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INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND NEP 2020: POLICY PERSPECTIVES, IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIC PATHWAYS

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Abstract: National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), formulated by the Government of India, represents a landmark decision in defining the education system through its focus on integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into curricula and institutions. This paper looks at the policy approach behind this endeavor, the problems faced during its implementation, and the solutions proposed by scholars and professionals to make the integration effective. Using an extensive analysis of existing scholarly literature on this topic, this paper highlights the intellectual legacy of Indian knowledge systems, discusses structural and attitudinal obstacles in their implementation, and proposes several strategies that include teacher education, technology, community engagement, and innovative assessment techniques as ways to further NEP 2020. From the available literature, the following theme emerges – namely, the gap between strong policy intents and inadequate implementation and practices. In fact, the problem is not one of resources, but rather one of conceptualizing and prioritizing different kinds of knowledge in educational settings. The discussion of Indian case concludes with a consideration of how this project fits into a larger global dialogue on decolonizing education.

Introduction

The act of educating is never an apolitical act. The subjects taught by a nation, the language in which the subjects are taught, and the metrics for evaluating learning all contain biases on whose knowledge matters, which traditions ought to be preserved, and what sort of individual a good education would create. Indian higher education throughout most of the time since independence was premised on certain assumptions that had roots in the colonial past. Western traditions of science and philosophy were considered standards of rigour and modernity while Indian traditions were relegated to being curiosities or superstitions of the past. As pointed out by Swamy (n.d.), the intellectual tradition native to India is generally considered folklore in the dominant discourse in the world of academia, an attitude motivated not by any rigorous analysis but by the old hierarchical structure of colonial knowledge production systems. It is within the National Education Policy 2020 that there have been attempts to bridge this divide. By recognizing and prioritizing Indian Knowledge Systems within the design of curriculum, research, and institution building, it can be seen that NEP 2020 reflects a recognition that India's intellectual legacy cannot be confined to history alone. According to Mandavkar (2023), NEP 2020 rests on five principles of accessibility, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability, and that the incorporation of IKS within education is reflective of all five principles. As per Mandal (2026), there were specific mandates included in the policy regarding the allocation of five percent of credits to IKS courses, establishing centers of research, and incorporating teacher education in these traditions.

The gap between having an elaborate policy document and providing students in classrooms across a country like India with a proper educational experience is significant. Through their mixed methodological study involving fifty institutions, Kumar, Shankar, and Airy (2025) determined that while sixty-eight percent had set up IKS cells, and forty-five percent had introduced dedicated courses, a lack of necessary resources remained a barrier.

The NITI Aayog survey conducted in 2023 indicated that forty-five percent of educational institutions find it difficult to incorporate IKS into the curriculum due to syllabus overload, whereas only twenty-five percent of higher educational institutes have offered any training to their faculties for IKS courses, as reported by Chauhan, Kumari, and Jaiswal (2026).

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This paper provides an evaluation of academic research done in the area of integrating Indian Knowledge Systems under NEP 2020. First, the background and historical context in which such efforts are made will be considered with help from the work of Jejurkar (2025), Dongare (2023), and Mandavkar (2023). Next, the paper will review the current state of affairs by examining relevant policy analysis and empirical research regarding implementation efforts. Afterward, the issue of teacher education and students' experiences will be discussed, as well as strategic implications that can be inferred from scholarly research.

Objectives of the Study

The paper is formulated on the basis of the following research objectives.

1. To explore the policy context within which NEP 2020 envisages integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Indian education systems.
2. To look into the historical context and relevance of the knowledge traditions in India from which this integration needs to happen.
3. To understand the difficulties encountered in the process of implementing this initiative.
4. To look into the possible solutions through teacher education programs, use of digital technologies, and engaging communities.
5. To collate some strategic recommendations offered by scholars and practitioners for successfully implementing NEP 2020.

Research Questions

This chapter will be structured based on three core questions.

- What does NEP 2020 envision by way of Indian knowledge systems and how far have institutions started realizing it?
- What are the major challenges which stand between such an envisioned future and its implementation in real-life situations?
- According to the existing literature, what are the possible pathways through which these challenges may be addressed and overcome?

Review of Related Literature

There has been a lot written about Indian Knowledge Systems and NEP 2020, partly because of the importance of the policy, but also due to the academic richness of the issues that it has raised. The field includes analyses of the policy from perspectives ranging from policy analysis to educational philosophy to community ethnography to environmental science to mathematics history. Collectively, the field forms a substantial basis for grasping the significance of the challenge involved.

