

National Education Policy 2020 and the Revival of Indian Knowledge Systems: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is one of the most significant changes to the education system in India, which attempts to re-align learning with the civilizational knowledge legacy of the nation, and remain globally competitive. The reestablishment and assimilation of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) which includes indigenous sciences, traditional health systems, classical languages, ecological wisdom, oral traditions, and culturally based pedagogies is a major facet of this reform. The present paper is the critical analysis of the opportunities and difficulties related to the integration of IKS into the curricular, institutional and pedagogical frameworks provided by NEP 2020. The analysis of documents, academic literature, and government reports on the qualitative and analytic basis of the study shows that NEP 2020 is the first national policy to institutionalize IKS on all levels of education. Nonetheless, it has major limitations like lack of trained teachers, insufficient academic structures to standardize IKS, and structural loopholes in the framework of higher education systems. Nevertheless, IKS has enormous potentials in the restoration of cultural continuity, diversification of knowledge streams, and placing India as an international provider of alternative knowledge systems in case integrated scientifically and strategically.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Indian Knowledge System, Indigenous Knowledge, Educational Reform.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a huge pool of intellectual, cultural, and scientific traditions that were developed in the Indian subcontinent over the thousands of years. IKS is based on the Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhist, and Jain, and subsequently classical, Sanskrit and local knowledge traditions, encompassing a wide variety of fields, including philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, Ayurveda, metallurgy, linguistics, ecology, performing arts and education. This native system operated centuries with Gurukalas, Pathshalas, Monasteries and Temple universities such as Nalanda and Takshashila and localized community-based networks of knowledge, which influenced the life of epistemology and socio-cultural life. This continuum was however broken in the colonial era particularly after the Minute on Education enacted by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1835 which systematically substituted the Indian intellectual traditions with an English-based curriculum. The policy of colonial education marginalized indigenous knowledge as

something non-scientific and left it to the realms of folklore and ritual, which led to the undermining of traditional learning institutions and the marginalization of epistemology.

Since the country attained independence, despite the national education system that India implemented, no structured policy was given to the revival of IKS. Initially commissions like the Radhakrishnan Committee (1948) and the Kothari Commission (1964) did not only recognize the importance of knowledge in India, but they did not manage to translate this to curricular frameworks. Higher education was still dominated by Western approaches to discipline and IKS was still contained in the isolated research centres, classical language departments and cultural preservation institutions. It is not until the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that IKS once again becomes a national educational priority.

NEP 2020 is defined by the dual vision of rootedness in India and international outlook that state that education should be oriented not only culturally but also globally. The policy is the first to make IKS a mainstream academic and research element at the school, higher, and vocational education levels. The policy is trying to overcome historical discontinuity by suggesting multidisciplinary universities, the encouragement of classical languages, experiential learning, and institutional mechanism like IKS centres. Therefore, NEP 2020 represents a conclusive transition between heritage conservation and the constructive re-use of indigenous knowledge by the present education system, turning IKS not into the nostalgia, but a living knowledge tradition with its modern significance.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Annual Report, All India Council for Technical Education (2021), reports on the operationalization of the IKS Cell of the Ministry of Education at AICTE: its mandate to advance interdisciplinary IKS research, curriculum pilots, funding, and outreach. It has been in the form of early institutionalization, including calls, proposals, and networking with universities; and the report highlights that on the long run, there is the need to establish capacity-building, academic standards of mainstreaming IKS in technical and higher education.

University Grants Commission (2023). Guidelines of the UGC to Incorporating Indian Knowledge System in Higher Education Curricula offer a useful roadmap, including credit-based courses in IKS, interdisciplinary buckets, research connections, and assessment proposals. The document makes IKS a heritage add-on curriculum component (implicitly), but underscores implementation prerequisites- faculty knowledge, resource materials, and institutional preparation- demand phase- based implementation and quality checks.

Kumar, 2025 In Integrating Indian Knowledge System in NEP 2020 (TIJMR), examines policy-text and early university practice, believing that NEP provides a new policy space of IKS, based on multilingualism, experiential learning, and multidisciplinary structures. Results indicate opportunities (new courses, research focus, collaborations with communities) and threats of standardization, content curation, and scholarly attestation in the mainstream accreditation systems.

