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Philosophical & Policy Foundations of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Teacher Education

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***Abstract*-- As interest in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) increases in educational discourse, there is growing attention on transforming teacher training. Contemporary teacher education still predominantly supports traditional teaching methods originating from Western knowledge traditions. While these methods have shaped formal education systems, they often miss out on the rich cultural diversity and unique ways of knowing that exist within India.**

This paper explores the philosophical foundations and policy imperatives behind integrating IKS into modern teacher education. Drawing upon classical Indian epistemologies and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, it highlights the historical evolution of teacher training in India and examines how decolonizing teacher education promotes epistemic justice by respecting diverse, indigenous ways of knowing.

***Keywords*-- Indian Knowledge Systems, Teacher Education, Epistemic Justice, NEP 2020, Educational Transformation**

I. Introduction

Teacher education plays a vital role in shaping any nation's educational success, student character, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Despite various policy changes over time, many teacher training programs in India rely primarily on Western educational ideas, failing to incorporate India's deep intellectual traditions and cultural values.

Indian civilization possesses one of the oldest, most varied knowledge systems in the world, spanning philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, language studies, governance, and ethics. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stresses the need to incorporate these systems across all levels of education, including teacher preparation. Integrating IKS goes beyond adding historical facts to textbooks; it requires a fundamental shift in how we view knowledge, teaching, learning, and the ultimate goals of education.

II. Understanding Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indian Knowledge Systems encompass a broad network of intellectual traditions, philosophical thoughts, and scientific findings developed over thousands of years.

What makes them unique is their focus on the complete person—viewing knowledge not merely as an accumulation of facts, but as a process that connects individuals to society and fosters personal, mental, emotional, and moral growth.

Key Domains :-

Philosophy (*Darshanas), Ayurveda, Yoga, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, agriculture, linguistics, governance, performing arts, literature, and ethics.

Dynamic Nature: Far from being static, IKS historically evolved through careful observation, debate, logic, and interdisciplinary learning across ancient centers of learning such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Vallabhi, and Vikramashila.

Philosophical Foundations: Core concepts include *Satya* (truth), *Dharma* (righteous duty), *Jnana* (knowledge), *Viveka* (discernment), and *Moksha* (freedom). Major schools of thought (Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta) view knowledge as inherently linked to moral purpose, self-reflection, and social responsibility.

Guru-Shishya Tradition:- Highlights education as a relationship where teachers act as mentors and role models who guide character building, learning by doing, and deep reflection.

III. Evolution Of Teacher Education In India

Vedic Era:- Learning occurred via the *Guru-Shishya Parampara*, focusing on deep thinking, ethics, discipline, and holistic character development.

Medieval Era :- Local educational institutions preserved key traditions, though access remained varied across society.

Colonial Era:- Standardized testing and rigid governance were introduced. Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854) prioritized English and Western models, sidelining traditional Indian learning methods.

Post-Independence Era:- Commissions like the University Education Commission (1948–49), Kothari Commission (1964–66), and bodies like the NCTE established standardized frameworks.

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IV. Epistemic Justice And NEP 2020 Alignment

Epistemic Justice & Decolonization: Historically, colonial frameworks marginalized indigenous knowledge. Decolonizing teacher education does not mean discarding Western theories or scientific methods, but rather creating a balanced dialogue between global and local knowledge systems. This ensures fairness and values the lived experiences and local expertise of diverse student communities.

NEP 2020 Mandate: NEP 2020 explicitly advocates incorporating Indian knowledge, local history, multilingualism, and multidisciplinary approaches into teacher training to prepare culturally grounded yet globally competent educators.

V. Need For Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems Into Contemporary Teacher Education

The twenty-first century brings many difficult challenges in education, like environmental problems, tricky ethical choices, unfair social conditions, feeling disconnected from culture, rapid changes in technology, and worries about mental health. To deal with these different issues, teachers need more than just knowledge of their subjects. They should also have an understanding of different cultures, a sense of ethics, the ability to think critically, and a broad view of the world.

Indian Knowledge Systems offer a complete and holistic way to handle these challenges. They highlight the importance of living in harmony with nature, working together in communities, following values in life, learning through experience, reflecting on one's actions, and continuing to learn throughout life. Including these ideas in teacher training can make teaching methods and learning goals more meaningful, culturally resonant, and effective.

VI. Epistemic Justice And Decolonising Teacher Education

Epistemic justice is about being fair in acknowledging, respecting, and valuing different kinds of knowledge. In the past, education systems set up by colonial powers favored some types of knowledge while pushing aside indigenous ways of thinking. Because of this, many local knowledge systems were seen as less important, even though they had a long history and were exceptionally useful in everyday life.

Today, teacher training is starting to focus more on making education more inclusive by questioning the idea that one type of knowledge is better than others.

