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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTEGRATING IKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PRIORITIZING THOUGHT DEVELOPMENT OVER CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & TRANSACTION

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ABSTRACT

Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a vast body of knowledge deeply rooted in Indian culture, encompassing disciplines such as philosophy, spirituality, science and medicine. It is evidenced by its massive collection of intellectual texts, manuscripts and its well-documented heritage of texts, thinkers and philosophical schools in a wide range of subject areas. The IKS emphasize holistic well-being by using knowledge for self-purification, liberation and addressing contemporary challenges through ancient wisdom. The National Education Policy 2020 too emphasises on integrating IKS into education at various levels. The implementation of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in higher education can be recognized as a crucial endeavour for fostering holistic development and critical thinking among students. This paper argues that the integration of IKS should focus not merely on the creation and transmission of content but on the development of a unique and diverse thought process based on Bharatiya Gyan Parampara. This idea aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's vision of creating an education system that nurtures critical thinkers and responsible citizens. By focusing on the development of thinking rather than the mere absorption of content, the implementation of IKS in higher education has the potential to enrich the intellectual landscape of students in HE. Integrating philosophical foundations, Indian cultural values, traditional & tribal knowledge and cognitive frameworks inherent in IKS, higher education can rise above the traditional content-centric approach. Drawing from ancient Indian educational practices, the paper discusses how IKS encourages inquiry-based learning, self-reflection and contextual understanding, which are essential for addressing contemporary global challenges. The study also explores the challenges in implementing IKS in higher education and provide recommendations including the need for curriculum redesigning, teacher training and policy support.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a dynamic blend of *Jnana* (knowledge), *Vijnana* (science), and *Jivandarsana* (philosophy of life), creating a holistic understanding of the world. *Jnana* refers to the traditional knowledge that is transmitted through textual, oral, and cultural traditions, documented in the diverse Indian languages (Murthy, 2024). This body of knowledge spans across spiritual, metaphysical, and philosophical realms, with sacred texts like the Vedas and Upanishads as its foundations. It is passed down through generations via oral traditions such as the *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) lineage, where wisdom is imparted directly and preserved through recitation, memorization, and performance. A notable example of this is the oral transmission of the *Rigveda*, one of the oldest texts in human history, where precise pronunciation and intonation have been maintained over millennia. *Vijnana*, on the other hand, refers to the application of knowledge in practical domains such as arts, commerce, medicine, and technology.

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It involves a systematic and scientific approach to understanding the material world. In ancient India, disciplines like Ayurveda (traditional medicine), architecture (Vastu Shastra), mathematics (as seen in the work of Aryabhata and Bhaskara), and metallurgy thrived. The town planning in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, the concept of zero in mathematics, and the use of surgical instruments in Ayurveda are examples of *Vijnana* in practice, reflecting the scientific spirit of experimentation, observation, and innovation in Indian tradition. *Jivandarsana* emerges from deep experience, observation, and rigorous analysis, forming a philosophical framework for living. It encompasses ethical, moral, and spiritual principles, such as the concepts of Dharma (righteousness), Karma (action), and Moksha (liberation). This life philosophy guides individuals toward a balanced and purposeful life, with the *Bhagavad Gita* being a prime example of a text offering practical guidance on leading a meaningful life through self-discipline, mindfulness, and devotion. Both *Jnana* and *Vijnana* are interwoven, with *Jnana* often being the source from which *Vijnana* originates. The creation of *Jnana* is an ongoing process in the IKS, constantly evolving through inquiry and introspection. Thus, the IKS reflects a dynamic and continuous flow of knowledge, with each generation building on the foundations laid by their predecessors, ensuring the preservation and renewal of the *Bharatiya Gyan*

Parampara, ensuring the transmission of wisdom and scientific inquiry across generations (Mandavkar, 2023). This synergy of knowledge, science, and philosophy forms the bedrock of Indian civilization, fostering holistic growth for individuals and society. One of the key strengths of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is its comprehensive approach, seamlessly integrating various dimensions of knowledge, such as empirical evidence, theoretical concepts, experiential understanding, and spiritual wisdom. This interconnectedness allows for a rich, multifaceted perspective that balances scientific inquiry with philosophical and moral insights (Kumar, 2024).

