

Integrating Indian Knowledge System: Revitalizing India's Educational Landscape

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Abstract:

The Indian education system has evolved significantly, transitioning from informal home-based education to more structured institutions, both private and state-sponsored. Key drivers of this evolution include colonialism and westernization, which continue to shape the system today due to the impact of globalization and capitalism. Colonialism significantly influenced the Indian education system. During the colonial era, British rulers established formal educational institutions to serve their administrative needs. These institutions propagated western knowledge, languages, and cultural norms. As a result, traditional Indian systems of education were marginalized. The Indian National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 marked a significant paradigm shift in the country's approach to education, including the introduction of Indian knowledge systems as a foundational component of the curriculum. The NEP-2020 acknowledges the significance of safeguarding and advancing India's vast legacy of knowledge systems, encompassing traditions in philosophy, language, science, and the arts. It recognizes that the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) may provide insightful opinions and viewpoints that enhance contemporary education. The policy is meant to encourage the next generation to recognize the significance that traditional knowledge formerly had.

The term "Indian Knowledge System (IKS)" referred in new education policy is different from that of indigenous knowledge system. The National Educational Policy document specifically quoted that "Knowledge of India" will incorporate knowledge from ancient India and its contributions to modern India, and it neglected the inclusion of the indigenous knowledge prevalent during the Muslim rule in India. However, utilization of indigenous and traditional learning methods as well as tribal knowledge was emphasized in the policy but a major portion is devoted for the inclusion of knowledge from the ancient period. This study aims to explore how traditional Indian knowledge systems can rejuvenate the Indian education system. The paper will delve into an examination of these ancient knowledge systems, exploring ways to seamlessly integrate them into the current educational framework.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System (IKS), NEP-2020, Indigenous knowledge, Traditional knowledge, Mughal Period, Holistic Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is the systematic transmission of knowledge from one generation to next generation. It is not a custom but a structured system and a sharing information. The IKS is centred on the Vedic literature, the Upanishads, the Vedas, and the Upvedas (Mandavkar, 2023). Although the Indian education system has evolved significantly, transitioning from informal home-based education to more structured institutions, both private and state-sponsored but the key drivers of this evolution include

colonialism and westernization, which continue to shape the system today due to the impact of globalization and capitalism. Colonialism significantly influenced the Indian education system. During the colonial era, British rulers established formal educational institutions to serve their administrative needs. These institutions propagated Western knowledge, languages, and cultural norms. As a result, traditional Indian systems of education were marginalized. Even after independence, remnants of colonial influence persist, impacting curriculum, language policies, and teaching methods. As globalization and capitalism continue to interconnect with educational practices, the consequences of colonialism continue to affect India's educational system, although in increasingly subtle ways.

1.1 IKS- HISTORICAL CONTEXT (PRE-BRITISH PERIOD)

The term “Indian Knowledge System (IKS)” referred in new education policy is different from that of indigenous knowledge system. The National Educational Policy document specifically quoted that “Knowledge of India” will incorporate knowledge from ancient India and its contributions to modern India (NEP, para 4.27), and it neglected the inclusion of the indigenous knowledge prevalent during the Muslim rule in India. The policy document sidelined the indigenous knowledge, literature and the languages of Hindustani, Arabic or Persian, which were dominant in tols, pathshalas, maktabas and madrasas throughout the pre-British era. (Dharmpal, 1983). However, utilization of indigenous and traditional learning methods as well as tribal knowledge was emphasized in the policy but a major portion is devoted for the inclusion of the knowledge from the ancient period.

Persian culture has had a significant influence on Indian knowledge systems, particularly during the period of Indo-Islamic rule. Persian scholars and rulers pursued knowledge about Indian sciences and literatures, leaving behind a vast collection of Persian texts that examine various aspects of South Asia's intellectual traditions. Persian served as the official language of the Mughal Empire, which governed India for over 300 years. This period saw Persian exert a profound influence on the evolution of India's languages and culture. It played a formative role in the emergence of Hindustani and had a strong influence on Punjabi, Sindhi, Bengali, Gujarati, and Kashmiri languages (Azeemuddin & Sayyad, 2021). Additionally, Persian works on Indian learned traditions have been critically surveyed in research projects like Perso-Indica, which explores how Hindu culture was represented and understood in Persian-medium texts composed between the 13th and 19th centuries (Truschke, 2012). During the Mughal period in India, the education system saw a blend of Indian and Persian traditions, which contributed to a rich fusion of cultures and knowledge systems. This integration was evident in Mughal art, literature, and scholarship.

