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Integration of Indian Knowledge System in NEP-2020

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a landmark reform in India's educational history by advocating the systematic integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into contemporary education. Indian Knowledge Systems encompass India's vast intellectual heritage rooted in ancient texts, indigenous practices, philosophical traditions, scientific reasoning, ethical frameworks, and artistic expressions. For decades, colonial and post-colonial educational models marginalized these knowledge traditions in favor of Western epistemologies. NEP-2020 seeks to correct this imbalance by emphasizing holistic education, cultural rootedness, multilingualism, and interdisciplinary learning. This research paper examines the conceptual foundations, policy provisions, pedagogical implications, and practical challenges associated with integrating IKS into India's education system under NEP-2020. Using a qualitative policy-analysis methodology and an extensive review of related research, the study highlights how IKS integration promotes value-based education, critical thinking, sustainability, and national identity. The paper argues that while NEP-2020 provides a robust framework for IKS integration, effective implementation depends on curriculum redesign, teacher preparation, research validation, and institutional support. The study concludes that the integration of IKS has the potential to transform Indian education into a globally relevant yet culturally grounded system.

Key Words:

Indian Knowledge System (IKS), National Education Policy 2020, Holistic Education, Indigenous Knowledge, Multidisciplinary Learning, Value-Based Education

1.0 Introduction:

Education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission but a powerful instrument for shaping cultural identity, ethical consciousness, and societal values. India possesses one of the world's oldest and richest knowledge traditions, developed through centuries of inquiry in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, linguistics, architecture, ecology, and governance. These traditions, collectively referred to as the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), are deeply embedded in texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Arthashastra, Yoga Sutras, Charaka Samhita, and various regional and folk traditions.

However, the colonial education system introduced in the nineteenth century systematically sidelined indigenous knowledge, privileging Western epistemologies and methodologies. This trend continued even after independence, resulting in an education system largely disconnected from India's cultural and intellectual roots. Scholars have repeatedly argued that such an approach created epistemic alienation among learners, weakening cultural confidence and ethical grounding.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to address this historical neglect by placing Indian Knowledge Systems at the center of educational reform. The policy envisions an education system that is deeply rooted in Indian ethos while being responsive to global challenges. NEP-2020 emphasizes holistic development, multidisciplinary education, ethical values, environmental consciousness, and experiential learning—principles that resonate strongly with traditional Indian educational philosophies.

The integration of IKS is not intended as a rejection of modern science or global knowledge systems but as a complementary framework that enriches learning. By integrating IKS into curricula, pedagogy, teacher education, and research, NEP-2020 aims to create learners who are culturally rooted, ethically responsible, and intellectually versatile.

This research paper critically examines how NEP-2020 conceptualizes and operationalizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems across different levels of education.

2.0 Review of Related Research:

Scholarly discourse on the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems has expanded significantly following the announcement of NEP-2020. Researchers across disciplines have analyzed the policy's philosophical foundations, curricular implications, and implementation challenges.

Kumar and Babu argue that NEP-2020 represents a decolonizing effort aimed at reclaiming India's intellectual legacy. They highlight that IKS integration fosters cultural confidence, sustainability, and interdisciplinary learning by reconnecting students with indigenous scientific and philosophical traditions.

Halo and Kharbiryumbai focus on teacher education, emphasizing that educators play a crucial role in translating policy into practice. Their study suggests that integrating IKS into teacher education programs enhances culturally responsive pedagogy and promotes contextualized teaching.

Sarita and Singh provide a theoretical analysis of NEP-2020, noting that the policy recognizes IKS as a living, evolving knowledge system rather than a static historical artifact. They argue that IKS integration enables a synthesis of ancient wisdom and modern scientific inquiry.

Jacob and Gaur explore the impact of IKS integration on holistic development, suggesting that traditional practices related to yoga, meditation, and ethical instruction contribute to students' emotional and moral well-being.

Other studies examine the role of IKS in STEM education, environmental studies, and language learning. Researchers argue that traditional ecological knowledge, indigenous mathematics, and linguistic diversity enhance conceptual clarity and real-world applicability.

