ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 10| Issue: 10| October 2024|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

INTEGRATION OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT
The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has a rich and diverse heritage that encompasses a vast range of knowledge traditions, from Vedic studies to various regional and linguistic literatures. The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into higher education has gained momentum in recent years, aiming to bridge traditional wisdom with contemporary education. This article explores the significance of IKS, discusses the potential benefits of integrating it into higher education, and addresses the various challenges involved. The study highlights issues related to curriculum design, pedagogy, and the acceptance of traditional knowledge in the academic community, while suggesting strategies for overcoming these challenges.
KEY WORDS: *Integration, IKS, Higher Education, Issues, Challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Knowledge System encompasses the vast traditional knowledge base that has evolved in India over millennia. It includes various disciplines like Ayurveda, yoga, Vedic mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, architecture (Vastu Shastra), and spiritual practices. With the advent of globalization, there is a renewed interest in harnessing the insights from IKS to address contemporary societal needs. Integrating IKS into higher education provides an opportunity to connect students with India's rich cultural heritage while enriching modern scientific inquiry and holistic learning.

2. IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATING IKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Integrating IKS into higher education is essential for several reasons:

- **Cultural Awareness and Identity:** It fosters a sense of cultural pride and national identity, making students aware of India's intellectual heritage.
- **Holistic Education:** Traditional Indian education emphasized the overall development of an individual, addressing physical, mental, and spiritual aspects, aligning with the principles of modern holistic education.
- **Alternative Approaches:** It offers alternative perspectives on various disciplines, such as health sciences, ecology, and ethics, which are highly relevant in the current context.
- **Sustainable Development:** The sustainable practices embedded in IKS can contribute to solving global environmental issues.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the significance of integrating IKS in higher education.
2. To identify the issues and challenges associated with this integration.
3. To suggest strategies for effective incorporation of IKS in academic curricula.
4. To analyze the impact of IKS on contemporary education practices.
5. To identify Key Features of IKS Integration under NEP 2020.

4. ISSUES IN INTEGRATING IKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite the benefits, there are numerous issues associated with integrating IKS into higher education:

4.1. Lack of Standardized Curriculum

One of the significant challenges is the absence of a standardized curriculum for IKS. The diverse and fragmented nature of traditional knowledge systems makes it difficult to design a uniform syllabus that can be adopted across different universities. There is a need for an organized framework to categorize and present IKS in a structured manner.

4.2. Resistance from Academic Community

The academic community often views traditional knowledge as outdated or unscientific. This skepticism creates a barrier to integrating IKS into mainstream education. The perception that modern education and scientific methods are superior to traditional knowledge limits the acceptance of IKS within academia.

4.3. Inadequate Teacher Training

Teachers and educators are not always adequately trained to teach IKS subjects. Most contemporary teachers are familiar with modern education methodologies, and there is a lack of training

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programs to equip them with the skills needed to effectively integrate IKS in their teaching.

4.4. Lack of Research and Documentation

Many aspects of IKS are still in oral form or documented in ancient texts that are not widely accessible. The lack of systematic research and documentation poses a challenge in integrating IKS into structured educational programs. Efforts are needed to compile, translate, and interpret these traditional texts in a way that is compatible with modern academic requirements.

4.5. Curriculum Overload

Introducing IKS into an already packed curriculum can lead to curriculum overload, where students and teachers may feel overwhelmed. Balancing traditional subjects with modern disciplines without overburdening the students is a key challenge.

5. CHALLENGES IN THE INTEGRATION OF IKS

5.1. Epistemological Challenges

IKS is based on a different epistemological foundation compared to Western knowledge systems. Traditional Indian knowledge often integrates spirituality and metaphysics, which may not always align with the empirical approach dominant in modern academia. Reconciling these different worldviews is a fundamental challenge.

5.2. Language Barriers

A significant portion of IKS is available in ancient languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit. Translating these texts into modern languages while preserving their essence poses a challenge. Additionally, the lack of proficiency in these ancient languages among students and teachers further complicates the integration process.

5.3. Policy and Regulatory Issues

The inclusion of IKS in higher education requires policy support from educational authorities. However, the absence of clear policies, guidelines, and accreditation standards for IKS courses affects its implementation at the university level.

5.4. Interdisciplinary Approach

IKS is inherently interdisciplinary, blending philosophy, science, art, and ethics. Integrating such a system into a compartmentalized academic structure poses a challenge, as universities often operate within rigid disciplinary boundaries.

6. STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

To successfully integrate IKS in higher education, the following strategies can be implemented:

6.1. Developing a Standardized Curriculum Framework

A standardized curriculum framework should be developed in collaboration with experts in IKS, modern education, and policymakers. This framework should outline the core subjects, elective options, and interdisciplinary courses that can be offered across universities.

6.2. Promoting Research in IKS

Encouraging research in IKS can help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern science. Funding initiatives and research programs aimed at studying, documenting, and validating traditional practices can foster greater academic acceptance.

6.3. Teacher Training Programs

Implementing teacher training programs to familiarize educators with IKS and its pedagogical approaches is crucial. Such programs should emphasize the philosophical underpinnings, practical applications, and interdisciplinary nature of IKS.

6.4. Translating and Publishing IKS Texts

Efforts should be made to translate important IKS texts into regional and international languages, making them accessible to a broader audience. Digital platforms can also be used for disseminating these texts and creating open-access resources.

6.5. Curriculum Integration through Electives

Instead of overloading the existing curriculum, IKS subjects can be introduced as electives. This would allow students to explore traditional knowledge without compromising their core academic requirements.

7. KEY FEATURES OF IKS INTEGRATION UNDER NEP 2020

7.1 Interdisciplinary Approach: The NEP encourages an interdisciplinary learning model, similar to the ancient Gurukul system, allowing students to study subjects such as Yoga, Indian philosophy, Ayurveda, and traditional arts alongside modern science and technology.

7.2 Research and Development: The policy promotes research in IKS, encouraging institutions to set up centers dedicated to studying traditional knowledge and linking it with contemporary science.

7.3 Inclusion of Languages: Efforts are being made to offer courses in classical languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit, along with modern Indian languages, to preserve and study ancient texts.

7.4 Vocational Training: The policy emphasizes skill development and vocational education in traditional crafts, music, dance, and other arts, thereby supporting the cultural heritage and artisanal communities.

8. CONCLUSION

Integrating the Indian Knowledge System in higher education presents a unique opportunity to enrich the academic landscape with traditional wisdom while fostering holistic development.

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Although there are numerous issues and challenges, a systematic approach involving curriculum standardization, research promotion, teacher training, and policy support can facilitate the successful incorporation of IKS in higher education. Bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and modern education will not only enhance learning experiences but also contribute to sustainable development, cultural preservation, and societal well-being.

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