

Re-envisioning Teacher Education in the Light of Indian Knowledge Systems under NEP-2020

*Subashisa Lenka

**Prof. (Dr.) Pradipta Kumar Mishra

Abstract

Teacher education in India is undergoing a transformative shift with the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020. One of the distinctive features of the policy is the revival and integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into mainstream education. This paradigm shift calls for re-envisioning teacher education programmes to align with India's rich intellectual, cultural, and pedagogical heritage. The present paper discusses the philosophical foundations of Indian Knowledge Systems, examines the provisions of NEP-2020 related to teacher education, and explores strategies for integrating IKS into teacher preparation. The paper argues that meaningful incorporation of IKS can promote holistic development, ethical orientation, contextual relevance, and culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Indian Knowledge System, NEP-2020, Curriculum Reform

Teacher education serves as the foundation of any educational system, as teachers are the key agents of change in classrooms and society. In India, teacher preparation has largely followed Western pedagogical models, often overlooking indigenous educational philosophies and practices. The National Education Policy 2020 envisions a shift towards rootedness in Indian culture while maintaining global standards.

Re-envisioning teacher education in the light of Indian Knowledge Systems is not merely a curricular adjustment but a philosophical reorientation. It seeks to integrate traditional wisdom with contemporary pedagogical approaches to prepare teachers who are culturally grounded, ethically responsible, and professionally competent.

Understanding Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indian Knowledge Systems refer to the vast body of knowledge developed in India over centuries in diverse fields such as philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, arts,

ecology, governance, and education. These systems are rooted in holistic, experiential, and value-based approaches to learning.

Ancient Indian educational traditions, such as the Gurukul system, emphasized:

1. Holistic development (physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual)
2. Experiential and inquiry-based learning
3. Ethical and moral training
4. Close teacher–student relationship
5. Learning in harmony with nature

Philosophical foundations can be traced to classical texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, which emphasize self-realization, critical inquiry, dialogue, and character formation. These principles remain relevant for contemporary teacher education.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) under NEP 2020: Policy Framework, Capacity Building, and Institutional Implementation

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places strong emphasis on the integration of Bharatiya Jnana Parampara (Indian Knowledge

*Research Scholar, Fakir Mohan University, Vyasa Vihar, Balasore, Odisha, Email Id-subashisa15@gmail.com

**Principal, Yogoda Satsanga Palpara Mahavidyalaya, Palpara, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, Email Id-drpradiptakumarmishra@gmail.com

Systems—IKS) into higher education to strengthen India's cultural and intellectual heritage and to foster pride in both ancient and contemporary knowledge traditions. IKS encompasses diverse domains such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Sanskrit, classical arts, ancient Indian mathematics, sciences, and indigenous knowledge traditions. NEP 2020 envisions curricula and pedagogical practices rooted in Indian ethos, promoting holistic, inclusive, and multidisciplinary learning across all levels of education.

To operationalize this vision, the University Grants Commission (UGC), under the Ministry of Education, has undertaken several structured initiatives. These include the issuance of guidelines for incorporating IKS into curricula, faculty training, and research orientation. UGC has invited Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across India to conduct a 6-Day Basic Training Programme in Bharatiya Jnana Parampara (IKS) aimed at equipping faculty members and regular research scholars with conceptual clarity, pedagogical tools, and the appropriate mindset to integrate IKS into teaching and research. Scheduled between October 2024 and March 2025, the programme will be implemented across 75 institutions, targeting the training of 10,000 faculty members and 1,000 research scholars nationwide. Selected HEIs will receive a grant of ₹33 lakhs, covering expert honoraria, training logistics, accommodation, and related academic expenses, with applications submitted through a prescribed online process by 02 October 2024 (UGC, 2024a; UGC, 2024b).

Recognizing faculty development as a critical component of successful IKS integration, UGC has also issued Guidelines for Training/Orientation of Faculty on Indian Knowledge System. These guidelines emphasize systematic orientation, capacity building, and continuous professional

development of teachers. Separate frameworks have been designed for induction programmes and refresher courses, addressing the diverse needs of faculty at different career stages. IKS training has been integrated into national faculty development initiatives such as the Malviya Mission (PMMMNTT) and is recognized under the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) in accordance with UGC regulations. Training programmes are conducted through Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) and Malviya Mission centres to ensure sustained professional growth and effective mainstreaming of IKS (UGC, 2023).

Further strengthening institutional mechanisms, the Ministry of Education established the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Division under AICTE in 2020, as envisaged in NEP 2020. The IKS Division promotes interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, preservation and dissemination of traditional knowledge, curriculum development, and the bridging of traditional and contemporary knowledge systems. NEP 2020, particularly Paragraph 4.27, recognizes India's ancient knowledge traditions as sustainable and welfare-oriented, positioning them as guiding principles for national development and global knowledge leadership (Government of India, 2020).

