

Transforming Ancient Wisdom Into 21st-Century Skills: A National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 Perspective

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of India's rich ancient knowledge systems with contemporary educational goals to develop 21st-century skills among learners. India's traditional education models, such as the Gurukul system, emphasized holistic development, ethical values, experiential learning, and life skills, which remain highly relevant in today's globalized and technology-driven world. This paper explores how ancient Indian wisdom can be transformed and aligned with modern competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy as envisioned under NEP 2020. Using a qualitative and conceptual research approach, the study analyzes key principles of ancient education—value-based learning, experiential pedagogy, teacher–student relationships, and community engagement—and maps them to the skill-based framework promoted by NEP 2020. The paper highlights the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in fostering sustainable, inclusive, and ethical education while addressing contemporary challenges such as employability and global competitiveness. The findings suggest that integrating ancient wisdom with modern pedagogical practices can significantly contribute to holistic learner development and national educational transformation. The study concludes with recommendations for curriculum design, teacher training, and policy implementation to effectively bridge ancient educational philosophies with 21st-century skills.

Keywords Ancient Indian Education, NEP 2020, 21st-Century Skills, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), Holistic Education, Skill-Based Learning.

1. Introduction

India has a long and distinguished tradition of education that dates back several millennia. Ancient Indian education systems such as the Gurukul, Vedic institutions, and renowned Buddhist universities like Takshashila and Nalanda emphasized holistic development, ethical values, and experiential learning. Education during this period was not limited to the acquisition of knowledge but aimed at the integrated development of the individual—intellectual, moral, physical, and spiritual. The Gurukul system fostered close teacher–student relationships, discipline, self-reliance, and lifelong learning, while Vedic education stressed inquiry, dialogue, and the pursuit of truth. Buddhist centers of learning further contributed to global knowledge through structured curricula, debate, research, and international academic exchange.

In contrast, the demands of the 21st century have significantly transformed the nature and purpose of education. Rapid technological advancement, globalization, and changing labor market requirements have created an urgent need for skill-oriented education. Contemporary learners must develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, adaptability, and ethical decision-making to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. However, many modern education systems continue to prioritize rote learning and examination-centric approaches, often neglecting essential life skills and holistic development.

Recognizing these challenges, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as a comprehensive framework for educational transformation. NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, and learner-centered education, moving away from content-heavy curricula toward competency-based learning. The policy highlights the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), value-based education, experiential learning, and skill development across all levels of education. By promoting flexibility, critical inquiry, creativity, and ethical grounding, NEP 2020 seeks to align India's educational practices with global standards while preserving its civilizational heritage.

The integration of ancient wisdom with modern educational practices presents a meaningful pathway to address contemporary educational challenges. Many principles embedded in India's ancient education—such as experiential learning, dialogue and debate, moral education, community engagement, and respect for teachers—closely align with the core competencies required in the 21st century. By reinterpreting these timeless principles through modern

pedagogical approaches and digital tools, education can become more relevant, inclusive, and future-ready. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how ancient Indian educational wisdom can be effectively transformed into 21st-century skills within the framework of NEP 2020, contributing to holistic learner development and sustainable educational reform.

2. Concept of Ancient Indian Wisdom in Education

Ancient Indian education was deeply rooted in philosophical inquiry, ethical living, and holistic human development. Unlike modern systems that often emphasize information acquisition and assessment, ancient education aimed at nurturing wisdom (jnana), right conduct (dharma), and self-realization (atma-jnana). Knowledge was considered a means to personal transformation and social harmony rather than merely a tool for economic advancement. This section examines the philosophical foundations and pedagogical practices that shaped ancient Indian education and continue to hold relevance for contemporary educational reforms.

2.1 Philosophical Foundations

Vedic and Upanishadic Educational Ideals

The Vedic and Upanishadic traditions form the philosophical core of ancient Indian education. Education (vidya) was understood as a liberating force that dispelled ignorance and guided individuals toward truth and self-knowledge. The Vedas emphasized holistic learning encompassing spiritual wisdom, moral values, scientific understanding, and social responsibilities. The Upanishads further deepened this vision by focusing on inquiry, reflection, and the realization of the inner self (Atman). Learning was dialogic in nature, often conducted through questioning, contemplation, and debate between the teacher and the learner.