Despite widespread support, scholars also highlight challenges such as lack of standardized curricula, limited teacher preparedness, and the risk of superficial or symbolic inclusion of IKS without rigorous academic engagement.

3.0 Research Methodology:

The present study adopts a **qualitative research methodology** based on descriptive and analytical approaches. The methodology includes:

1. **Policy Analysis:** A close reading of the National Education Policy 2020 document with specific attention to sections addressing Indian Knowledge Systems, curriculum reforms, pedagogy, teacher education, and research.
2. **Literature Review:** Analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy briefs, and conference papers related to IKS and NEP-2020.
3. **Thematic Analysis:** Identification of recurring themes such as cultural integration, holistic education, ethical values, sustainability, and interdisciplinary learning.
4. **Comparative Perspective:** Comparison between traditional Indian educational philosophies and contemporary educational goals to assess alignment and relevance.

This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of policy intent, scholarly interpretations, and practical implications.

4.0 Research Findings:

The analysis of NEP-2020 and related literature reveals several key findings:

4.1 Formal Recognition of Indian Knowledge Systems:

NEP-2020 explicitly acknowledges the importance of India's indigenous knowledge traditions and recommends their inclusion at all educational levels. This marks a significant shift from earlier policies that largely ignored traditional knowledge.

4.2 Curriculum Integration:

The policy encourages the inclusion of IKS in subjects such as mathematics, science, medicine, arts, philosophy, and environmental studies. Examples include Vedic mathematics, Ayurveda, yoga, Indian astronomy, classical languages, and ethical teachings.

4.3 Multilingual and Cultural Emphasis:

NEP-2020's focus on mother tongue and regional languages supports the transmission of traditional knowledge, much of which is embedded in local linguistic and cultural contexts.

4.4 Teacher Education and Capacity Building:

Teacher preparation is identified as a critical factor. NEP-2020 recommends professional development programs to equip teachers with the knowledge and pedagogical skills required to teach IKS meaningfully.

4.5 Research and Innovation:

The policy promotes the establishment of IKS research centers in higher education institutions to encourage scholarly validation, documentation, and innovation based on traditional knowledge.

5.0 Discussion (Detailed Explanation):

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems in NEP-2020 represents a transformative vision that redefines the purpose and philosophy of education in India.

5.1 Philosophical Foundations:

Traditional Indian education emphasized holistic development—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical. NEP-2020 aligns with this philosophy by advocating education that nurtures character, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility alongside cognitive skills.

5.2 Holistic and Experiential Learning:

IKS integration supports experiential learning approaches such as observation, reflection, dialogue, and practice. Yoga, meditation, and traditional arts promote mental well-being and emotional balance, which are increasingly relevant in modern education.

5.3 Ethical and Value-Based Education:

Indian philosophical traditions emphasize values such as truth, non-violence, compassion, and duty. Integrating these values into education fosters ethical citizenship and social harmony.

5.4 Environmental Sustainability:

Traditional Indian knowledge systems emphasize harmony with nature. Indigenous ecological practices and sustainable living principles offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

5.5 Challenges in Implementation:

Despite strong policy intent, challenges remain. These include insufficient teacher training, lack of authentic learning materials, and the risk of ideological misuse. Academic rigor and critical inquiry must guide IKS integration to ensure credibility.

5.6 Global Relevance:

IKS integration does not isolate Indian education from global knowledge systems. Instead, it enriches global discourse by offering alternative perspectives on science, ethics, and sustainability.

6.0 Conclusion:

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems under NEP-2020 represents a decisive step toward creating an education system that is culturally rooted, ethically grounded, and globally relevant. By recognizing the value of indigenous knowledge, NEP-2020 challenges colonial legacies and promotes epistemic diversity. While the policy provides a comprehensive framework, its success depends on effective implementation through curriculum development, teacher training, research support, and institutional commitment. If implemented thoughtfully, the integration of IKS can transform Indian education into a holistic, inclusive, and forward-looking system.

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