According to Khan and Husain (2025), using a qualitative method to analyze policies, NEP 2020 offers curricular integration with elements such as Vedic mathematics, science, and local art, while major issues include standardization and resource-related challenges. Likewise, Mandal (2026), after conducting an analysis through qualitative and analytical methods, found that NEP 2020 requires 5% credit toward IKS courses, and there are over 32 IKS centers throughout India, but there are differences in states regarding political will, budget, and teacher readiness. In a conceptual study, Baral (2024) found that proper implementation of IKS involves developing curricula, teacher training, research collaboration, and the creation of IKS centers of excellence. Using mixed-method research, which entailed surveys of 50 institutions and interviews of 78 people, Kumar, Shankar, and Airy (2025) discovered that 68% of respondents have developed IKS cells within their institutions, 45% offer IKS courses, and 88% of students feel a strengthened sense of cultural identity, whereas problems include insufficient funding (72%), unavailability of skilled teachers (65%), and infrastructure limitations (58%). Bera (2025) undertook teacher education reforms and observed that UGC's suggestions included establishment of IKS centres, integration in curricula, interdisciplinary teaching-learning activities, faculty development programs, and highlighted that value education must be a compulsory

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component of pre-service teacher education. In the edited book published by Roy (2026), there were various contributions where Ghosal discussed feminism and its history which led to Rig-Vedic gender equality, Bose wrote on the existence of ancient women scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi, Biswas discovered that Dharma was the central theme around which Gurukul education revolved, Roy established yoga through the eightfold path as explained by Patanjali and exposed Panchatantra as the instrument of value education, and Rashul identified the oral traditions of women such as Phawar, Li, Dadaria, and Oppari as a counter-archive of eco-knowledge. Likewise, in the edited book of Yadav et al., (2024), the establishment of the IKS Division in October 2020 was studied and noted that traditional practices, such as organic farming and rainwater harvesting provide sustainable alternatives to contemporary environmental problems. According to Sharma, Awasthi & Soni (2025), the researchers undertook a review-based study and reported that over 90 percent of the schools in cities have included yoga in their curriculum and there has been an increase in enrollment in Ayurvedic courses by 25% in five years, cautioning the negative effects on IKS due to globalization. In another study, Howlader & Sarkar (2025) focused on examining mathematical concepts used in traditional fishing and revealed that traditional fishing societies instinctively use the principle of isoperimetric inequality, proving that a circular shape of the cast nets yields maximum area when perimeter is kept constant. In yet another study, Roy (2025) investigated environmental wisdom from ancient scriptures of India and concluded that the foundations of environmental protection are very strong in Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata with the help of the theory of Pancha Bhutas and totemism of Indian tribes. Similarly, Nath (2025), teacher development using IKS shows that NEP 2020 encourages integrating IKS into the curriculum of teacher education programs and mentions innovation in methods like inquiry-based, problem-based, case-based, team-based, self-directed, and gaming learning approaches. Jejurkar (2025), who studied the historical evolution of Indian education during the Vedic, Maurya, Gupta, and Chola eras, concluded that IKS has the capacity to revolutionize education through revitalization of Gurukul systems and emphasis on indigenous knowledge but faced challenges such as unawareness and resistance to change. Pandey (2024), who explored the history of Indian education policy changes from NPE 1968 to NEP 2020, identified unawareness among educators, absence of documented information, reluctance to change, and preference for western ways of knowing as some of the main hurdles in the implementation of IKS. Chauhan et al. (2026), after conducting an extensive literature review, found that 45% of educational institutes had problems implementing IKS because of overloaded syllabus, only 25% had faculty trained to teach IKS subjects, and only 15% students perceived IKS as their future career option.

Non-significant differences were found in terms of awareness ($p = 0.814$), perception ($p = 0.856$), and attitude ($p = 0.231$) among qualifications; however, significant differences were observed regarding its cultural and ethical relevance ($p = 0.001$) and interdisciplinary relevance ($p = 0.015$); hence, Rajput et al. (2025) conclude that increasing education will enable individuals to understand the transdisciplinary nature of IKS. Similarly, Shukla and Sharma (2026) explore IKS as part of environmental education and argue that traditional systems such as the creation of stepwells, crop rotation, vermicompost, and sacred groves provide an environmentally friendly approach while highlighting challenges such as lack of proper training for teachers and assessment criteria. Dongare (2023) analyzes critical policies related to IKS, NCF 2005, and NCF 2023 and highlights that while NCF 2005 focused on "diversity to be managed," NCF 2023 emphasized "civilizational state to be reclaimed"; hence, it recommends tri-axial integration of IKS.