Singh & Patra (2023) In their paper “Revitalizing Indigenous Pedagogies through NEP 2020” evaluate how IKS-based learning through experience is aligned with the competency-driven curriculum of NEP. The paper concludes that traditional teaching methods like gurukul, storytelling, apprenticeship, and community-based learning are some of the constructive pedagogies that has been advocated in the world today. Nevertheless, the authors caution that, unless the digital repositories, textbooks, and teacher preparation are made valid, IKS might not be transformative but rather rhetorical in classroom practice.

Borah (2022) studied “Repositioning Indian Knowledge in Higher Education: A Policy Analysis of NEP 2020” assesses the possibility of the policy to bring an academic democratization. The study finds, based on the content-based review of NEP and the interviews with the stakeholders working in Assam-based

universities, that IKS has the potential in providing the localized curricula, regional language scholarship, and cultural research cluster. Another issue mentioned in the paper is political interpretations of tradition, discrepancies in the distribution of the institutional resources and absence of cross-disciplinary bridges between modern sciences and IKS-based epistemologies.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- i. To analyse the provisions of NEP 2020 related to the revival and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems in education.
- ii. To examine the potential prospects and academic relevance of IKS in modern Indian education.
- iii. To identify the major challenges in implementing IKS-based reforms under NEP 2020.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research design in the current study will be qualitative, analytical and descriptive and will be used to discuss the provisions, opportunities, and challenges associated with the implementation of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The paper is solely founded on secondary data that have been gathered as official policy depending on documents including NEP 2020, UGC guidelines, government notifications, IKS Cell publications and peer-reviewed journal articles including articles that are included in Scopus. Thematic interpretation and content analysis were used to establish major patterns, policy trends, and issues of implementation. The study is narrowed down to policy level analysis but not to empirical classroom level or institutional case studies. Although the methodology allows gaining a comprehensive view of the intent of the text and policy, it is constrained by the presence of published data of follow-up, as NEP 2020 is only at the initial stages of its implementation. Accordingly, the results are conceptual and policy views as opposed to field results that could be measured.

5. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS:

5.1 Objective 1: Provisions for Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in NEP 2020:

The initial goal of the research was to examine the particular clauses of the National Education Policy 2020, attempting at a reintroduction, mainstreaming, and institutionalization of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in the national education system. The policy document NEP 2020 is the first Indian policy document to not only briefly refer to heritage studies at a symbolic level, but it forms structural avenues of integrating IKS into school, higher and vocational education.

Among the most tangible of them is the introduction of specific institutional frameworks like IKS Centres, the IKS Division within AICTE and UGC, which should be tailored towards fostering research, curriculum design and academic cooperation in this field. They are supposed to support fellowship programs, capacity-building workshops, documentation project, interdisciplinary research between IKS and contemporary sciences, technology and humanities. In contrast to previous committees and commissions, NEP 2020 transforms the concept of IKS, which is a policy rhetoric, into an administrative building.

The second big provision is an emphasis of policy on early education using the mother tongue or regional languages. This is in tandem with the philosophy of IKS which was and still is flourishing in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, and indigenous dialects that were and were passed by word of mouth. The revival of classical languages, such as Sanskrit as a non-compulsory, and yet very significant language, brings back classical texts of knowledge in Ayurveda, mathematics, poetry, political philosophy and ecological ethics to the learners.

The reorganization of higher education into multi-disciplinary universities where IKS-related courses like ancient metallurgy, Vedic mathematics, traditional medicine and performing arts can be mixed with engineering, social sciences, and biotechnology are also emphasized by the policy. This bridges the old

dichotomy between the streams of knowledge created during the colonial rule, that is, modern and traditional knowledge.

Moreover, NEP 2020 also puts emphasis on traditional knowledge systems in India in the fields of health (Ayurveda, Yoga), agriculture (organic and climate-resilient practices), architecture (Vastu), ecology (sacred groves), and arts (music, dance, craft guilds). These domains are not proposed as heritage appendages but are now research, innovation, and economic relevant disciplines.

5.2 Objective 2: Perspectives and Academic Future of IKS Integration:

The second goal investigated the future of IKS integration with regard to educational transformation, skill-building, expansion of research, and international presence.

