

Decolonizing Education: Integrating Indian knowledge Systems with Modern Curriculum Design

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Abstract:

Current curricular frameworks that frequently marginalise indigenous knowledge systems need to be reevaluated in light of the increasing conversation about decolonising education. As a revolutionary move towards educational decolonisation, this study investigates the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into contemporary curriculum design. The study evaluates awareness, attitudes, and difficulties related to the integration of IKS using a descriptive research approach and a structured questionnaire given to 150 academic professionals and educators. The results show a high degree of support for integration, whereas the absence of standardised resources and insufficient teacher preparation were noted as the main obstacles. The study comes to the conclusion that, with strong legislative backing, teacher capacity building, and innovative curriculum, meaningful integration of IKS may enhance learning, protect cultural heritage, and advance holistic education.

Keywords: Decolonizing Education, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), Curriculum Design, Indigenous Knowledge, Holistic Learning, Educational Reform, Teacher Training, Policy Integration, etc.

Introduction

The discourse on decolonizing education has gained renewed momentum in recent years, particularly in post-colonial societies like India, where the current educational frameworks remain deeply influenced by colonial legacies. Introduced by the British during colonial rule, the Macaulay system of education prioritized Western epistemologies, sidelining the vast and rich traditions of Indian knowledge systems (IKS). This historical displacement has led to an alienation of learners from their cultural roots and a disconnection between traditional wisdom and modern education (Kumar, 2005). Decolonizing education, in this context, refers to the process of critically evaluating and restructuring curricula to foreground

indigenous perspectives, values, and knowledge paradigms while engaging with global educational standards.

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into modern curriculum design is not only an act of cultural reclamation but also a necessary step toward developing a more holistic, inclusive, and contextually relevant education. IKS encompasses a diverse range of disciplines including Ayurveda, Yoga, classical arts, Sanskrit literature, mathematical and astronomical treatises, philosophical schools, environmental ethics, and more. These systems offer unique epistemological and pedagogical contributions that can enrich contemporary education by fostering critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, and ethical consciousness (Ramanathan, 2019).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscores the need to integrate IKS into the formal education system, recognizing its potential in fostering a sense of pride, identity, and self-reliance among learners (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, the practical translation of this vision into curriculum design and pedagogical practice remains a complex challenge. Questions arise about the standardization, contextualization, and adaptability of IKS within modern educational frameworks, which are often influenced by globalized metrics and Western-centric paradigms.

This paper explores the rationale, challenges, and strategies for decolonizing education through the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into modern curriculum design. It seeks to examine existing literature, evaluate policy-level initiatives, and propose a conceptual framework that supports the blending of traditional and contemporary knowledge streams.

Literature Review

The legacy of colonial education in India has been critically examined by scholars across disciplines. Batra (2017) argues that the colonial curriculum was designed to produce a class of clerks and administrators loyal to the British empire, effectively marginalizing indigenous education systems such as gurukuls and madrasas that were prevalent across the subcontinent. This has resulted in a continued hegemony of Eurocentric thought in Indian academia. As a corrective measure, the decolonization of education entails both epistemic justice and curricular innovation (Smith, 2012).

Indian Knowledge Systems, though marginalized, have been well-documented and preserved in various forms. Sen (2005) highlights the intellectual vibrancy of ancient India, which contributed significantly to the fields of mathematics, linguistics, medicine, and logic. For example, the Sulbasutras laid down early principles of geometry, while scholars like Aryabhata and Bhaskaracharya made pioneering contributions in astronomy and algebra. Yet, despite this wealth, the integration of such knowledge into the mainstream curriculum has been sporadic and superficial.

Recent educational reforms, particularly the NEP 2020, mark a significant shift toward acknowledging the value of IKS. The policy advocates for curriculum revisions that are rooted in Indian ethos and aligned with local contexts. As Mishra (2021) points out, this represents an ideological shift towards culturally responsive pedagogy. However, effective integration necessitates a robust understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of IKS and its pedagogical relevance. Patel and Raina (2019) argue that IKS should not be tokenistically added as standalone modules, but rather woven seamlessly into subject areas to promote interdisciplinary and applied learning.

A key concern in this endeavor is the tension between traditional knowledge and scientific rationality. Critics worry that the incorporation of IKS might lead to uncritical glorification or the dilution of scientific temper (Nanda, 2003). Nonetheless, scholars like Mukherjee (2018) counter this view by highlighting how Indian epistemology, particularly Nyaya and Vedanta schools, emphasize logic, inquiry, and empiricism, suggesting that IKS can complement modern science rather than contradict it.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the gurukul system offers valuable insights into experiential learning, mentorship, and values-based education. Varma (2020) suggests that the emphasis on holistic development, moral education, and teacher-student bonding in traditional systems can address some of the shortcomings of the current rote-based education. Similarly, integrating Sanskrit texts, classical arts, and yoga into the curriculum has shown positive impacts on student engagement, memory, and well-being (Deshpande & Shukla, 2020).

