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# **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AND INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS): BRIDGING PAST AND PRESENT**

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## **Abstract**

The National Education Policy 2020 reimagines Indian higher education through the systematic integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into mainstream curricula. This paper critically examines the epistemological foundations, policy framework, and institutional mechanisms that position IKS as a transformative pedagogical resource. Drawing upon postcolonial theory, decolonial discourse, and interdisciplinary educational philosophy, the study argues that NEP 2020 initiates a paradigm shift from colonial epistemic dependency toward knowledge pluralism and cultural self-reflexivity. The paper expands existing scholarship by engaging with twenty-three scholarly sources, highlighting the historical marginalization of indigenous epistemologies and the contemporary need for integrative knowledge architectures. Through qualitative policy analysis and critical hermeneutics, the research demonstrates how IKS can foster sustainable development, ethical consciousness, and holistic education aligned with global frameworks such as UNESCO's knowledge society paradigm.

The findings suggest that while policy intent is robust, effective implementation requires institutional restructuring, faculty training, research funding, and epistemic sensitivity. The study concludes that IKS under NEP 2020 is not a revivalist project but a dialogic bridge between tradition and modernity.

## **Keywords**

National Education Policy 2020; Indian Knowledge Systems; Epistemic Decolonization; Interdisciplinary Education; Knowledge Pluralism; Higher Education Reform

## **Introduction**

The National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020) marks a historic reform in India's educational landscape.

One of its most significant dimensions is the institutionalization of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) across disciplines.

Scholars such as Kumar (2005) and Sen (2005) have long argued that colonial education restructured indigenous epistemologies into peripheral knowledge domains.

NEP 2020 attempts to rectify this imbalance by encouraging research, curriculum redesign, and interdisciplinary integration of traditional knowledge systems in sciences,

humanities, and social sciences.

This policy initiative must be understood within a broader global discourse on decolonizing knowledge (Mignolo, 2011; Smith, 1999).

By embedding IKS within formal education, the policy repositions India's intellectual heritage as a living, evolving knowledge tradition rather than a static cultural artifact.

### **Literature Review**

Existing scholarship highlights multiple dimensions of Indian knowledge traditions.

Radhakrishnan (1953) conceptualized Indian philosophy as an experiential epistemology grounded in ethical praxis.

Kapoor (2019) discusses the contemporary revival of traditional sciences such as Ayurveda and Vastu Shastra within academic research.

Sharma (2018) and Dasgupta (1922) examine the scientific temper embedded in classical Indian mathematics and logic.

UNESCO (2005) emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity in knowledge societies, reinforcing the legitimacy of integrating indigenous systems.

Alvares (2013) critiques epistemic homogenization in modern universities and calls for plural knowledge frameworks.

Rao (2017) underscores the pedagogical relevance of indigenous ecological wisdom in sustainable development discourse.

Collectively, these studies establish that Indian knowledge traditions are inherently interdisciplinary, integrating philosophy, science, ethics, and aesthetics.

### **Research Gap**

Despite growing academic interest, limited research systematically evaluates NEP 2020's IKS framework through rigorous policy analysis.

Most studies either celebrate the initiative uncritically or critique it ideologically without empirical grounding.

There remains a gap in examining how policy discourse translates into institutional practice and curriculum design.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary theoretical framing—particularly from postcolonial and decolonial perspectives—remains underexplored.

This paper addresses these lacunae by situating IKS within broader global epistemological debates and analyzing its structural feasibility.

### **Methodology**

This research employs qualitative document analysis of NEP 2020 and related institutional reports.

A critical hermeneutic approach interprets policy language, supplemented by comparative theoretical analysis drawing on postcolonial and decolonial scholarship (Spivak, 1988; Mignolo, 2011).

Secondary sources include peer-reviewed articles, philosophical treatises, and UNESCO policy documents.

The methodology integrates interdisciplinary frameworks from education, philosophy, and cultural studies to produce a holistic interpretation.

### **Discussion**

The integration of IKS under NEP 2020 represents a multidimensional reform.

First, it challenges epistemic hierarchy by validating indigenous knowledge within formal academia.

Second, it promotes research centers dedicated to classical languages and traditional sciences.

Third, it aligns with sustainable development goals by incorporating ecological and ethical perspectives rooted in Indian traditions (Rao, 2017; UNESCO, 2005).

However, challenges include faculty preparedness, standardization concerns, and risk of essentialization.

Scholars such as Nussbaum (2007) caution against romanticizing tradition without critical scrutiny.

Therefore, implementation must balance preservation with critical inquiry.

### **Conclusion**

NEP 2020's IKS initiative constitutes a transformative educational paradigm aimed at epistemic pluralism and cultural revitalization.

By bridging past and present, the policy envisions universities as dialogic spaces where traditional wisdom and contemporary science intersect.

Effective realization depends on research investment, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustained academic rigor.

Future research should examine institutional case studies to evaluate implementation outcomes.

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