Education during this period encouraged learners to develop critical thinking through philosophical discussions and logical reasoning. Rather than passive reception of information, students were guided to discover knowledge through introspection and rational inquiry. This approach aligns closely with modern educational ideals that emphasize higher-order thinking skills and learner autonomy.

Emphasis on Values, Ethics, Self-Realization, and Character Building

A defining feature of ancient Indian education was its strong emphasis on values and ethical conduct. Education was inseparable from moral development, with concepts such as truth (satya), righteousness (dharma), self-discipline, compassion, and social responsibility forming the foundation of learning. The ultimate aim of education was not only intellectual excellence but the cultivation of character and ethical leadership.

Self-realization and inner development were considered central to human growth. Education sought to harmonize the individual's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, fostering balanced and responsible citizens. This value-oriented approach resonates with contemporary calls for social-emotional learning, ethical reasoning, and citizenship education in the 21st century.

2.2 Pedagogical Practices

Guru–Shishya Tradition

The Guru–Shishya tradition represented a personalized and relational model of education. The teacher (Guru) was not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a mentor, guide, and moral exemplar. Students (Shishyas) lived and learned under the guidance of the Guru, enabling continuous interaction, observation, and experiential learning. This close teacher–student relationship fostered trust, discipline, humility, and respect for knowledge.

The individualized nature of instruction allowed teachers to adapt teaching methods according to the learner's abilities, interests, and pace—an approach that parallels modern personalized and learner-centered pedagogies. The Guru–Shishya model also emphasized lifelong learning and mentorship, which are increasingly recognized as essential components of professional and personal development.

Experiential and Inquiry-Based Learning

Ancient Indian education placed strong emphasis on experiential learning and inquiry. Students learned through observation, practice, reflection, and participation in daily activities, rituals, debates, and community life. Knowledge

was closely linked to real-world applications, encouraging learners to develop problem-solving skills and practical wisdom. Samantha (2022) has noted that the incorporation of system science into teaching will result in the formation of a comprehensive and intricate way of thinking.

As in ancient system, Inquiry-based learning was focal point, with questioning and dialogue forming the basis of knowledge construction. Philosophical debates (shastrartha) and discussions promoted analytical thinking, logical reasoning, and effective communication—skills that are now considered critical for the 21st century.

Oral Traditions and Reflective Learning

Oral transmission of knowledge played a crucial role in ancient education. Texts were memorized, recited, and interpreted through structured oral traditions, enhancing concentration, memory, and comprehension. Reflection (manana) and deep contemplation (nididhyasana) were integral to the learning process, enabling learners to internalize knowledge rather than merely recall information.

This reflective approach encouraged metacognition and self-awareness, fostering deeper understanding and lifelong learning habits. While modern education relies heavily on written and digital media, the reflective and dialogic elements of oral traditions continue to offer valuable insights for contemporary pedagogical practices.

3. Understanding 21st-Century Skills

The concept of 21st-century skills has emerged in response to rapid technological advancement, globalization, and evolving socio-economic demands. Education systems worldwide are shifting from content-driven instruction toward competency-based learning that equips learners with transferable skills essential for success in complex and uncertain environments. These skills extend beyond academic knowledge to include cognitive, digital, social, and ethical competencies that enable individuals to adapt, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to society.

3.1 Definition and Global Frameworks of 21st-Century Skills

21st-century skills are commonly defined as a set of abilities that enable learners to think critically, solve problems creatively, communicate effectively, and collaborate productively in diverse contexts. International frameworks, such as those proposed by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), UNESCO, OECD, and the World Economic Forum, consistently emphasize the 4Cs—Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration—as the core competencies required for modern learners.

- **Critical Thinking** involves analyzing information, evaluating evidence, and making reasoned judgments to solve complex problems.
- **Creativity** refers to the ability to generate innovative ideas, adapt to new situations, and approach challenges with originality.
- **Communication** encompasses the capacity to express ideas clearly, listen actively, and engage in meaningful dialogue across cultural and disciplinary boundaries.
- **Collaboration** emphasizes teamwork, leadership, empathy, and the ability to work effectively with diverse groups.

