia:** Namibia's Innovation System combines indigenous knowledge with modern education and emphasizes the practical application of local wisdom to boost innovation and sustainability, especially in rural areas.
- iv) **Norway:** Norway is incorporating Sami traditions, such as herding of reindeer, into local decision-making to preserve their culture and incorporate them into educational institutions to encourage cultural preservation and sustainability practices.
- v) **Philippines and Timor-Leste:** By observing natural patterns, indigenous communities in these countries have developed intuitive methods for disaster risk anticipation, which are now incorporated into education programs to enhance environmental awareness and disaster preparedness.
- vi) **India:** India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 combines ancient wisdom from texts like the Vedas and Upanishads with modern academia to foster holistic learning and national pride.

These examples demonstrate transformational education that can be brought into real-life situations of learners from diverse backgrounds and settings.

6. Policy Implications and Re commendations:

There is a practical need and demand to standardize IKS courses across all universities to enhance and preserve the uniformity of academic credits. In addition to teacher training initiatives and faculty development programs (FDPs), it is critical to develop IKS-based curriculum further to ensure that educators certify themselves with the necessary skills and competencies to facilitate the IKS courses in a classroom setting. Prioritizing IKS integration at all educational levels, which is moving toward a structured approach to its implementation, requires policy support. By increasing the relevance of ancient and new knowledge systems in modern education, interdisciplinary research can help close the gap between them. The global collaborations can further elevate the recognition and integration of IKS ensuring its broader academic and practical impact.

7. Implementation Challenges:

- i) **Lack of Awareness:** Since it is a revolutionary conception, IKS demands more systematic planning and an approach for its implementation in classroom settings across educational



institutions. There is a consistent need for exposure to stakeholders such as students, educators and policymakers regarding more IKS themes and their practicality in the modern context.

- ii) **Lack of Infrastructure and Funding:** There is a high demand to sensitize educators and allocate necessary resources for faculty training, curriculum development and research work.
- iii) **Resistance to Change:** There is always resistance to change. However, traditional academic systems must evolve to integrate IKS successfully in the modern setting.

8. Conclusion:

This paper attempted to critically explore the integration of Indian Knowledge system for an inclusive and decolonized education. It consisted of reviewing IKS as an emerging approach in higher education curriculum as expressed in relevant literatures. There were many themes identifies such as integration of IKS into NEP, reforming curriculum and teaching methods, implementation of IKS in curriculum for decolonization, impact of subjective, colonized education and worldwide efforts to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems and implementation challenges. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 replaced NPE 1986, a thirty-four-year-old policy which integrates IKS for a potential commencement of an authentic, historical, culturally rooted and a self-reliant policy. It has formally and informally contributed significantly to global scientific and philosophical discourses recognized by renowned intellectuals such as Albert Einstein, W. Heisenberg and J. Robert Oppenheimer for millennia. The Indian Knowledge System ensures an equitable educational system where all communities may benefit from its diverse and inclusive perspectives. It also provides a rich cultural perspective on the essence of education which is character building, resilience and standing by the values even amid provocations. However, there is a need to establish training centers and sensitization programs for faculty members to teach IKS across various disciplines effectively. It is also to be noted that a significant portion of IKS is unrecorded or only available in the Sanskrit language and requires an accurate interpretation in modern languages in order to be standardized for its execution. Additionally, a strong institutional support, cooperation with traditional scholars, infrastructure development and teacher training are required to overcome the challenges. Integration of the Indian Knowledge System in the modern curriculum has potential to transform educational system of India by promoting global well-being and cultural awareness through a balanced and holistic learning approach of incorporating a Bharatiya outlook in contemporary education.

9. Limitations of the Study:

The limitations of this study include methodological challenges such as sampling and assessment tools. The limited understanding of IKS may also impact the study.



10. Future Directions for Research:

Future research may involve collecting a primary data to validate the findings and increase generalizability by including diverse populations, institutions to enhance representativeness of sample and developing a valid and reliable assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the study. Also, a more comprehensive understanding of Indian Knowledge systems integration into modern curriculum can be investigated through longitudinal studies.

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