Objectives

1. To identify the relevance of integrating Indian Knowledge System in higher education.
2. To analyse the importance of the thought development along with content development and transaction for Higher Education Students
3. To identify the challenges in implementation of Indian Knowledge System in higher education.
4. To propose recommendations for the effective implementation of IKS in higher education

Relevance of Integrating Indian Knowledge System in Higher Education: Integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in higher education is crucial because of its significant relevance, which has been highlighted through various key aspects. Firstly, *cultural preservation and revitalization* is essential for safeguarding India's rich heritage, ensuring that traditional knowledge, practices, and values are passed on to future generations, thus preventing the erosion of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world. Moreover, *enhancing contextual relevance* addresses the issue of the current education system's overemphasis on Western paradigms, which often overlook the socio-cultural realities of Indian students. By integrating IKS, education becomes more meaningful and relatable to students' lives and communities. Additionally, *addressing the gaps in modern education* is another crucial factor, as modern systems often focus on rote learning and technical skills, neglecting holistic development. IKS provides a balanced approach, incorporating ethical, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions that contribute to the overall growth of students. Furthermore, *promoting interdisciplinary learning* is a natural outcome of IKS integration, as it blends science, philosophy, arts, and technology, breaking down academic silos and encouraging a comprehensive understanding of knowledge. The wealth of *supporting sustainable development* offered by IKS, through traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable practices, makes it a valuable tool for addressing contemporary environmental challenges. Similarly, *fostering innovation and creativity* becomes possible through the exposure to IKS, which inspires new ways of thinking and problem-solving by blending ancient wisdom with modern technology. Equally important is *promoting ethical and moral development*, as the ethical teachings embedded in IKS nurture morally responsible citizens, countering the ethical void often found in modern educational systems. Moreover, IKS helps students achieve *global competitiveness with local roots*, providing them with a unique perspective that is globally relevant while remaining connected to local traditions and values. IKS also aids in *addressing the challenges of modernity*, such as technological disruption, climate change, and social inequality, by offering alternative, time-tested perspectives and practices. Finally, *aligning with national educational goals* as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, emphasizes the importance of IKS integration to make education more inclusive, relevant, and culturally grounded, fostering a sense of pride in India's heritage while promoting knowledge systems that are uniquely Indian.

Importance of Thought Development in Higher Education Students: Promoting thought development in higher education students, grounded in Indian wisdom and moral ethics, is vital for several key reasons:

1. **Cultivation of Critical Thinking:** Indian wisdom, particularly from texts like the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, emphasizes the importance of *Vichara* (critical inquiry). Thought development rooted in these traditions encourages students to engage in deep, reflective thinking, enabling them to analyze, question, and critically evaluate information rather than accepting it at face value.
2. **Holistic Cognitive Growth:** Indian educational philosophy, as seen in the *Gurukul* system, advocates for the development of all aspects of the mind, including intellect, emotions, and intuition. Thought development based on this holistic approach ensures that students do not merely acquire knowledge but also develop the wisdom to apply it appropriately in various life situations.
3. **Ethical Decision-Making:** Indian moral ethics, drawn from texts like the *Manusmriti* and *Dharma Shastras*, stress the importance of *Dharma* (righteousness) in thought and action. Developing thought processes aligned with these ethical principles equips students to make morally sound decisions in both their personal and professional lives.
4. **Promoting Self-Awareness and Self-Realization:** A core aspect of Indian wisdom, especially in *Advaita Vedanta* and other philosophical traditions, is the pursuit of self-knowledge (*Atma Vidya*). Thought development grounded in this tradition helps students cultivate self-awareness, leading to greater emotional intelligence and the ability to navigate life with a deeper understanding of oneself and others.
5. **Fostering Resilience and Adaptability:** Indian teachings often highlight the importance of *equanimity* (*Samatva*) in the face of challenges. Thought development based on this principle helps students build resilience and adaptability, enabling them to remain balanced and composed in the face of adversity, an essential trait in the rapidly changing modern world.
6. **Encouraging a Lifelong Quest for Knowledge:** Indian wisdom traditions, such as the *Jñāna Mārga* (path of knowledge), promote the idea that the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong endeavor. Developing a mindset that values continuous learning and intellectual curiosity ensures that students remain engaged and motivated to grow throughout their lives.
7. **Integrating Compassion and Empathy in Thinking:** Moral ethics from Indian traditions, such as the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and *Karuna* (compassion), emphasize the importance of empathy in thought and action. Thought development rooted in these values nurtures compassionate and empathetic individuals who are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.
8. **Enhancing Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement:** The concept of *Lokasamgraha* (welfare of all) from the Bhagavad Gita encourages individuals to think and act for the greater good of society. Developing thought processes aligned with this principle fosters a sense of social responsibility, encouraging students to contribute positively to their communities and the world.
9. **Promoting Inner Peace and Mental Well-Being:** Indian wisdom traditions, such as Yoga and meditation practices, emphasize the importance of mental discipline and inner peace. Thought development that incorporates these practices helps students manage stress, maintain mental well-being, and achieve a sense of inner harmony, which is crucial for their overall development (Khan and sharma, 2024).
10. **Balancing Material and Spiritual Aspirations:** Indian philosophy often teaches the importance of balancing *Artha* (material prosperity) and *Moksha* (spiritual liberation). Thought development based on this balance helps students prioritize their goals in life, ensuring that they pursue material success without compromising their spiritual and ethical values.

