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Revitalising Bharatiya Wisdom in Modern Classrooms: The Role of Indian Knowledge Systems in NEP 2020

Prof. (Dr.) Preeti J. Maiyani [1]*

ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 heralds a paradigm shift in India's education system, strategically embedding Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) to revitalize Bharatiya wisdom within contemporary classrooms. This descriptive research paper synthesizes policy analysis, literature review, case studies, and forward-looking recommendations, adopting a qualitative lens centered on conceptual frameworks rather than primary empirical data. By drawing from ancient repositories like Vedic mathematics, Ayurveda, yoga philosophy, and the guru-shishya parampara of Gurukul traditions, NEP 2020 counters colonial-era rote learning legacies, promoting a multidisciplinary, value-infused pedagogy that nurtures cultural rootedness alongside global competencies. Objectives encompass: (1) dissecting NEP 2020's structural provisions—such as the 5+3+3+4 curricular model, mandatory IKS credits in higher education, and dedicated research centers—for seamless incorporation across foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages; (2) investigating practical integration strategies, including experiential methods like jigsaw learning with folk ecology modules and play-based early childhood care infused with regional lore; and (3) pinpointing implementation barriers, notably teacher unfamiliarity, resource scarcity, and standardization gaps, while proffering solutions like digital repositories, community-elder partnerships, and incentivized continuous professional development. Real-world exemplars, such as Tripura's community-driven Ayurveda projects and Kerala's herbal science curricula, underscore enhanced student engagement, sustainability ethos, and dropout mitigation. Ultimately, this paper posits IKS as a catalyst for holistic development—bolstering critical thinking, ethical reasoning, environmental stewardship, and national pride—positioning India as a Vishwaguru in the global knowledge arena.

Keywords: *Indian Knowledge Systems, NEP 2020, Bharatiya wisdom, curriculum integration, experiential pedagogy, Gurukul tradition, Vedic sciences, Ayurveda, educational policy, holistic learning*

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a groundbreaking paradigm shift in India's educational architecture, envisioning a system deeply rooted in the nation's cultural ethos while equipping students for global citizenship and innovation (Ministry of Education, 2020). Unlike previous policies tethered to colonial frameworks, NEP 2020 explicitly mandates the holistic integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)—encompassing ancient contributions in mathematics (Aryabhata's heliocentric insights and

[1] Professor, UGC-MMTTC Department, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, Email. Id.-twaranyara@gmail.com
*Corresponding Author

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zero's invention), astronomy (precise calendars from *Surya Siddhanta*), medicine (Susruta's surgical advancements and Charaka's holistic Ayurveda), and philosophy (Upanishadic inquiries into consciousness) (Kumar & Kishor, 2024). This strategic revitalization dismantles entrenched legacies of rote memorization and Eurocentric curricula, supplanting them with multidisciplinary, value-infused pedagogies that cultivate cultural pride, ethical discernment, and critical thinking.ncert.gov+2

At its core, NEP 2020's vision propels India toward its "Vishwaguru" destiny, synergistically blending *Jnan* (profound knowledge), *Vignan* (empirical science), and *Jeevan Darshan* (life philosophy), as articulated in policy discourses (Ministry of Education, 2020). For over three millennia, Bharatiya wisdom thrived through experiential, immersive learning in venerable institutions like Takshashila—where Chanakya synthesized economics, governance, and ethics—and Nalanda, a global hub fostering interdisciplinary dialogues among scholars from diverse civilizations (Sharma, 2025). The guru-shishya parampara emphasized mentorship, self-inquiry, and real-world application, yielding sustainable practices like agroforestry from *Vrikshayurveda* and ethical ecology from Vedic hymns.kuey+2

In today's urbanized classrooms plagued by cultural alienation and ecological crises, IKS serves as a potent antidote, bridging ancestral wisdom with modern exigencies (Kumar & Kishor, 2024). It promotes sustainability (e.g., zero-waste principles from ancient texts), ethical innovation (karma yoga in STEM), and emotional resilience via yoga and meditation modules. By decolonizing minds and fostering experiential learning aligned with Kolb's cycle—through projects on *Panchamahabhuta* (five elements)—NEP 2020 not only restores civilizational continuity but ignites transformative education, nurturing self-reliant *Atmanirbhar* Bharat citizens.[theacademic]

Objectives

- To examine NEP 2020's provisions for embedding IKS in school curricula and higher education.
- To analyze practical strategies and case studies for revitalizing Bharatiya wisdom in classrooms.
- To identify implementation challenges and propose solutions aligned with experiential learning principles.

NEP 2020 FRAMEWORK FOR IKS

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 fundamentally restructures India's school education through a flexible 5+3+3+4 foundational model—spanning ages 3-18—which prioritizes play-based, activity-oriented, and inquiry-driven learning infused with local and indigenous traditions (Ministry of Education, 2020). This shift from the rigid 10+2 system recognizes early childhood care and education (ECCE) as foundational, incorporating storytelling, folk games, and regional rituals to embed Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) from the outset. Foundational stage (ages 3-8) emphasizes multilingualism and holistic development, while preparatory (8-11), middle (11-14), and secondary (14-18) stages progressively integrate IKS through multidisciplinary modules, reducing content overload by 50% to foster critical thinking and creativity (Kumar & Kishor, 2024).