However, still embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships, and rituals, the indigenous knowledge is sometimes marginalized by modern scientific knowledge, but it remains integrated due to indigenous people's holistic approach to knowledge construction and application. This local wisdom, unique to cultures and societies, goes by various names such as ‘local knowledge,’ ‘folk knowledge,’ ‘traditional wisdom,’ or ‘traditional science.’ Passed down through generations via oral tradition and cultural rituals, it has been fundamental to activities sustaining societies worldwide (Okpokwasili & Oladipupo, 2019).

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore how traditional Indian knowledge systems can rejuvenate the Indian education system. The paper will delve into an examination of these ancient knowledge systems, exploring ways to seamlessly integrate them into the current educational framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

This is a systematic review paper. The papers were gathered via various websites and online journals. A few papers were chosen for in-depth examination based on the requirements of the current study after their titles and abstracts were examined. For this study, relevant research articles, concept notes, and various government documents and reports on NEP 2020 and IKS were consulted. A thorough analysis of these studies is provided in this paper.

4. INTEGRATION OF IKS

The Indian National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 marked a significant shift in the country's approach to education, including the introduction of Indian knowledge systems as a foundational component of the curriculum. The NEP-2020 acknowledges the significance of safeguarding and advancing India's vast legacy of knowledge systems, encompassing traditions in philosophy, language, science, and the arts. It recognizes IKS may provide insightful opinions and viewpoints that enhance contemporary education. The policy is meant to encourage the next generation to recognize the significance that traditional knowledge formerly had. The policy also emphasizes the need for teacher training programs to equip educators with the knowledge and skills required to integrate IKS into their pedagogical practices. It calls for the inclusion of modules on IKS in teacher education curricula and professional development initiatives.

Newer evidence supporting indigenous knowledge across different fields has been uncovered by several recent studies on the antiquity of Indian civilization. Languages, the arts, religion, spirituality, culture, astronomy and mathematics, science and technology, health and wellbeing, town planning, and public administration are a few examples of these. Despite possessing such a wealth of information, these concepts are not included in India's contemporary educational framework. During British administration, the state policy opted to create a new knowledge system based on Western knowledge and to downplay the importance of the indigenous knowledge system. For the previous 200 years, this has served as the foundation for education delivery in India. As a result, the educational model that is now popular in India is entirely based on relatively recent Western sources which has marked a discontinuity in the Indian Knowledge System (Mahadevan, et. al. 2022).

The Indian Knowledge System attempts to bring together the country's ancient knowledge from long ago with its modern knowledge system. It also aims to support the field's multidisciplinary research prospects for academics and educational institutions. The framework for IKS studies and research approaches in modern knowledge was conceived at the theme session under Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (ABSS, 2023) with the aim of attracting Indians and foreigners and gaining worldwide acceptability, ultimately serving the purpose of internationalization domestically. The importance of people's "Janbhagidari" engagement in the advancement and spread of IKS was also highlighted in the conversation. Following are the examples of integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into education:

1. **Regional Language and Literature Courses:** Universities can offer specialized courses that explore regional languages, literature, and oral traditions. This includes studying classical texts, folk tales, and indigenous poetry.
2. **Traditional Medicine and Wellness:** Incorporate courses on Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy. Students can learn about holistic health practices, herbal remedies, and preventive wellness.
3. **Vedic Mathematics and Geometry:** Introduce Vedic mathematics principles alongside conventional math. Explore ancient geometric concepts and their practical applications.