Scholarly analyses also affirm that NEP 2020 provides a robust philosophical and institutional foundation for the revival and global dissemination of Indian Knowledge Systems, highlighting curriculum reform, teacher training, and research integration as key drivers of implementation (Mahajan, 2026). Collectively, these policy measures and capacity-building initiatives aim to rejuvenate India's educational heritage while aligning it with contemporary academic, scientific, and societal needs.

Implementation Framework:

The integration of Traditional Indian Knowledge Systems (TIKS) into higher education is gaining momentum, with institutions like Rashtram leading the way by developing innovative curricula in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020. This initiative aims to enrich the higher education curriculum with insights from traditional Indian knowledge, fostering a holistic understanding of cultural heritage and unique approaches to various domains. Key areas for integration include Ayurveda, Yoga, Literature, Arts, Languages, and Philosophies. Teaching methodologies draw from the 'gurukula' system, emphasizing immersive learning and mentorship (Vaz, 2024).

Implementing Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula requires a comprehensive approach encompassing curriculum development, faculty training, research, and resource allocation. Firstly, curriculum development involves identifying key IKS principles and concepts aligned with educational goals, designing courses and modules that integrate IKS into existing curricula and ensuring ongoing review and updates to reflect evolving knowledge. Interdisciplinary perspectives and real-world applications are incorporated to enhance student engagement and relevance. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has unveiled initiatives to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the curricula of higher education institutions nationwide, marking a significant move towards embracing traditional Indian knowledge systems. The UGC has initiated training sessions on IKS for current college and university professors, paving the way for the introduction of IKS courses in higher education institutions starting from the ongoing academic session (Patel,

Veerakumar, Smita and Trivedi, 2023). The objective of the course was to educate students about ancient Indian wisdom, which was cultivated for the betterment of humanity as a whole. The main aim was to educate individuals to think critically and be culturally aware, enabling them to gain understanding of the Indian Knowledge System and apply that knowledge to enhance various facets of life (Thapiliyal, 2023).

Secondly, faculty training and development are crucial aspects. Providing professional development opportunities for faculty enhances their understanding of IKS principles and methodologies. Training workshops, seminars, and collaborative experiences facilitate the integration of IKS into teaching practices. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty fosters innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery, while support for incorporating IKS-related research enriches student learning experiences.

Thirdly, research and resource allocation are essential. Allocating resources for research initiatives focused on exploring IKS principles across disciplines is vital. Establishing research centers or institutes dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary research in IKS and fostering partnerships with industry, government agencies and community organizations supports collaborative projects and knowledge exchange. Investment in infrastructure and technology facilitates data collection, analysis and dissemination to support IKS-related research endeavors.

Examples of potential courses and modules include Introduction to Indian Knowledge Systems, Sustainable Development and Environmental Ethics, Digital Humanities, Indigenous Science and Technology, and

Globalization and Cross-Cultural Communication. Integration of IKS with existing disciplines involves incorporating IKS perspectives into courses across fields, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, establishing programs or concentrations focused on IKS and encouraging students to pursue interdisciplinary research projects. By following this comprehensive implementation framework, higher education institutions can effectively incorporate IKS into curricula, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, innovative research, and a deeper understanding of interconnected knowledge systems among undergraduate and postgraduate students.

In this context, the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Division has already operationalized this vision by offering courses through IKS Centres across India to integrate traditional Indian knowledge with modern higher education. These courses are offered at undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, and teacher-training levels and cover areas such as Ayurveda, yoga, Indian mathematics and astronomy, Paninian grammar, Nyāya logic, Indian psychology, town planning, architecture, music, cultural studies, and language learning. Designed and delivered by host institutions, the courses support interdisciplinary learning and capacity building in alignment with NEP-2020 goals (Indian Knowledge Systems Division, n.d.).

NEP-2020 and Teacher Education Reform

The National Education Policy 2020 proposes significant reforms in teacher education, including:

1. Introduction of a four-year integrated B.Ed. programme
2. Emphasis on multidisciplinary institutions
3. Focus on competency-based teacher preparation

4. Integration of Indian values, traditions, and knowledge systems
5. Promotion of ethical and constitutional values

NEP-2020 clearly states that education must be rooted in Indian ethos and culture. Teacher education institutions are expected to incorporate courses and modules on Indian Knowledge Systems to ensure contextual and culturally responsive pedagogy.