The study by Mandavkar (2023) was quite elaborate where he provided data showing that the formation of the IKS Division in October 2020 had led to the establishment of 32 IKS Centres, 75 research centers, internship opportunities numbering 5200, and the digitization of 1.5 lakh books with reference to the progression from the Gurukul system through Macaulay's Education System to NEP 2020 highlighting the fact that the NEP 2020 is based on five pillars namely Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability where the UGC has set a mandate of allocating 5% credit in the form of IKS courses. The issues found in the literature repeatedly included lack of financial resources, deficiency in qualified teaching staff, absence of proper infrastructure, Western educational systems resistant to IKS incorporation, non-standard pedagogical models, and insufficient documentation of oral traditions while the literature clearly shows that successful integration of IKS results in cultural identity, alternative ways of thinking, ethics, and sustainability goals.

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The Policy Framework and its Institutionalization

According to Khan and Husain (2025), after conducting a qualitative investigation into policy documents and the views of various stakeholders, the vision that underlies the NEP 2020 goes far beyond introducing a handful of ancient subjects in an already existing curriculum. This policy proposes education that equally cares about the intellect, emotions, society, and spirit, and which relies on Vedic mathematics, ancient science, technology, and classical arts to educate children of today. Increasingly emerging interdisciplinary research, digitization, and international reach were found to be some of the contemporary trends in this process, although standardization issues, resource availability problems, resistance to change, inclusivity issues, and global competition were seen as barriers.

However, Mandal (2026), in applying a qualitative and analytical perspective to evaluate interdisciplinary literature and policy documents, explored how the above policy vision has already taken institutional form. He discovered that the initiative of giving five percent credit to courses in IKS as part of NEP 2020 is already being implemented through the creation of more than thirty-two IKS centers across universities in the country, IKS Division as part of AICTE, and internship programs that would serve as institutional tools to promote the implementation of the above policy vision. However, Mandal (2026) pointed out considerable differences among states in political commitment, financial support, and teacher readiness, as well as issues such as the lack of faculty members and teaching aids that hamper policy implementation.

As for Pandey (2024), he provided an overview of Indian educational policies in terms of their historical development from NPE 1968 up to their most recent revision with NEP 2020 as the latest effort to create an equal and indigenous education system in India. Mandavkar (2023) provided an insightful analysis of the IKS Division itself, set up in October 2020 in the Ministry of Education at AICTE, whose vision is to rejuvenate and bring the Indian knowledge tradition into the mainstream of modern times. He revealed that around five thousand two hundred internships relating to Indian knowledge have been provided; more than fifty faculty training programs have been organized, and over eight thousand educational institutions have started including IKS in their curriculum along with the digitization of over one and a half lakh books. Mandavkar (2023) also traced the journey of educational policy from the Gurukul period to Lord Macaulay's introduction of English language teaching in 1835, placing NEP 2020 in the larger historical context of contention over what the Indian education system should serve and respect.

Indian Knowledge and Its Historical and Modern Importance

Much of the material written focuses on demonstrating the intellectual depth that the traditions which NEP 2020 is trying to revive. Jejurkar (2025), for example, described how Indian education went through different stages historically, beginning with the Vedic period between fifteen hundred BCE and five hundred BCE, where Gurukul was followed, followed by the period of Mauryans where famous institutions like Nalanda and Takshashila came into being, followed by the period of Guptas when science, particularly astronomy and mathematics, were flourishing, and the Chola period during which temple education was followed and sea voyages became famous. Jejurkar (2025) pointed out that this proves the dynamism of Indian education through history, and NEP 2020's attempts to revive these traditions are thus an attempt to reclaim intellectual tradition rather than a stepping back from modernity.

Further, Mandavkar (2023) gave flesh and bones to this image by describing what the Gurukul course covered, which included the eighteen Vidyas comprising the four Vedas, four Upavedas like Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda, and Shilpaveda, along with Mimamsa, Nyaya, Purana, and Dharmashastra. According to Mandavkar (2023), the instructors in this system were perceived as sages dedicated to knowledge, and education was never seen as a business deal, which is an interesting philosophical outlook on education that contrasts with today's market-based system of higher education.

According to Dongare (2023) based on critical policy discourse analysis of NEP 2020, Curriculum and Credit Framework by UGC, and NCF 2023, Indian historiography has been influenced by the intellectual bias of colonizers as reflected in James Mill's characterization of Indian traditions as non-historical. Dongare recommended the formation

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of a tri-axial approach to include Indian empiricism in the form of metallurgical skills of Vishwakarma people, geometrical mathematics of Sulba sutra and Kerala School of Astronomy, and the concept of republic in the Gana Sangha, thus placing the initiative of India along with the Kaupapa Maori initiative in New Zealand and Indigenization in Canada within global pluriversal modernity. Howlader & Sarkar (2025) found out that traditional fishermen use isoperimetric inequality in the design of their circular fishing nets to cover maximum area for a given perimeter, with objects displaying geometric shapes such as cones, cylinders, rectangles, and triangles.