Revitalization of cultural rootedness is one of the best opportunities. Since decades Indian students have been taught on Eurocentric curricular systems which cut them off indigenous ideas of knowledge, morality, and sustainability. With the reintroduction of IKS, NEP creates epistemic confidence and fills the historical divide between education and identity. This follows the universal shift, which is currently evident, towards knowledge decolonisation in African, Latin American, and Māori scholarship.

Experience and practice-based learning is another good opportunity. The shramdaan IKS traditions, apprenticeship systems, gurukul pedagogy, and craft-based learning have shown to be in a natural preposition with the change of NEP to rote learning to competency-based education. The traditional knowledge emphasises the learning through doing, observing and living in the ecological and social contexts, which is exactly what contemporary education is trying to recover with the help of experiential models.

New research opportunities and degree programs are also provided with the integration of IKS. Postgraduate programs in IKS are already being developed in Yoga Sciences, Ayurveda Biology, Indic Psychology, Indigenous Agriculture, Epics and Civilizational Studies and Ethnomathematics. These programs do not only diversify academic fields but also establish new employment areas in the field of wellness, sustainable agriculture, cultural tourism and indigenous technologies.

To the rest of the world, IKS provides India soft power and scholarly legitimacy. Yoga and Ayurveda are already being internationalised; other areas as ancient metallurgy (e.g., rust-free iron pillar), shipbuilding, astronomy, or pan-Indian ecological practices can make India become an exporter of knowledge and not a passive consumer of Western epistemology.

5.3 Objective 3: Major Challenges in Implementing IKS under NEP 2020:

The third goal was to determine the obstacles to successful integration of IKS, even where there are high policy intentions.

The first one is an untrained faculty that has not only disciplinary but also pedagogical knowledge about IKS. A majority of Indian universities lack faculties to conduct courses based on IKS using academic rigour. The same knowledge remains in the hands of the traditional scholars (pandits, vaidyas, artisans, gurus) not belonging to the mainstream academic community, establishing a disconnection between the skill.

The second one is epistemic conflict between contemporary scientific models and conventional knowledge. A great number of IKS ideas are based on non-linear, holistic ontologies, which are not similar to Western empiricism. In the absence of epistemological bridges, IKS runs the risk of being either thrown off as non-scientific, or mindlessly worshipped.

Another complexity is in the curricular development: IKS is enormous, heterogenous, and decentralised. It is a pedagogical challenge to standardise it into syllabi without oversimplification and politicisation. To

do a translation of Sanskrit or other local literatures of scientific validity into modules, interdisciplinary scholarship is still immature.

There is the danger of cultural romanticism as well. Unless it is taught in academically proven research, IKS may not pass the scrutiny of the scientific community and the global academia, when it is taught under a national or ideological tone.

Political and ideological critiques also make implementation difficult. Other stakeholders are worried that IKS inclusion will appear as a cultural imposition or revivalist agenda and not a scholarly enrichment especially in a plural society such as India.

Therefore, Objective 3 will be met: IKS reintegration is challenged because of manpower, epistemology, curriculum design, and sociopolitical interpretation.

Result Summary:

- NEP 2020 has established a policy space in relation to IKS like never before alongside institutional, curricular, and linguistic reforms.
- IKS stands at a good academic diversification, culturally based, experiential pedagogical, and global contribution of knowledge.
- The implementation issues are still structural, intellectual, and political and need to be planned long-term instead of being symbolically adopted.

6. CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS:

The inclusion of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in the mainstream educational framework as per NEP 2020 has both the prospects and the issues that it brings into reality. Although the policy provides a basis of epistemic revival and diversification of academics, its success is also subject to how willing institutions, educators, and society in general are to the policy. The next section is a summary of the major challenges and opportunities in four dimensions, the educational, institutional, policy, and societal.

6.1 Prospects:

1. Educational Prospects:

- Experience learning: IKS will foster hands-on, situational, and community-based learning in line with the model of competency-based education of NEP.
- Curricular enrichment: Interdisciplinary academic enrichment in the form of new courses like Ayurveda Biology, Vedic Mathematics, Indic Psychology, and Indigenous Agriculture are introduced.

2. Institutional Prospects:

- Establishment of IKS Centres: the Universities receive a chance to have new research centres, exchange of faculty, and documentation of cultural knowledge.
- Skill-based jobs: IKS related areas like wellness, herbal science, craft industries and eco-tourism can also create new jobs.

