



Transforming teacher education through Indian knowledge systems: A critical analysis of NEP 2020

Dr. Gunjan

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, M.L.R.S College of Education, Charkhi Dadri, Haryana, India

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to revamp the Indian education system through a comprehensive and culturally rooted approach. A major highlight is the inclusion of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which embodies centuries-old wisdom across disciplines—from metaphysics to medicine, from arts to astronomy. Rooted in the Vedas, Upanishads, and other ancient texts, IKS presents a holistic worldview, blending intellectual, spiritual, and practical knowledge. NEP 2020 envisions teacher education that not only incorporates IKS principles but also integrates them into modern pedagogical frameworks. This paper explores how NEP 2020 proposes to transform teacher education by drawing from IKS, encouraging interdisciplinary learning, and nurturing cultural awareness.

Keywords: Indian knowledge system, NEP 2020, teacher education, vedas, holistic learning, indigenous knowledge, cultural pedagogy

Introduction

The Indian Knowledge System is a vast and ancient repository of wisdom encompassing a range of fields such as philosophy, literature, medicine, astronomy, and fine arts. Rooted in sacred texts like the Vedas and Upanishads, IKS offers insights into the universe, human consciousness, and ethics. India's civilizational continuity has been enriched by the contributions of sages and scholars who laid the intellectual foundations for a knowledge tradition that has shaped global thought.

IKS remains relevant today, not only for its philosophical depth but also for its practical applications in education, science, and wellness. The NEP 2020 recognizes the potential of IKS in providing holistic, interdisciplinary, and values-based education. For teacher education in particular, NEP 2020 advocates training educators to appreciate and apply these indigenous frameworks in contemporary contexts.

Review of Related Literature

A study of related literature involves locating, analyzing, and evaluating reports of research as well as casual observation and opinions that are related to the study. The related literature forms the foundation upon which all work can be built. One cannot develop an insight into the problem to be investigated unless and until one has learnt what others have done in a particular area of his own interest. The review of related literature helps the author to define the limit of his field. The National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) as an integral component of holistic education. It highlights the need to revive India's intellectual traditions, such as logic, epistemology, environmental awareness, ethical reasoning, and spiritual well-being, to guide contemporary teacher education.

IKS encourages a holistic approach to learning—aiming not only at knowledge acquisition but also at character development. This aligns with NEP's vision to develop

empathetic, ethical, and reflective practitioners in the teaching profession^[1]. teacher education in India is being remained to include elements such as Vedic mathematics, Sanskrit language basics, classical Indian philosophy, Yoga, Ayurveda, and indigenous pedagogy. These components equip future educators with a deeper cultural context and ethical orientation, allowing them to teach in a way that integrates both tradition and modernity.

This transformation ensures that teachers can facilitate student learning that connects local knowledge with global skills, helping build culturally responsive classrooms^[2]. The NEP recommends the use of mother tongue and regional languages as the medium of instruction at the foundational level. In teacher education, this insight ensures that educators are linguistically inclusive and capable of preserving and promoting folk knowledge, oral traditions, and community-based practices, which are all valuable parts of the Indian knowledge framework^[3]. Ancient Indian philosophies emphasize values such as truth (satya), non-violence (ahimsa), self-discipline (sanyam), and compassion (karuna). These ideas are central to preparing teachers who are morally grounded and can guide students toward holistic personal development. Teacher education programs, therefore, are being designed to integrate ethical modules, inspired by Indian texts like the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and the teachings of Buddha, Mahavira, and Swami Vivekananda^[4]. One of the core principles of IKS is self-reflection or svadhyaya, which encourages constant introspection. NEP 2020 promotes reflective teacher education, where educators are trained not only to teach content but to question, analyze, and evolve continuously—qualities embedded in ancient Indian learning traditions^[5]. While integrating IKS has immense potential, scholars argue for a balanced approach. Blindly incorporating ancient practices without critical evaluation may result in cultural essentialism or exclusion. Therefore, research-based and inclusive interpretations of IKS are essential in teacher training programs to maintain academic rigor and pluralism

[6]. They emphasize the necessity of reforming the Indian Education System highlighting that this transformation extends beyond merely revising the syllabus to also encompass innovative teaching methodologies. While theoretical knowledge holds significance, the ability to apply such knowledge in practical situations is even more essential. These deficiencies within the education system have led numerous Indian students to pursue their studies abroad, particularly in countries like the United States and Australia, where educational frameworks are perceived to better equip them for the job market [7].