Challenges in the implementation of IKS in Higher Education: Implementing the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in higher

education comes with several significant challenges. One of the primary issues is the *lack of awareness and understanding of IKS* among educators, administrators and students, many of whom view it as outdated or irrelevant. To address this, institutions must engage in awareness campaigns, workshops, and foundational courses that introduce the value and relevance of IKS. Another major challenge is *faculty training*, as there is a shortage of teachers proficient in IKS, necessitating continuous professional development to equip educators with the necessary skills and understanding. Additionally, *curriculum development* poses difficulties, with the need to balance traditional knowledge with contemporary academic standards, requiring interdisciplinary planning to create a seamless integration of IKS into existing disciplines. Further complicating the situation are *language and technology barriers*, as much of the traditional knowledge is recorded in ancient or regional languages, making it inaccessible to modern learners. Institutions must invest in translating these texts and leveraging digital resources to make IKS more accessible. Ensuring the *quality of education* is also a concern, as the integration of IKS must be done without diluting academic rigor, maintaining a focus on critical analysis, research, and practical applications. The *interdisciplinary approach* encouraged by IKS is another challenge, as modern education is often divided into rigid academic silos. Overcoming this requires promoting collaboration between departments and fostering a culture of cross-disciplinary learning. *Resource allocation* is yet another challenge, as many institutions face financial constraints that limit their ability to invest in faculty training, curriculum development, and research. Policymakers and institutions must prioritize funding for IKS programs to ensure their sustainability. Finally, *cultural continuity* presents a delicate balancing act, as integrating IKS into modern education must preserve cultural heritage while making it relevant to contemporary contexts. Each of these challenges must be addressed through strategic planning, policy support, and innovative teaching methods to ensure the successful implementation of IKS in higher education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for the implementation of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to foster thought development in higher education students:

Policy and Curriculum Design for IKS Integration

- Advocate for the integration of IKS into educational policies at the institutional and governmental levels, aligning with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to promote culturally grounded and contextually relevant education.
- Educational institutions should revise their curricula to incorporate Indian Knowledge Systems, ensuring students are exposed to traditional wisdom, cultural values, and indigenous knowledge alongside modern disciplines.
- Encourage the use of primary sources, such as ancient texts, scriptures and traditional practices, in the curriculum. This allows students to engage directly with the original materials and develop a deeper understanding of IKS.
- Educational Institutions must encourage interdisciplinary learning by designing programs that blend IKS with modern science, arts, and technology, encouraging students to think beyond conventional academic landscape and adopt a holistic approach to problem-solving.
- Implement a system for the regular review and adaptation of the curriculum to keep it updated with new research and evolving educational needs as it will help maintain the relevance and effectiveness of IKS integration.

Capacity Building and Faculty Development

- Organise workshops aimed at training faculty members in the principles and practices of IKS. These workshops should focus on both content knowledge and pedagogical

approaches, enabling educators to effectively create and transact IKS based content within their respective disciplines.

- Facilitate networking opportunities for faculty to collaborate with other institutions, both within India and globally, that are also working on integrating indigenous knowledge systems into their curricula.
- Encourage students and faculty to engage in research focused on IKS, fostering innovation by applying traditional knowledge to modern-day challenges in fields such as healthcare, agriculture, and technology.
- Provide professional development programs for educators to equip them with a thorough understanding of IKS, ensuring they can effectively create and transact which are embedded in the Bharatiya values.

Student Engagement and Community Involvement

- Incorporate community-based learning experiences where students can interact with practitioners of IKS in their local communities as these opportunities provides real-world context and allows students to see the practical applications of IKS.
- Encourage students to engage in research projects that explore IKS, offering them opportunities to innovate and apply traditional knowledge in modern contexts. This must be facilitated through research grants, competitions, and publications.
- Support student-led projects aimed at preserving and documenting traditional knowledge, crafts, and practices, instilling a sense of responsibility for cultural preservation.
- Establish student led knowledge exchange programs through discussion forums, seminars, and workshops where students can engage with scholars and practitioners of Indian Knowledge Systems, fostering a deep understanding and appreciation for these traditions.

CONCLUSION

Integrating traditional Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education, as envisioned by NEP 2020, represents a transformative step towards creating an educational framework that is both deeply rooted in cultural heritage and globally relevant. This integration acknowledges India's rich intellectual traditions while offering a holistic approach to fostering thought development grounded in Indian wisdom and moral ethics among students in higher education. Such an approach can significantly enhance the intellectual, ethical and emotional growth of students, equipping them to lead balanced, responsible, and meaningful lives. By bridging modern scientific methodologies with traditional wisdom, IKS promotes innovation and creativity, fostering a more inclusive and interdisciplinary academic environment. Although, there are certain challenges in the implementation of the IKS in the HEIs like lack of awareness and understanding of IKS among the teachers and untrained faculty etc. suitable measure if taken can implement the IKS in HEIs. An effective IKS embedded content creation and transaction by the teachers in the HEIs and promotion of thought development among the students lays the foundation for a more culturally relevant, ethically grounded educational system that prepares students for modern challenges while staying connected to their roots, contributing to sustainable development and societal well-being.

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