According to Roy (2025), Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata have strong eco themes structured on the basis of Pancha Bhutas (five elements), while recording totemism among Ho, Mundas, Santhals, Adi, and Kamar tribes as conservation mechanisms. Shukla & Sharma (2026) studied the traditional systems for management of water resources like stepwells, surangams, khalis, and tanks as well as sustainable agriculture techniques like crop rotation, vermicompost (Jeevamrutham), natural pest management through herbs, and Vrikshayurveda, showing that sacred groves, van panchayats, and seed preservation practices reflect a belief system about humans being a part of nature with direct implications for environmental education. In this regard, the study by Yadav, Deepika, Kumari & Satsangi (2024) is also noteworthy.

Teacher Education and Value Integration

According to Baral (2024), while providing a conceptual analysis of IKS integration strategies, comprehensive curricular designing, effective teacher training, collaborative research, and creative use of resources were critical, especially given that any implementation of these IKS strategies required informed and competent teachers for success. Bera (2025) conducted an investigation into the recent teacher education reforms proposed under NEP 2020, which indicated that UGC had made several recommendations including the establishment of IKS centers, incorporation of IKS in curricula, multidisciplinary approaches, and collaborations with traditional knowledge experts. The author stressed the point that according to Indian philosophies of education, values were caught rather than taught and that teachers needed to exemplify them in order to be successful educators. Nath (2025) analyzed several pedagogical practices consistent with IKS principles and found that inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, case-based learning, team-based learning, self-directed learning, and game-based learning were some of the practices congruent with the active, experience-based, and socialized Gurukul tradition.

Shukla & Sharma (2026) looked into the issue of assessment, stating that the current evaluation model aimed at memorizing information is inadequate for IKS, suggesting that portfolio assessment, reflection, practical demonstrations, and continuous formative assessment be used instead, as otherwise, the effort to integrate IKS would become yet another exercise in memorizing facts.

Student Experience and Attitudes

An empirical study carried out by Rajput et al. (2025) through a survey distributed to 150 individuals who were students of colleges located in Rajasthan found that basic awareness ($p=0.814$), perception ($p=0.856$), and attitude ($p=0.231$) regarding IKS were similar among both undergraduate and postgraduate students; however, when looking at cultural/ethical relevance ($p=0.001$) and interdisciplinarity ($p=0.015$) of IKS, there were notable differences, meaning that postgraduates appreciate the cultural and ethical sides of Indian knowledge better than undergraduates do. The researchers Kumar, Shankar, and Airy (2025), in their mixed methodological research using a survey of 50 institutions and an interview with 78 stakeholders, revealed that 88% of the students who participated in the active implementation of the IKS curriculum felt strengthened in their cultural identity, thus contributing to the objective set by NEP 2020 to educate the country's citizens on the basis of its culture. As Sharma, Awasthi, and Soni (2025) stated, at present, more than 90% of the urban educational institutions use yoga in their curricula; moreover, the number of students studying ayurveda increased by 25% within five years. However, globalization threatens the development of IKS due to the commercialization of knowledge.

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Challenges to Implementation

According to Khan and Husain (2025), implementation challenges arise from structural issues, attitudes, and pedagogy, such that any solution to them becomes inadequate owing to their interactions. Kumar et al. (2025) reported that 72% of institutions experience the challenge of inadequate funding, while 65% cite a lack of appropriately qualified teachers and 58% cite deficiencies in infrastructure as the major challenges. According to Chauhan, Kumari, and Jaiswal (2026), only 25% of institutions offering higher education have the appropriate faculty for teaching IKS courses, while Mandal (2026) cites variations between the states on political will, financing, and preparedness of teachers. Resource limitation and quality assurance become some of the challenges highlighted by Badlakkanavar and Mali (n.d.). Khan and Husain (2025) highlight challenges related to resistance emanating from the colonial system of education in which western knowledge was regarded as universal and scientific and Indian knowledge as particular and pre-scientific. This situation leads to the coloniality of Indian historical consciousness (Dongare, 2023). According to Chauhan et al. (2026), the other major challenge is employability, since only 15% of students consider a career in IKS viable.