Despite the potential, several barriers exist. There is a lack of standardized frameworks for curriculum designers, insufficient teacher training, and inadequate resource materials for effective implementation. Moreover, the politicization of education poses the risk of

selective appropriation of IKS for ideological purposes rather than educational merit (Chatterjee, 2020). To mitigate these risks, Singh (2022) proposes a multi-stakeholder approach involving educators, scholars, community leaders, and policymakers to co-create curriculum models that are inclusive, pluralistic, and pedagogically sound.

The literature strongly supports the decolonization of education through the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems. However, meaningful transformation requires more than policy intent; it calls for curricular redesign, teacher capacity building, and sustained academic inquiry into indigenous epistemologies. The next section of this paper will propose a framework for such integration, grounded in both traditional insights and contemporary educational theory.

Objectives:

In order to support decolonised education, this project intends to investigate how Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) might be included into contemporary curriculum design. It aims to analyse current teaching methods, pinpoint obstacles and possibilities for implementing IKS, and provide a culturally sensitive framework that promotes all-encompassing education while safeguarding India's rich intellectual legacy.

Methodology:

To obtain a deeper understanding of how Indian Knowledge Systems are incorporated into contemporary curriculum design, the study uses a descriptive research approach. A systematic questionnaire approach is used to gather data from academic specialists, curriculum creators, and teachers. Purposive sampling is used to determine a sample size of 150 respondents in order to guarantee informed and pertinent participation.

Data Analysis:

A systematic questionnaire was used to gather information from 150 respondents in order to comprehend how educators and academic professionals perceive and are prepared to include Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into contemporary curriculum design. Descriptive statistics like frequency distribution and percentage analysis were used to examine the replies.

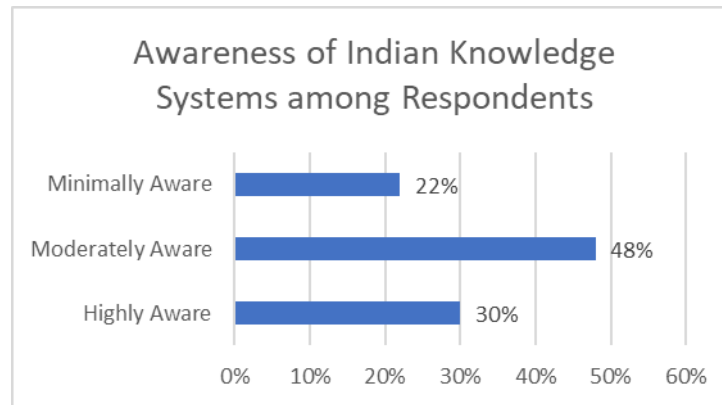


Fig. 1

Nearly 78% of respondents indicated moderate to high awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems, suggesting a strong foundational understanding that can support curriculum integration.

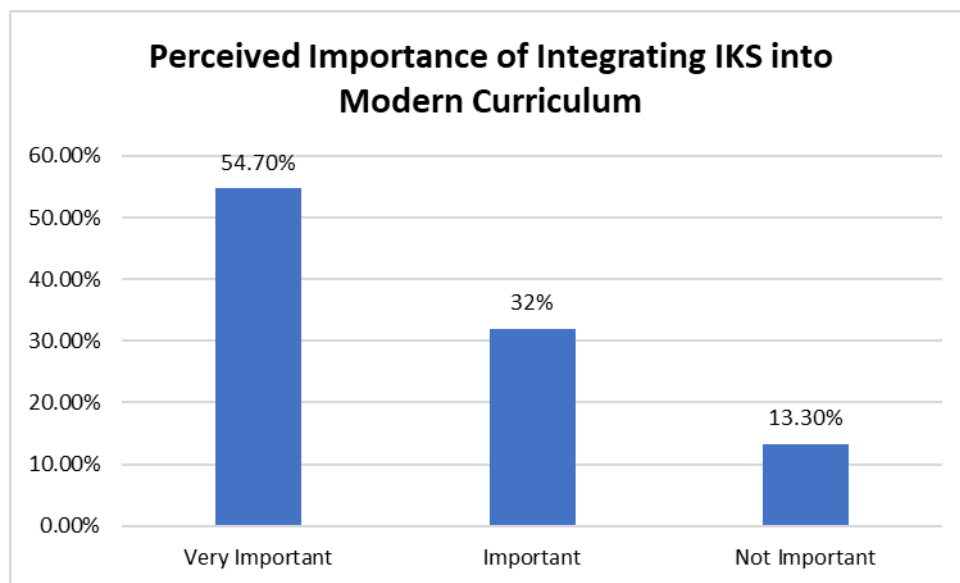


Fig. 2

A majority (86.7%) of participants believe integrating IKS into the curriculum is important or very important, indicating widespread support for educational decolonization.