These competencies are considered foundational for lifelong success, as they support innovation, democratic participation, and social cohesion in an interconnected world.

3.2 Digital Literacy, Adaptability, and Lifelong Learning

In the digital age, digital literacy has become an indispensable component of 21st-century skills. It includes the ability to access, evaluate, and ethically use digital information, as well as to engage with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital communication platforms. Digital literacy empowers learners to navigate information-rich environments while fostering responsible and informed technology use.

Adaptability and lifelong learning are equally critical in a rapidly changing world characterized by continuous technological disruption and evolving career pathways. Learners must be prepared to reskill, upskill, and learn independently throughout their lives. Educational systems therefore need to cultivate curiosity, resilience, and self-directed learning habits that enable individuals to respond effectively to change. NEP 2020 explicitly recognizes these attributes by promoting flexible curricula, multidisciplinary learning, and experiential education.

3.3 Importance of Ethical and Social Skills in a Global Context

While cognitive and technical skills are essential, 21st-century education also places strong emphasis on ethical, social, and emotional competencies. Global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and digital ethics require individuals who are not only skilled but also socially responsible and ethically grounded. Skills such as empathy, intercultural understanding, ethical reasoning, and civic responsibility are vital for fostering global citizenship.

In this context, education must nurture values that promote social harmony, inclusivity, and sustainability. The integration of ethical and social skills ensures that technological and economic progress is guided by human-centered values. This emphasis closely aligns with India's ancient educational philosophy, which viewed education as a means of character building and social well-being—an approach reaffirmed in NEP 2020's vision of holistic education.

4. NEP 2020: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative shift in India's educational landscape by seeking to harmonize the nation's rich intellectual heritage with contemporary global educational demands. Rather than viewing tradition and modernity as opposing forces, NEP 2020 positions ancient Indian wisdom as a foundational resource for developing future-ready learners equipped with 21st-century skills. The policy emphasizes holistic development, flexibility, and inclusivity while fostering innovation, critical thinking, and ethical consciousness.

4.1 Features of NEP 2020

Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

One of the central pillars of NEP 2020 is the promotion of holistic and multidisciplinary education. The policy moves away from rigid subject boundaries and encourages learners to explore diverse disciplines, integrating arts, sciences, humanities, and vocational studies. This approach reflects the ancient Indian educational tradition, where knowledge was not compartmentalized but viewed as interconnected and comprehensive. Multidisciplinary learning fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving—core competencies required in the 21st century.

Skill Development and Vocational Integration

NEP 2020 places strong emphasis on skill development and vocational education, aiming to prepare learners for employability and lifelong learning. The policy introduces vocational exposure from the school level, encourages experiential learning, and promotes the development of practical skills alongside academic knowledge. This focus resonates with ancient educational practices that emphasized learning through experience, craftsmanship, and real-life application of knowledge. By integrating vocational skills with academic learning, NEP 2020 seeks to reduce the gap between education and the world of work.

Promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

A distinctive feature of NEP 2020 is its explicit recognition and promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The policy advocates the inclusion of traditional knowledge from fields such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, ecology, philosophy, and ethics into mainstream curricula. By integrating IKS, NEP 2020 aims to foster cultural pride, contextual relevance, and global understanding while encouraging learners to engage critically with India's intellectual heritage.

4.2 Alignment with Ancient Educational Values

Value-Based Education and Ethics

NEP 2020 underscores the importance of value-based education, ethical reasoning, and responsible citizenship. These principles closely align with ancient Indian education, which emphasized moral values, discipline, compassion, and social responsibility as integral components of learning. The policy's focus on ethics, constitutional values, and social-emotional learning reflects the timeless educational goal of nurturing well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society.