The use of western knowledge systems was highlighted by Pandey (2024) and Dei (n.d.) in educators' and administrators' behavior. Further, Jejurkar (2025) indicated resistance to change and a need for standardization as important barriers. In terms of the digital divide, according to Das (2025), access to digitized knowledge resources poses ethical issues because of the problem with intellectual property rights of indigenous communities. Swamy (n.d.) highlighted that when knowledge is taken out of the community context, issues regarding the beneficiaries of formalization and changes in its nature arise. Khan and Husain (2025) stressed the need for standardization as the central challenge. Furthermore, according to Swamy (n.d.), modern universities with lecture-based curricula fail to teach knowledge that is relational and contextually based. Nath (2025) pointed out that language might be a barrier due to the fact that indigenous knowledge sources are often written in Sanskrit or regional languages rather than English. Bera (2025) stressed that knowledge transfer requires instructors formed in such cultures rather than those whose education consisted only of courses in the area.

Strategic Pathways

Chauhan, Kumari, and Jaiswal (2026) suggested a thematic inclusion of Indian knowledge in the existing disciplines rather than in separate electives. According to Swamy (n.d.), curricular change was required to include indigenous histories, languages, arts, sciences, and philosophies as the core contents of courses. Baral (2024) highlighted the need to ensure that materials are engaging and suitable for learners' ages. Shukla and Sharma (2026) advocated for schools to create herb gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, and compost pits to create a more hands-on learning environment. According to Badlakkanavar and Mali (n.d.), curriculum development should involve collaboration between educators, academics, and traditional knowledge holders. Mandavkar (2023) reported over 50 faculty development programs offered by the IKS Division. Bera (2025) advocated for value education using indigenous knowledge to become compulsory in pre-service teacher preparation. Chauhan, Kumari, and Jaiswal (2026) suggested appointing special faculty members, interdisciplinary research, and bridge programs between academia and practitioners. Shukla and Sharma (2026) advised for IKS training to be compulsory in both pre-service and in-service education. Pandey (2024) suggested faculty training workshops and interactive learning sessions.

Community partnerships involving elders, farmers, and craftsmen teaching as guest teachers was another suggestion by Shukla and Sharma (2026). The use of IKS hubs and museums as learning sites was one of Jejurkar's (2025) suggestions. Public awareness through community activities, cultural festivals, and media campaigns was recommended by Badlakkanavar and Mali (n.d.). The use of platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM as ways of educating students across the country was brought forth by Das (2025). Jejurkar (2025) suggested mobile apps and online learning platforms. Digital repositories to be created in consultation with knowledge-holding communities were emphasized by Chauhan et al. (2026). Addressing the digital divide so that rural communities can have access to digital resources was one of the recommendations made by Das (2025). The number of interdisciplinary research centers in areas such as ancient metallurgy, town planning, water management, and Rasayanshastra stood at 75 according to

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Mandavkar (2023). Interdisciplinary research and innovation centers were recommended by Chauhan et al. (2026) with focus on IKS. Dongare (2023) presented India's initiative in the light of the Kaupapa Māori movement and indigenization in Canada within the context of pluriverse modernity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Jejurkar (2025), Dongare (2023), and Roy (2025, 2026) identified a heritage of exceptional intellectual profundity whose contributions to the fields of mathematics, medicine, ecology, philosophy, politics, and the arts have been profound. Mandavkar (2023) and Mandal (2026) identified the existence of policy commitment underpinned by institutional mechanisms, dedicated centers, digitization initiatives, and mandatory curriculum reforms which represented a break from past colonial legacy. Kumar, Shankar, and Airy (2025), Chauhan, Kumari, and Jaiswal (2026), and Khan and Husain (2025) continuously showed that the gulf separating policy and practice remained wide due to decades of policies designed around Western systems of knowledge. Baral (2024), Bera (2025), and Nath (2025) highlighted the importance of teachers, while Kumar, Shankar, and Airy (2025) revealed that 88% of students in IKS programs felt improved sense of cultural identity. According to Dongare (2023), Swamy (n.d.), and Khan & Husain (2025), addressing the belief in the universality of Western scholarly norms involves an epistemic reckoning. According to Jejurkar (2025), and Chauhan, Kumari & Jaiswal (2026), integration of IKS represents the most ambitious initiative since independence. Dongare (2023) posited that whose knowledge counts was a pertinent question for all societies. According to Mandal (2026), and Mandavkar (2023), there are serious indications in terms of the policy framework, as well as growth in institutional infrastructure. According to Kumar, Shankar & Airy (2025), there were successful cases when students had encountered IKS with enthusiasm. According to Rajput et al. (2025), engaging effectively improves cultural identity, whereas according to Shukla & Sharma (2026), contributions have been made towards sustainability, while according to Baral (2024), efforts are worthwhile.

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