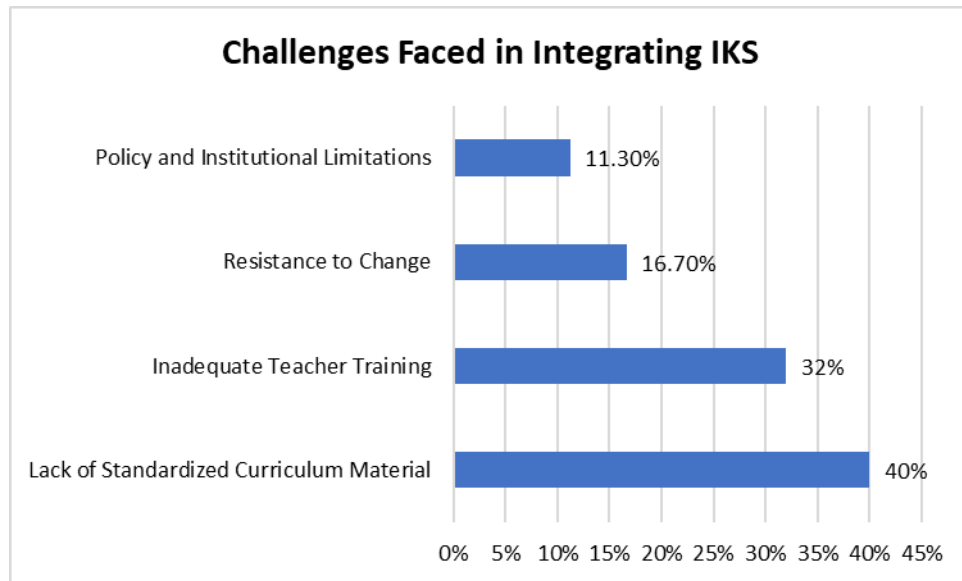


Fig. 3

The most cited challenge was the lack of standardized curriculum material, followed by inadequate teacher training, indicating key areas that need to be addressed for successful integration.

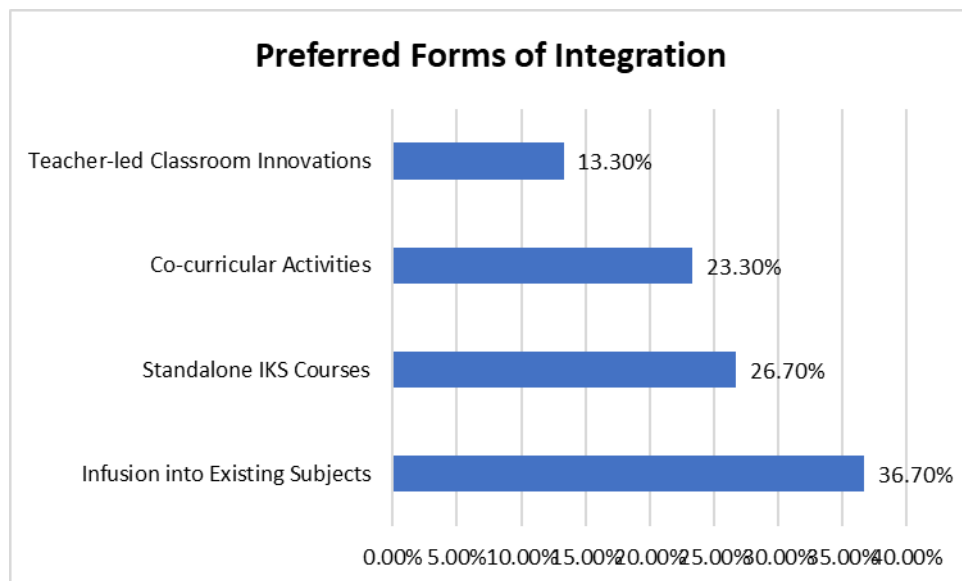


Fig. 4

The highest preference was for integrating IKS into existing subjects, reflecting the desire for a blended and seamless curriculum rather than creating isolated modules.

According to the research, educators are generally in favour of incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems into contemporary education, with the main obstacles being related to practical implementation. The results emphasise that in order to promote meaningful integration, deliberate curriculum development, teacher preparation, and policy support are required.

Conclusion

The study emphasises how educators and curriculum makers are becoming more conscious of and have a favourable opinion of the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into contemporary educational systems. According to the results, most respondents acknowledge the pedagogical, cultural, and intellectual benefits of IKS in enhancing curriculum design and creating a comprehensive learning environment. The successful implementation of such integration is hampered by real-world issues such as a lack of standardised instructional materials, inadequate teacher preparation, and systemic inertia. The study highlights the necessity of going beyond tokenistic inclusion and implementing a revolutionary strategy that, by recovering indigenous knowledge and contextual relevance, really decolonises the educational system.

Recommendations

The study suggests creating accessible, standardised learning materials with an Indian philosophical and traditional foundation to help incorporate IKS into contemporary curriculum design. Initiatives to increase capacity, including specialised training and certification programs for teachers, should be implemented to provide them the pedagogical know-how and abilities needed to effectively teach IKS. Furthermore, policymakers should encourage cooperation between educational institutions, governmental agencies, and cultural experts by supporting curriculum reform. IKS may be progressively included across different educational stages through pilot programs, multidisciplinary projects, and blended learning models, guaranteeing inclusion, authenticity, and sustainability in educational reform.

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