Experiential and Competency-Based Learning

Experiential and competency-based learning form the pedagogical backbone of NEP 2020. The policy advocates learning by doing, inquiry-based instruction, and continuous assessment of competencies rather than rote memorization. This approach mirrors ancient pedagogical practices such as experiential learning, reflective inquiry, and dialogue-driven instruction. By emphasizing competencies over content accumulation, NEP 2020 facilitates deeper understanding and practical application of knowledge.

Teacher Empowerment and Learner-Centric Approaches

NEP 2020 recognizes teachers as the cornerstone of educational transformation. The policy emphasizes teacher empowerment through professional development, autonomy, and continuous learning. Simultaneously, it promotes learner-centric approaches that respect individual interests, abilities, and learning styles. This dual focus reflects the Guru–Shishya tradition, where teachers served as mentors and learners actively engaged in the construction of knowledge. By strengthening teacher capacity and prioritizing learner agency, NEP 2020 creates an educational environment that is both inclusive and adaptive to contemporary needs.

5. Mapping Ancient Wisdom to 21st-Century Skills

The principles underlying ancient Indian education demonstrate remarkable relevance to the competencies required in the 21st century. Although articulated in different historical and cultural contexts, ancient pedagogical practices emphasized holistic development, critical inquiry, ethical conduct, and experiential learning—core elements of modern skill-based education. This section systematically maps key components of ancient Indian wisdom to contemporary 21st-century skills, highlighting their continuity and applicability within the framework of NEP 2020.

5.1 Holistic Development and Social-Emotional Learning

Ancient Indian education viewed learning as a process of holistic development encompassing the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual. Education aimed to cultivate balance, self-discipline, and inner awareness. In the 21st century, this approach aligns closely with social-emotional learning (SEL), which emphasizes self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills. NEP 2020 reinforces this holistic vision by advocating for the integration of life skills, well-being, and ethical values within formal education.

5.2 Inquiry, Dialogue, and Critical Thinking

The tradition of shastrartha (scholarly debate) and dialogic learning in ancient India fostered logical reasoning, analytical thinking, and intellectual curiosity. Learners were encouraged to question, reflect, and engage in reasoned discussions with peers and teachers. These practices directly correspond to critical thinking and communication skills, which are central to global 21st-century skill frameworks. Such inquiry-based learning methods are essential for developing problem-solving abilities and informed decision-making in contemporary contexts.

5.3 Experiential Learning and Creativity

Experiential learning formed the foundation of ancient pedagogy, where students learned through observation, practice, reflection, and real-life application. This hands-on approach nurtured creativity, innovation, and adaptability. In modern education, experiential and project-based learning models promote creativity, problem-solving, and design thinking, enabling learners to apply theoretical knowledge to practical challenges. NEP 2020's emphasis on experiential learning resonates strongly with these ancient educational practices.

5.4 Guru–Shishya Tradition and Personalized Learning

The Guru–Shishya tradition exemplified a personalized approach to education, where instruction was tailored to the learner's abilities, interests, and pace. Teachers served as mentors and facilitators, guiding students toward intellectual and moral growth. This model parallels contemporary approaches to personalized and learner-centric education, including adaptive learning systems and mentorship-based pedagogy. Such approaches enhance learner engagement, motivation, and lifelong learning skills.

5.5 Value-Based Education and Ethical Citizenship

Ancient Indian education placed significant emphasis on moral values, ethical conduct, and social responsibility. Education aimed to develop character and promote harmony within society. These principles align with modern expectations of ethical reasoning, global citizenship, and civic responsibility. In an era of rapid technological advancement and globalization, the integration of ethical and social values is essential for ensuring that innovation serves the broader good of humanity.

5.6 Comparative Mapping Table

Ancient Educational Principle	Description	Corresponding 21st-Century Skill
Holistic development	Integrated growth of body, mind, and spirit	Social-emotional learning
Shastrartha (dialogue & debate)	Inquiry, reasoning, and discussion	Critical thinking & communication
Experiential learning	Learning through practice and reflection	Creativity & problem-solving
Guru–Shishya tradition	Personalized mentorship	Personalized & learner-centric learning
Value-based education	Ethics, discipline, and responsibility	Ethical reasoning & global citizenship

5.7 Synthesis and Implications

The mapping demonstrates that many competencies identified as essential for the 21st century are deeply rooted in ancient Indian educational philosophy. NEP 2020 provides a contemporary policy framework to reinterpret and integrate these timeless principles into modern curricula, pedagogy, and assessment systems. By bridging ancient wisdom with modern skills, education can become more holistic, relevant, and responsive to the needs of a rapidly changing global society.