The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), released by the Ministry of Education under the NEP-2020 mandate, provides a foundational policy framework that defines the minimum expected competencies, ethical dispositions, and professional standards required for teachers in India. The NPST delineates three core professional domains—professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement—all of which together outline the ideal teacher identity envisioned for 21st-century India (NPST, 2022). Professional knowledge encompasses a deep understanding of child development, curriculum and subject - pedagogical knowledge, and contextual awareness of diverse learner backgrounds, including socio-cultural variation and inclusion of children from marginalized communities. Professional practice focuses on instructional design, facilitation of learning, assessment literacy, and the ability to create safe, positive, and culturally responsive learning environments. Professional engagement emphasizes teachers' ethical duties, community participation, continuous professional learning, and reflective practice—positioning teachers as lifelong learners and contributors to the education ecosystem (NPST, 2022).

Importantly, the NPST places explicit emphasis on teacher identity as ethical, reflective and socially responsible, articulating that teachers are not merely transmitters of curriculum content but must serve as “role models who

embody values of respect, dignity, cooperation and democratic citizenship” (NPST, 2022, p.). Such language aligns closely with global discourse on intercultural and global competence, where teachers are expected to model empathy, openness to diversity, and collaborative engagement to prepare learners for a pluralistic society. Moreover, NPST advocates for continuous professional development (CPD) as a mandatory feature of teacher professionalism, recommending structured annual learning hours, peer mentoring, engagement in research, and digital-learning participation to ensure teachers remain globally and pedagogically current. This aligns with the NEP-2020 guideline mandating 50 hours of CPD annually, reinforcing that professional learning must shift from episodic workshops to sustained, competency-based development (NEP, 2020; NPST, 2022).

The policy also acknowledges systemic gaps in teacher preparation—unequal infrastructure, varied institutional quality, and limited faculty development—and calls for reform through multidisciplinary teacher education universities, merit-based recruitment, and teacher performance evaluation linked to standards. Thus, NPST functions not only as a professional guideline but as a roadmap for transforming India’s teaching workforce toward global readiness through standardization, accountability, and reflective professionalism (NPST, 2022).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a transformative agenda for strengthening teacher education in India, emphasizing professional excellence, multidisciplinary learning, and improved institutional standards. Key reforms include the introduction of a four-year integrated B.Ed. programme—to become the minimum qualification for teachers by 2030—intended to provide a holistic blend of subject knowledge,

pedagogical grounding, and practical school-based experience. The policy also proposes the phasing out of substandard teacher-education institutions and integrating teacher education within large multidisciplinary universities to enhance academic rigor and resource availability. Additionally, NEP outlines the development of a revised National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), which will embed contemporary research, child-centred pedagogy, inclusive education, professional values, and ethics into curriculum design. Further priorities include enhancing the use of technology in teacher preparation, strengthening continuous professional development (CPD) for in-service teachers, implementing merit-based recruitment of teacher educators, and rebuilding the status of the teaching profession by elevating standards and career pathways.

Recognizing the centrality of teachers in shaping educational quality, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places strong emphasis on Teachers’ Professional Development (TPD), proposing a flexible and future-oriented framework grounded in continuous professional growth (Subudhi and Rabha, 2025). The policy underscores lifelong learning, advocating regular opportunities for teachers to refine skills, engage in reflective practice, and adopt innovative pedagogies (Bhargava and Pathak, 2020). In alignment with this vision, NEP 2020 mandates that every teacher complete 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) annually, aimed at strengthening instructional competence, promoting adaptive teaching practices, and enhancing the capacity to serve diverse learner populations.

Despite its ambitious vision, the policy faces several implementation challenges. Many teacher education institutions lack adequate infrastructure, qualified faculty, and technological capacity, particularly in rural and

semi-urban settings. There is also resistance to systemic change, financial constraints related to institutional upgrades, and limited access to multidisciplinary learning environments. Capacity-building for existing teachers remains insufficient, with inadequate CPD opportunities and uneven state-level infrastructure. Variation across states, along with weak quality-assurance and monitoring mechanisms, further complicates uniform implementation. Without strong institutional support, funding, and policy alignment, the transformative goals of NEP 2020 risk remaining aspirational rather than operational.

Curriculum Enrichment: Teacher education curricula must broaden to include structured modules on global citizenship education, sustainable development, human rights, social justice, and comparative international education. Embedding these themes enables future teachers to understand global interconnections and to contextualize local teaching practices within wider global realities. Such curricular revision aligns with global frameworks such as UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education as well as national priorities outlined in NEP 2020.