Key provisions explicitly champion IKS across levels. In higher education, NEP mandates at least 5-10% curricular space for IKS courses, alongside establishing National Research

Foundations (NRF) and up to 51 dedicated IKS centers for documentation, translation, and validation of classical texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Arthashastra, and texts on yoga, Ayurveda, and architecture (Ministry of Education, 2020). Multilingualism policies revive Sanskrit, Tamil, and regional languages as mediums, enabling direct access to primary sources via digital repositories like the Indian Knowledge Systems Division portal. Interdisciplinarity dissolves artificial silos between arts, sciences, vocational streams, and ethics, promoting credits for yoga, nai talim (craft-based learning), and Amrita Manthan-inspired value education rooted in constitutional Fundamental Duties.

Demonstrating momentum, the Ministry of Education has launched 38 IKS courses across IITs and central universities, 88 research projects (e.g., AI-driven analysis of Vedic mathematics), and 5,527 faculty internships by 2025, with UGC guidelines institutionalizing Research and Development Cells for translational innovation—such as drone tech inspired by ancient aviation concepts in Vaimanika Shastra or sustainable agriculture from Vrikshayurveda (Sharma, 2025). Virtual labs and MOOCs on SWAYAM further democratize access.

This comprehensive framework roots education in India's pluralistic heritage, fostering Atmanirbharta (self-reliance) while aligning with SDGs. By mandating IKS in teacher education (e.g., 30-hour modules) and assessments via portfolios over exams, NEP cultivates pride in civilizational achievements—from Aryabhata's astronomy to Sushruta's surgery—transforming classrooms into vibrant hubs of rooted-global scholarship (Kumar & Kishor, 2024).

DEFINING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent a vast, interconnected repository of indigenous wisdom spanning philosophy, sciences, ecology, health, and pedagogy, derived from ancient texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics (Ministry of Education, 2020). Unlike the often fragmented Western epistemological models that compartmentalize disciplines, IKS offers holistic worldviews exemplified by the Gurukul's experiential, guru-shishya parampara, where learning occurred through immersive dialogue, nature observation, and ethical praxis (Kumar & Kishor, 2024). Core domains include Vedic mathematics—flawless algorithms like the Vertically and Crosswise method for rapid computation and logical reasoning; Ayurveda's tridosha framework for preventive health and personalized wellness; and traditional ecology drawn from tribal *lokavidya* (community knowledge) on biodiversity conservation, agroforestry, and water harvesting (Sharma, 2025).

Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* revolutionized linguistics with generative grammar precursors, while Bhaskaracharya's *Lilavati* advanced astronomy through differential calculus concepts and planetary models. NEP 2020 positions IKS as vital carriers of sustainable practices, addressing modern crises like environmental degradation via value-based pedagogy—e.g., *ahimsa* (non-violence) in ecology and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) for sustainable consumption. It elevates *lokavidya* of artisans, farmers, and healers as legitimate academic capital, fostering inclusive knowledge ecosystems (Ministry of Education, 2020).

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BHARATIYA WISDOM

Ancient Bharatiya civilization excelled in multidisciplinary pursuits that shaped global paradigms. Charaka's *Samhita* systematized internal medicine, while Susruta pioneered plastic surgery, cataract operations, and 300+ surgical procedures millennia ahead of Western

counterparts. The concept of zero and infinity emerged from Vedic *shunya* philosophy, enabling modern computing (Aryabhata, 5th century). Temples functioned as astronomical observatories and environmental knowledge hubs, encoding hydrology in stepwell architecture and cosmology in mandala designs. Women scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi advanced philosophical inquiry at royal courts, while Lilavati contributed to mathematics (Kumar & Kishor, 2024).

The guru-shishya tradition emphasized mentorship, character-building (*sadhana*), and real-world application over rote memorization. This legacy globalized chess (*chaturanga*), yoga, and numeral systems, yet colonial Macaulayism systematically marginalized it, imposing an alien curriculum. NEP 2020 revives this heritage through mandated cultural rootedness, positioning India as a knowledge superpower.

Strategies for Classroom Integration

Curriculum Reforms. The National Curriculum Framework embeds IKS via thematic modules: Vedic math enhances numeracy, Ayurveda projects teach biology, folk arts enrich languages. Multidisciplinary units link the Himalayan *devrai* forests to climate studies.

Pedagogical Approaches. Experiential methods like jigsaw cooperative learning on IKS themes align with Kolb's cycle. Play-based ECCE integrates regional rhymes, *panchatantra* stories, and traditional games.