6. Role of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Modern Education

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent a vast and interdisciplinary body of knowledge developed over centuries through observation, inquiry, and experiential practice. NEP 2020 recognizes IKS as a vital component of contemporary education, not merely as cultural heritage but as a dynamic knowledge base with significant relevance to modern scientific inquiry, sustainability, and holistic development. Integrating IKS into modern education enables learners to contextualize global knowledge while developing ethical awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

6.1 IKS in Science, Mathematics, Medicine, and Sustainability

Indian Knowledge Systems have made enduring contributions to fields such as science, mathematics, medicine, and environmental sustainability. Ancient Indian scholars developed advanced concepts in mathematics, including the decimal system, zero, algebraic methods, and geometric principles, which form the foundation of modern mathematical thinking. In astronomy and physics, Indian texts demonstrate sophisticated understanding of planetary motion, time measurement, and natural phenomena.

In medicine, traditional systems such as Ayurveda emphasize preventive healthcare, holistic well-being, and the integration of mind and body—principles increasingly recognized in modern health sciences. Similarly, ancient ecological practices rooted in harmony with nature highlight sustainable resource management, biodiversity conservation, and ethical environmental stewardship. Incorporating these perspectives into modern curricula encourages interdisciplinary learning and fosters scientific temper grounded in sustainability.

6.2 Integrating Yoga, Mindfulness, and Ethics into Curricula

Yoga, mindfulness, and ethical instruction are integral components of Indian Knowledge Systems that contribute to learners' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Yoga promotes physical health, concentration, and emotional balance, while mindfulness practices enhance self-awareness, stress management, and cognitive focus. In contemporary educational settings, these practices support social-emotional learning and mental health, which are critical for academic success and personal development.

Ethics and moral philosophy, deeply embedded in ancient Indian education, provide a strong foundation for value-based learning. Integrating ethical discussions into curricula helps students develop integrity, empathy, and responsible decision-making. NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic development aligns closely with the inclusion of yoga, mindfulness, and ethics as core educational components rather than peripheral activities.

6.3 Global Relevance of Indigenous Knowledge Traditions

In an increasingly interconnected world, indigenous knowledge traditions, including IKS, hold significant global relevance. Contemporary challenges such as climate change, public health crises, and social inequality demand solutions that are interdisciplinary, culturally grounded, and ethically informed. IKS offers alternative epistemologies that complement Western scientific approaches, enriching global knowledge systems through pluralism and diversity.

The integration of IKS into modern education promotes cross-cultural understanding, intellectual diversity, and global citizenship. By engaging with indigenous knowledge traditions, learners develop respect for cultural heritage while acquiring skills necessary to address global challenges. NEP 2020 positions IKS not as isolated or archaic knowledge, but as a living and evolving resource that contributes meaningfully to global educational and intellectual discourse.

7. Challenges in Integrating Ancient Wisdom with Modern Education

While the integration of ancient Indian wisdom and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern education holds immense potential, its practical implementation presents several challenges. These challenges arise from structural constraints, pedagogical limitations, and the need to balance traditional knowledge with contemporary technological advancements. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring that integration efforts are meaningful, inclusive, and aligned with the objectives of NEP 2020.

7.1 Curriculum Rigidity and Assessment Models

One of the primary challenges lies in the rigidity of existing curricula and assessment frameworks. Modern education systems often prioritize standardized testing, content-heavy syllabi, and examination-oriented outcomes, leaving limited scope for experiential, reflective, and value-based learning. Ancient wisdom traditions emphasize holistic development, dialogue, and inquiry—approaches that are difficult to assess through conventional examination methods.