3. Policy Prospects:

- Academic decolonisation: The policy allows India to regain intellectual independence by countering world knowing with the indigenous roots.
- Worldwide soft power: Yoga, Ayurveda, Sanskrit study, and ecological knowledge enhance the role of India in global knowledge markets.

4. Societal Prospects:

- Cultural continuity: Returning the learners to the civilizational heritage helps to instill confidence in identity and ethical foundation.
- Community engagement: Folk practitioners, artisans, and traditional healers may be brought to the formal knowledge systems.

6.2 Challenges:

1. Educational Challenges:

- Untrained teachers and IKS-pedagogy skills.
- Risk of cosmetic inclusion of the risk of surface-level, shallow, and unacademically verified inclusion.

2. Institutional Challenges:

- Inadequate capital, resource materials, and research infrastructure.
- Lack of uniform curricula and textbooks of peer review.

3. Policy Challenges:

- Inequity in implementation between states and universities.
- Requirement of scientific validation and accreditation compatible structures.

4. Societal Challenges:

- Ideological or non-scientific perception of IKS.
- Language obstacles: some of the original works are not translated into other languages.

All in all, even though NEP 2020 provides a revolutionary gateway to the revival of IKS, its effectiveness depends on long-term planning, scholarly rigour, and an institutional inclusive involvement.

7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is the first national policy to institutionalize and enshrine the system at all levels of education, beginning with school through to higher education.
- The policy offers structured and curricular systems like IKS centres, multidisciplinary universities, and education based on the mother tongues to restore indigenous knowledge systems.
- IKS also has substantial educational and cultural opportunities such as experiential education, interdisciplinary research and identity-based education.
- New degree courses and job opportunities exist due to the high potential in new degrees and job opportunities in areas of Ayurveda, yoga, traditional agriculture, arts, metallurgy and heritage science which are included in the IKS.
- Major implementation obstacles are shortage of trained faculty, no standardised curriculum models and inadequate research infrastructure.
- Epistemology There are epistemological issues that challenge the academic validity between modern science systems and traditional knowledge.
- Risk of cultural romanticism or misuse of ideology may obstruct objective scholarship except when the IKS is approached in a scientific way.
- It will need a gradual planning, training of the teachers, financial assistance and academic work of the traditional professionals and the present institutions.

8. SUGGESTIONS:

- Establish teacher training and certification in IKS of school and higher education staff.
- Create special funds, research grants, and fellowships to fund IKS-based scholarly research and translation.
- Develop standardised and peer-reviewed curricula and textbooks so as to maintain academic rigour and prevent superficial or ideological content.
- Enhance the partnership between universities and traditional knowledge practitioners, such as vaidyas, craftsmen, Sanskrit scholars, tribal knowledge bearers and so on.
- Encourage interdisciplinary courses that bridge IKS and contemporary science, technology, environmental studies, and psychology and health sciences.

- Manuscripts, oral traditions, and regional knowledge archives Digitalize manuscripts, oral traditions, and regional knowledge archives to enable IKS to be available in research and global scholarship.
- Make sure IKS integration is slow, research based and not political and cultural to retain credibility and acceptance.

9. CONCLUSION:

The National Education Policy 2020 is a landmark in the education history of India, which is the first attempt in the systematic manner to reengage the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into the framework of formal education. Contrary to the past policies where indigenous knowledge was considered at the cultural level of acknowledgment, NEP 2020 makes IKS an intellectual, scientific, and pedagogical tool that can play a role in the future-ready education. Its vision is one of moderation, in which tradition is not seen through a romantic lens and modernity not seen through blind emulation of others, but rather, both are seen as complementary to each other to form a holistic learning ecosystem based on Indian civilizational wisdom yet global-wise.

Nonetheless, the policy intent alone cannot be used to revive IKS. It requires a sequential implementation plan incorporating the preparation of teachers, research framework, standardization of curriculum, interdisciplinary teamwork, and validation of academics. When implemented with an academic rigour and not symbolic inclusion, IKS may prove a potent tool of knowledge sovereignty, allowing India to regain an agency of epistemology rather than continuing to be an active consumer of western thought. More to the point, the introduction of IKS can restore cultural confidence in learners, reintegrate education into the ethical and ecological awareness, and add new tradition of knowledge to the international academic community. NEP 2020, however, is not merely a reform document, it is a chance to rethink the intellectual future of India with the power of its own tradition.

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