Teacher Training. 30-hour NISHTHA inductions allocate 10% to IKS, leveraging DIKSHA repositories and elder workshops for authenticity (Sharma, 2025)

Table -1

Strategy	**NEP Provision**	**Example**
Curriculum	IKS credits mandatory	Ayurveda in health modules
Pedagogy	Experiential learning	Gurukul-style projects
Training	CPD programs	6-month ECCE certification

CASE STUDIES

Successful IKS integration under NEP 2020 reveals transformative impacts across diverse Indian contexts (Ministry of Education, 2020). In Tripura, a northeastern state with rich tribal heritage, NEP-aligned initiatives embedded Ayurveda and folk arts into school curricula, fostering cultural identity and critical thinking. Students participated in community-sourced herbal gardens and *Reang* tribe storytelling projects, reducing dropout rates by 15% through heightened engagement and parental involvement (Kumar & Kishor, 2024). Kerala's high-literacy ecosystem leverages coastal ethnobotany—projects on neem-based pest control and *kalaripayattu* biomechanics integrate local medicinal knowledge with STEM, yielding 92% student proficiency in sustainability modules (Sharma, 2025).

Himachal Pradesh incorporates Himalayan ecology via *devbhoomi* wisdom: Class 8 modules on transhumance pastoralism and sacred grove conservation link traditional practices to climate resilience, enhancing ecological literacy. Institutions like Rishi Valley School (Andhra Pradesh) masterfully blend *Acharya parampara* with modern rigor—composite learning

spaces simulate Gurukul dialogues around Vedic astronomy apps, reporting 28% gains in student engagement and reflective thinking (Krishnamurti Foundation, 2023).

Higher education pioneers include IIT Madras's 38 IKS courses on *Vedic mathematics* and *Natyashastra* AI, alongside 5,527 faculty internships training 1,200+ educators by 2025. Gujarat's IITGN established a Bhartiya Jnana Parampara Centre, yielding patents in *Vrikshayurveda*-inspired biopesticides. These exemplars demonstrate enhanced sustainability awareness (e.g., 35% rise in zero-waste behaviors) and holistic outcomes—integrating cognitive, affective, and ethical domains (Sharma, 2025).

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite progress, formidable barriers persist. Lack of standardisation fragments IKS curricula—regional variations risk diluting authenticity (Kumar & Kishor, 2024). Teacher unfamiliarity remains acute: only 22% of educators report IKS proficiency, compounded by infrastructure gaps in rural areas lacking digital access. Sanskrit and Prakrit language barriers hinder primary text engagement, while Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) vulnerabilities expose tribal knowledge to biopiracy.

Urban-rural divides exacerbate inequities, with metropolitan schools dominating resources. Colonial mindsets foster skepticism toward "ancient" systems, viewing them as unscientific. Funding shortages constrain DIKSHA modules and repositories, while curriculum overload challenges balance—adding IKS without reducing rote content defeats transformative intent (Ministry of Education, 2020).

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic interventions can catalyze scale-up. Develop robust validation frameworks blending IKS with modern science—e.g., ICMR-Ayurveda clinical trials and CSIR herbal pharmacology. Fund National Teacher Hubs (₹500 crore allocation) and digital repositories like IGNCA's IKS portal with AI translations.

Promote multilingual apps (Sanskrit-to-regional via Bhashini) and *gram-panchayat-elder* partnerships for intergenerational *lokavidya* transmission. Policy advocacy includes tax incentives for IKS-model schools and alumni volunteering mandates. Pilot hybrid STEAM+Ethics models like *Mulya Parvaha* (Value Integration), fusing maker-spaces with karma yoga ethics.

Assessment reforms—portfolios over exams—alongside 50 NIRF bonus points for IKS research will institutionalize excellence. These measures ensure equitable, scalable revitalization (Sharma, 2025).

Table -2

Challenge	Solution
Teacher Training	Workshops with elders
Resources	Digital DIKSHA modules
Standardization	Research centers

CONCLUSION

Revitalising Bharatiya wisdom through Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) profoundly fulfils NEP 2020's visionary blueprint for equitable, culturally rooted education that bridges ancient sagacity with futuristic aspirations (Ministry of Education, 2020). By systematically addressing multifaceted challenges—standardisation gaps, teacher capacity deficits, infrastructural inequities, and lingering colonial scepticism—through targeted, evidence-based strategies like validation frameworks, digital multilingual repositories, elder-community partnerships, and hybrid STEAM+ethics pilots, Indian classrooms metamorphose into dynamic hubs of innovation, ethical inquiry, and cultural renaissance (Kumar & Kishor, 2024).

This transformative synergy yields multifaceted dividends: heightened critical thinking via Vedic logic, sustainability ethos from *Vrikshayurveda*, emotional resilience through yoga-*darshana*, and unshakeable civilizational pride among youth. Experiential pedagogies, aligned with Kolb's cycle and the guru-shishya parampara, dismantle the shackles of rote learning, nurturing Atmanirbhar citizens equipped for global leadership while honouring Sanatana continuity.

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Conflict of Interest
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