The lack of flexible curricula hampers the meaningful incorporation of interdisciplinary themes, ethical education, and experiential learning rooted in ancient practices. Without reforms in assessment models that value competencies, creativity, and ethical reasoning, the integration of ancient wisdom risks becoming superficial rather than transformative.

7.2 Teacher Preparedness and Training Gaps

Teachers play a pivotal role in bridging ancient wisdom with modern pedagogy; however, many educators lack adequate training and exposure to Indian Knowledge Systems. Limited professional development opportunities, insufficient instructional resources, and the absence of structured teacher training programs focused on IKS pose significant barriers.

Furthermore, teachers may struggle to contextualize ancient concepts within contemporary classrooms, especially when learners are accustomed to technology-driven instruction. Strengthening teacher education programs and continuous professional development is crucial for enabling educators to interpret, adapt, and effectively deliver ancient knowledge in learner-centric and relevant ways.

7.3 Balancing Tradition with Technological Advancement

Another significant challenge is achieving a balance between preserving traditional educational values and embracing technological innovation. While digital tools, artificial intelligence, and online learning platforms have transformed education, there is a risk that overreliance on technology may marginalize reflective, experiential, and human-centered learning practices emphasized in ancient education.

Conversely, resistance to technology in the name of tradition may limit learners' exposure to essential digital and future-ready skills. The challenge, therefore, lies in creating an integrative educational model that leverages technology to enhance, rather than replace, the core values of ancient wisdom. NEP 2020 encourages this balance by advocating for technology-enabled learning that remains grounded in ethical, cultural, and humanistic principles.

7.4 Way Forward

Overcoming these challenges requires systemic reforms, including curriculum flexibility, assessment redesign, targeted teacher training, and thoughtful integration of technology. Policymakers, educators, and institutions must collaborate to ensure that ancient wisdom is not treated as a static or symbolic inclusion but as a dynamic pedagogical resource aligned with contemporary educational goals.

8. Opportunities and Future Prospects

The implementation of NEP 2020 creates significant opportunities to reimagine Indian education by meaningfully integrating ancient wisdom with 21st-century skills. By leveraging curriculum reforms, strengthening teacher capacity, utilizing digital technologies, and positioning Indian education globally, the education system can evolve into a model that is both culturally rooted and globally relevant.

8.1 Curriculum Reforms under NEP 2020

NEP 2020 provides a flexible and enabling framework for curriculum reform that supports interdisciplinary learning and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The policy encourages competency-based curricula, reduced content load, and greater learner choice, creating space for incorporating ancient philosophies, ethical education, and experiential learning.

The introduction of multidisciplinary courses, value-based education, and experiential pedagogies allows institutions to embed ancient wisdom across subjects rather than confining it to isolated courses. Such reforms can help learners develop critical thinking, creativity, and ethical reasoning while fostering cultural awareness and contextual understanding. NEP emphasizes integrating Artificial Intelligence in classrooms. Kalita B. (2026), performed an experimental study that explored the design, implementation, and evaluation of an adaptive AI-tutor to learn theatre and drama education, as the substitute to the traditional studio-based learning and non-adaptive analytics tools. The proposed system allows sustained, individual feedback in order to support the development of technical skills as well as expressive growth through the combination of multimodal performance sensing, interpretable AI models, and pedagogically based adaptation strategies. Representative performance, combined with experimental outcomes that validate the results, such as adaptive tutoring have shown to provide quantifiable benefits in the vocal clarity, pacing stability, embodied expressiveness and ensemble coordination, without compromising learner autonomy and creative freedom. Such studies validate that Artificial Intelligence can play an effective role in all disciplines.

8.2 Teacher Education and Capacity Building

Teacher education and professional development present a critical opportunity for advancing the integration of ancient wisdom in modern classrooms. NEP 2020 emphasizes continuous professional development, teacher autonomy, and the use of innovative pedagogical approaches. Specialized training programs on Indian Knowledge Systems, blended with modern instructional strategies, can empower teachers to deliver culturally relevant and learner-centric education.

Collaborations between universities, research institutions, and traditional knowledge centers can further enhance teacher preparedness. By equipping educators with both content knowledge and pedagogical skills, the education system can ensure effective implementation of integrated learning models.