4. **Environmental Management through Indigenous Wisdom:** Teach students about sustainable practices from Indian traditions. This includes eco-friendly agriculture, water conservation, and forest management.
 5. **Art and Craft Revival:** Encourage students to learn traditional art forms such as Madhubani painting, Pattachitra, or Warli art. These not only preserve culture but also enhance creativity.
 6. **Philosophy and Ethics in Modern Context:** Discuss philosophical texts like the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. Explore ethical dilemmas and critical thinking using ancient wisdom.
 7. **Architectural Heritage and Urban Planning:** Study ancient Indian architecture, including temple design, stepwells, and town planning. Apply these principles to contemporary urban development.
 8. **Indigenous Music and Dance:** Offer courses on classical music (Carnatic, Hindustani) and dance forms (Bharatanatyam, Kathak). Understand their cultural significance and artistic expression.
 9. **Language Technology and Preservation:** Explore computational linguistics and language technology. Also, focus on preserving endangered languages and scripts.
 10. **Historical and Cultural Context in Science and Technology:** Teach science and technology with insights from Indian history. For instance, understanding ancient metallurgy techniques or astronomy.
- The IKS attempts to bring together the country's traditional knowledge from the past with its present-day knowledge system. In this preview, blended learning approach artfully combines the best of both worlds: traditional classroom teaching and technology-assisted learning. It seamlessly integrates offline and online modes, creating a dynamic educational experience. With the use of blended learning, it will be easy to incorporate IKS in education. By doing so, we will enrich students' experiences, promote cultural understanding, and create a holistic learning environment. The blended learning techniques are a great way to customize a course to fit the training requirements of each student while also making it suitable for a variety of participant groups (S. Amani, 2023).

5. ENHANCING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH IKS

1. **Credit Component and IKS Electives:** Universities across all States/Union Territories (UTs) are encouraged to introduce learner credits or IKS electives in various courses. These initiatives aim to infuse traditional knowledge and cultural pride into learners from diverse disciplines. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has already mandated that 5% of total credits should be related to IKS courses. Additionally, the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has introduced IKS courses for first-year engineering students.
2. **Designing Regional Courses:** States/UTs have the opportunity to document their unique native cultures, arts, crafts, traditions, architecture, food habits, languages, and more. By doing so, they can tailor dedicated courses that resonate with learners' local contexts and heritage.
3. **Global Collaborations:** Recognizing India's global history, universities can design multidisciplinary courses that explore international collaborations. For instance, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is actively including content that highlights historical connections between India and Indonesia at the school level.
4. **Online and Open Distance Learning (ODL):** Existing IKS courses can be seamlessly integrated into digital learning platforms such as SWAYAM and NPTEL. This approach ensures that learners from various geographical locations can access IKS education.

These strategies collectively contribute to transforming education by embracing India's rich knowledge systems and fostering a holistic learning experience.

6. CONCLUSION

The educational institutions have a crucial role in shaping education and can actively preserve and share the Indian Knowledge System. By integrating this system into the curriculum, these institutions enhance students' learning, foster cultural appreciation, and connect ancient wisdom with contemporary knowledge. Recently, an initiative by the Government of India, Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), has also launched many courses of IKS in collaboration with premier institutes like Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Gandhinagar, National Institute of Technical Teachers' Training & Research, Bhopal with IKS- Concepts and Applications in Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences. The courses mainly offer an introduction to the extensive and varied knowledge traditions of India. This assists learners in comprehending the rich heritage of ancient India, including enduring and sustainable practices from earlier times. Evaluating historical approaches and applying them in contemporary contexts is crucial for societal improvement.

Recognizing the global significance of IKS, educational institutions must wholeheartedly embrace this holistic approach to empower future generations with our rich cultural heritage. By preserving and revitalizing this rich heritage, promoting interdisciplinary approaches, and fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills, IKS integrated education can contribute to strengthening and transforming the country. However, the successful implementation of IKS integration requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that takes into account the challenges associated with it while constantly adapting to the evolving needs of the modern world. However, merely reinforcing, or revitalizing IKS in the classroom will result in the creation of a new learning compartment that is riskier than preservation. Therefore, it is intended that the IKS content be harmoniously incorporated into current understanding. It takes a lot of work and clarity to accomplish such integration.

7. REFERENCES

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