Including Indian Knowledge Systems helps with this by showing that good knowledge can come from many different cultures, not just one main way of thinking. Decolonizing teacher education doesn't mean throwing out Western theories or scientific methods. Instead, it's about creating a balanced system where different knowledge systems can talk to each other in a meaningful way. This helps students learn by comparing ideas, understanding contexts, and exploring different subjects together.

Teacher educators are important in making sure that epistemic justice is practiced. They can help students learn about local history, traditional ecological practices, art, storytelling, community knowledge, and regional languages, along with modern subjects. Including Indian Knowledge Systems also helps make education more inclusive by showing respect for students' backgrounds and experiences. Students from different communities often have useful knowledge about farming, protecting the environment, crafts, health, and local leadership. Recognizing these experiences makes learning richer and more fair.

Epistemic justice also helps with research and innovation. When different knowledge systems are brought together, they can lead to new questions, teamwork across fields, and ways of doing research that are respectful of different cultures. This means schools and teacher training programs can become places where many ways of thinking come together and create new ideas in education.

VII. Indian Knowledge Systems And The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 gives a lot of attention to Indian Knowledge Systems as part of a bigger plan to change education. The policy wants an education system that helps students become creative, ethical, multilingual, culturally aware, and globally capable people.

There are several ways the policy supports adding Indian Knowledge Systems into teacher training:

- *Curricular Realignment:* Encourages creating curricula that show India's rich cultural history while making sure they meet high academic standards.
- *Broad Domain Coverage:* Suggests including traditional knowledge, local history, indigenous science, Indian languages, arts, philosophy, and environmental practices in all education programs.
- *Multidisciplinary Training:* Allows teacher training colleges to include philosophy, psychology, sociology, environmental studies, literature, performing arts, and traditional knowledge in how teachers are trained.

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- *Hands-On & Experiential Focus:* Supports project-based learning, internships, field experiences, working with communities, vocational training, and problem-solving activities—many of which align with traditional Indian learning modes.
- *Multilingual Education:* Promotes teaching in multiple languages, viewing language not just as communication but as a vehicle for passing down cultural knowledge and intellectual traditions.

The policy suggests structural changes in teacher education, including integrated teacher training programs, ongoing professional development, assessments based on skills, and research-based learning. These changes offer strong opportunities to include Indian Knowledge Systems in course design, pedagogy, and educational research. However, making this vision work requires institutional commitment, thorough teacher training, tailored resource development, and collaborative research.

VIII. Transformative Pedagogical Practices Inspired By Indian Knowledge Systems

One of the biggest strengths of Indian Knowledge Systems is how rich and deep their teaching methods are. Traditional approaches focus on creating real and meaningful educational experiences that simultaneously build knowledge, abilities, values, creativity, and a better understanding of oneself.

- *Experiential Learning*

Ancient Indian education taught students to learn by watching, taking part, thinking about what they learned, doing hands-on work, and interacting with others in the community. Today, teacher training can embed these ideas by placing students in real-world projects, community outreach, professional apprenticeships, environmental efforts, and practical classroom learning.

- *Dialogic Learning*

Dialogue has always been fundamental in Indian philosophy. Thoughtful conversation, questioning, and debate were believed to deepen understanding and critical thinking. Today's educators can adopt this approach to cultivate classrooms driven by inquiry, collaboration, and equitable, inclusive discussion.

- *Storytelling as Pedagogy*

Indian literature boasts a rich tradition of storytelling that imparts lessons on ethics, leadership, emotional intelligence, environmental stewardship, and social harmony.

Narrative pedagogy remains a powerful tool across all age groups to foster deep reflection, empathy, and contextual comprehension.

- *Reflective Practice*

Self-reflection was historically viewed as the gateway to wisdom in Indian education. Tools such as reflective journals, teaching portfolios, mindfulness or meditation-based introspection, and peer dialogues empower student-teachers to continuously evaluate and refine their pedagogy over time.

- *Community-Based Learning*

Traditional education maintained strong ties between learning and community life. Integrating community engagement into teacher preparation exposes future educators to local ways of knowing, real-life challenges, cultural heritage, and regional educational needs—fostering social responsibility, active citizenship, and democratic values.

Together, these teaching methods demonstrate that Indian Knowledge Systems offer practical, modern educational frameworks that harmonize seamlessly with contemporary learner-centered research.

IX. Conclusion

The paper also identifies key constraints, including limited institutional readiness, inadequate faculty preparation, scarcity of appropriate teaching–learning materials, and persistent misconceptions about indigenous knowledge. In response, it proposes a comprehensive framework for IKS integration through curriculum revision, experiential and interdisciplinary learning, sustained community engagement, digital documentation and preservation, and continuous professional support for teachers. It stresses that meaningful integration is not a return to the past, but the development of a forward-looking education system that aligns scientific inquiry with ethics, sustainability, and cultural values. The paper concludes that embedding IKS in teacher education can strengthen holistic learning, promote equitable access and participation, and support long-term national development.

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