Professional Development for Teachers and Teacher Educators: Continuous professional learning is essential, particularly in areas such as intercultural communication, ICT-integrated pedagogy, multilingual and multicultural classroom strategies, and inquiry-based learning. For teacher educators in particular, professional development must also include research mentoring, engagement with global scholarship, and participation in international learning communities, so that they may authentically model the dispositions and capacities they seek to cultivate in student teachers.

Digital Platforms and Virtual Global Learning: Expanding access to digital learning environments—such as MOOCs, webinars,

international online symposia, and virtual exchange programmes—can significantly enhance global exposure, particularly where institutional resources for travel or exchange are limited. Virtual global classrooms provide teachers and teacher educators opportunities to engage with peers across borders, develop intercultural communication skills, and integrate global perspectives into teaching practice.

Institutional Support and Structural Strengthening: Institutions must adopt policies that create supportive ecosystems for global competence development. This includes establishing institutional partnerships—both national and international—developing research networks, facilitating faculty and student exchange, and creating incentive structures that recognize and reward global engagement. Without such systemic supports, global competence risks remaining aspirational rather than transformational.

Role Modelling by Teacher Educators: Because teacher educators serve as catalysts of belief and practice formation among pre-service teachers, their own global engagement and scholarly orientation must be prioritized. Teacher educators must be positioned and empowered to function as globally aware practitioners—conducting research, participating in international discourse, and demonstrating intercultural values—so that they serve as role models for the next generation of teachers.

The Indian knowledge system encompasses profound concepts like "Jnana" (knowledge) and "Ajnana" (ignorance), which align with Vedanta and Vyavahara (business). These concepts are integral to understanding the complexities of existence, from individual to societal, human to nature, and physical to spiritual. The Chaturdasha Vidyastana, comprising 14 places of knowledge, is a testament to the vastness and depth of ancient

Indian wisdom. Among these, the Vedas stand as the oldest surviving literary works globally, embodying the experiences of Rishis (sages) and offering profound insights into human life and the cosmos. The Vedas, considered 'Aparusheya' or not created by humans, are transmitted orally across generations, underscoring the meticulous preservation efforts undertaken by our ancestors. Moreover, the Vedangas, Puranas, Mimamsa, Dharmashastras, and Darshanas provide essential frameworks for understanding and interpreting the Vedas accurately. These ancient texts delve into various aspects of life, philosophy, ethics, and spirituality, enriching human understanding and guiding conduct. The Indian philosophy, deeply rooted in value-based principles, emphasizes the significance of action in the material world and the importance of moral education for individual development. Central to this philosophy is the concept of "Karma Yoga," which emphasizes the theory of Karma and the pursuit of Purusharthas—Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation). The pursuit of these noble objectives shapes human endeavors and guides ethical conduct, ultimately leading to spiritual liberation (Laxmi and Kalluraya, 2023). The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has made significant contributions across various disciplines. IKS introduced the concept of zero, the decimal system, and approximation algorithms for the computation of Pi. Aryabhata and Brahmagupta made foundational contributions to algebra and trigonometry. Ayurveda, with texts like Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, provided extensive knowledge on medical practices, surgical procedures, and holistic health. Vastu Shastra outlined principles of design, layout, and spatial geometry, influencing traditional Indian architecture. Ancient texts explored various philosophical

schools, including Vedanta, Nyaya, and Mimamsa, focusing on ethics, logic, and metaphysics (UGC, 2023).

The NEP 2020 acknowledges the profound heritage of India's ancient and timeless knowledge and philosophy, using it as a fundamental guiding principle. To achieve the goals of NEP 2020, various initiatives have been implemented by the Ministry of Education, UGC, AICTE, and HEIs. Key actions include issuing guidelines for incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education curricula, mandating that students take at least 5% of their credits in IKS-related courses, and providing guidelines for faculty training. Additionally, artists and artisans have been integrated into HEIs, and short-term courses on Indian heritage and culture have been introduced. There are 32 IKS Centres established for research, 75 high-end interdisciplinary projects, and over 5200 internships offered. Faculty development programs have been conducted, and more than 8000 HEIs have begun integrating IKS, including digitizing 1.5 lakh books. The Dhara Conference series has reached millions, promoting the relevance of IKS, and Vision 2047 aims to establish a thriving Indian knowledge tradition (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Conclusion

Re-envisioning teacher education in the light of Indian Knowledge Systems under the National Education Policy 2020 represents a significant step towards educational self-reliance and cultural rootedness. Integrating IKS is not about returning to the past but about harmonizing timeless wisdom with contemporary educational needs. If implemented thoughtfully, this approach can produce teachers who are intellectually competent, ethically grounded, culturally aware, and globally competitive. Such teachers will play a crucial role in realizing the

transformative vision of NEP-2020 and in shaping an education system that is both Indian in spirit and global in outlook.

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