Integration in Education

NEP 2020 advocates for integrating IKS into the curriculum, fostering research, and encouraging multilingual education. This includes:

- **Curriculum Development:** Incorporating IKS into the curriculum across various subjects, from science and technology to humanities and arts.
- **Research and Development:** Encouraging research on IKS and its application in contemporary fields, fostering a multidisciplinary approach.
- **Multilingual Education:** Promoting the use of Indian languages in education, recognizing their role in preserving and transmitting IKS.
- **Teacher Training:** Integrating IKS into teacher education programs to prepare educators who can effectively integrate it into the curriculum and promote a holistic approach to learning.

Benefits of Integrating IKS

- **Holistic Education:** IKS promotes a holistic approach to learning, encompassing not only academic knowledge but also cultural values, ethical reasoning, and critical thinking.
- **Relevance to Contemporary Issues:** IKS can provide insights into addressing contemporary societal issues and fostering a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural context.
- **Promoting National Identity:** Integrating IKS strengthens the connection between heritage and contemporary education, fostering a sense of national identity and pride.

Challenges and Considerations

- **Standardization and Validation:** There is a need to develop frameworks for validating and integrating IKS with modern scientific methods, ensuring accuracy, safety, and efficacy.
- **Language Barriers:** Addressing language barriers in accessing ancient texts and knowledge is crucial for wider dissemination of IKS.
- **Resource Availability:** Ensuring sufficient funding, infrastructure, and trained personnel to support IKS

initiatives are essential.

- Key Insights for Teacher Education from NEP 2020 Based on IKS

1. Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

- **Holistic understanding:** Teachers are to be trained to integrate ancient Indian philosophies, such as those from Vedas, Upanishads, Ayurveda, Yoga, and ethical/moral teachings, into pedagogy.
- **Contextual relevance:** Teachers should understand and convey how IKS relates to contemporary life and scientific thought.

2. Multidisciplinary and Value-Based Education

- IKS is inherently interdisciplinary – combining science, arts, philosophy, and health.
- Teacher education programs will train educators to adopt value-based education, focusing on truth, compassion, self-discipline, and sustainability, inspired by IKS.

3. Use of Local and Indigenous Knowledge

- Emphasis on regional knowledge systems, local traditions, arts, and languages.
- Teachers must be prepared to respect, document, and incorporate local knowledge in teaching, enhancing cultural pride and environmental stewardship.

4. Curriculum Revamp in Teacher Education

- New B.Ed. programs (from 2023 onwards) will include courses on IKS, Sanskrit, Indian logic systems (Nyaya), and Indian pedagogical traditions (e.g., Gurukul system, experiential learning).
- Teachers will learn critical comparison between Indian and Western pedagogies.

5. Professional Development Through IKS

- In-service training will include modules on yoga, mindfulness, and ethics derived from Indian traditions.
- Encourages reflective teaching practices rooted in Indian epistemologies and self-inquiry.

6. Language and Cultural Heritage

- Emphasis on mother tongue/local language as medium of instruction
- Teachers need proficiency in local languages and understanding of the linguistic-cultural heritage of India to implement IKS meaningfully.

7. Research and Innovation in IKS

- Teachers will be encouraged to undertake action research in traditional knowledge practices.
- New research centres in IKS will offer fellowships and training for educators.

8. Inclusive and Ethical Teaching Practices

- Drawing from inclusive Indian philosophies like Sarvodaya (upliftment of all) and Ahimsa (non-violence), teacher education will stress equity, compassion, and democratic values.

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 marks a significant step in reclaiming India's indigenous educational roots while aligning them with global challenges. For teacher education, it proposes a model grounded in Indian wisdom, preparing educators who are culturally aware, ethically strong, and intellectually equipped. By integrating IKS, NEP envisions a generation of teachers and learners who value tradition, embrace innovation, and contribute meaningfully to society.

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