8.3 Use of Digital Tools to Preserve and Disseminate Ancient Knowledge

Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to preserve, document, and disseminate ancient knowledge in accessible and engaging formats. Digitization of manuscripts, online repositories, virtual simulations, and interactive learning platforms can make Indian Knowledge Systems available to diverse learners across geographical and socio-economic boundaries.

The use of artificial intelligence, data analytics, and immersive technologies can further enhance personalized learning and experiential engagement with ancient texts and practices. When applied thoughtfully, digital tools can bridge the gap between tradition and modernity while ensuring inclusivity and scalability.

8.4 Global Positioning of Indian Education

Integrating ancient wisdom with modern educational practices positions India as a global leader in holistic and value-based education. Indian Knowledge Systems offer alternative perspectives on sustainability, ethics, wellness, and interdisciplinary learning—areas of growing global concern. By sharing these insights through academic collaborations, international programs, and research initiatives, Indian education can contribute meaningfully to global knowledge ecosystems.

NEP 2020's vision of internationalization, combined with a strong foundation in indigenous knowledge, enables India to project its educational philosophy globally while engaging in cross-cultural dialogue. This global positioning strengthens India's role in shaping future educational paradigms that are inclusive, ethical, and sustainable.

9. Implications for Policy and Practice

The integration of ancient Indian wisdom with modern educational practices has far-reaching implications for educational policy, institutional governance, and classroom practice. NEP 2020 provides a strong policy foundation; however, its successful implementation depends on systemic alignment across curriculum design, teacher development, and institutional frameworks.

9.1 Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

Curriculum design must move beyond content-heavy syllabi toward competency-based, multidisciplinary frameworks that embed ancient wisdom organically across subjects. Rather than treating Indian Knowledge Systems

(IKS) as standalone or optional modules, curricula should integrate ethical reasoning, experiential learning, sustainability, and holistic development within mainstream disciplines.

Pedagogically, inquiry-based learning, dialogue, reflective practices, and experiential projects—hallmarks of ancient education—should be emphasized. Assessment systems need to be reoriented to evaluate skills, values, and competencies alongside academic achievement, ensuring alignment with the holistic vision of NEP 2020.

9.2 Teacher Professional Development

Teachers are central to translating policy into practice. Continuous professional development programs must equip teachers with:

- Conceptual understanding of Indian Knowledge Systems,
- Skills to integrate ancient wisdom with modern pedagogy,
- Capacity to use technology meaningfully without undermining human-centered learning.

Teacher education institutions should incorporate IKS-based pedagogical training and encourage reflective teaching practices. Mentorship models inspired by the Guru–Shishya tradition can be reinterpreted for modern contexts to promote learner-centric education and professional growth.

9.3 Institutional and Governance Reforms

Institutional reforms are essential for enabling innovation and flexibility. Educational institutions require autonomy to design interdisciplinary programs, experiment with pedagogy, and collaborate with knowledge centers, research institutions, and community stakeholders.

At the governance level, sustained policy support, adequate funding, and robust monitoring mechanisms are necessary to ensure that integration efforts are not symbolic but impactful. Aligning institutional vision with NEP 2020's holistic and inclusive goals will be critical for long-term success.

Conclusion

This study highlights the enduring relevance of ancient Indian educational wisdom in addressing the demands of 21st-century education. Principles such as holistic development, experiential learning, ethical grounding, and personalized mentorship—central to ancient education—align closely with contemporary global frameworks emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

The National Education Policy 2020 emerges as a transformative framework that bridges tradition and modernity by recognizing Indian Knowledge Systems as dynamic resources rather than relics of the past. By integrating ancient wisdom with modern skills and technologies, NEP 2020 envisions an education system that is inclusive, future-ready, and culturally grounded.

However, realizing this vision requires sustained policy commitment, curriculum flexibility, teacher empowerment, and institutional innovation. With coherent implementation and long-term investment, India has the opportunity to redefine global education by demonstrating how tradition and innovation can coexist to create meaningful, holistic learning experiences for future generations.

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