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IKS and Teacher Education:
Reflective Practice and Rooted Pedagogies

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the evolution of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in teacher education in India, with a focus on their implications for epistemic justice, ethical pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching. Through a qualitative study of policy documents, curriculum materials, and research studies, the paper explores the comprehension and use of IKS in teacher education programs such as B.Ed., M.Ed., and the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). The findings indicate that although recent policy initiatives, particularly NEP 2020, firmly support the inclusion of IKS, its adoption institution-wide is fragmented and superficial. All these challenges of limited faculty readiness, lack of organized curricular scaffolding, no contextual models for assessment, and institutional lethargy continue to exist. However, when adopted with intent and depth, IKS enhances teacher education by supporting holistic, value-driven, and community-based learning. The research concludes by calling for curricular reform, faculty development, pedagogical innovation, and institutional restructuring to empower substantive IKS integration and secure the full realization of its transformative potential within India's teacher education system.

I. INTRODUCTION

The current teacher education discourse in India is being revolutionised on an epistemic and pedagogic level by the reassertion of cultural embeddedness and knowledge pluralism. Centring this change, there is an increasing need to incorporate Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the planning and implementation of teacher education programmes. IKS constitutes a rich and cosmopolitan corpus of indigenous intellectual traditions forged over centuries in the Indian subcontinent, drawing upon but not limited to the realms of philosophy, pedagogy, logic, linguistics, ethics, cosmology, environmental science, and medicine. These systems emerged as provisions of civilizational knowledge and as systems of holistic and transformational learning. Traditionally passed on in gurukulas, community institutions, and classical texts, IKS emphasizes self-reflection (svādhyāya), moral action (dharma), and ecological harmony

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(prithvī-sambandha), all of which are critical to forming reflective and socially aware teachers.

Yet, the postcolonial and colonial educational path of India excluded these epistemes in favour of technocratic, Eurocentric models of teacher education that valued standardization more than contextual adaptation. Consequently, contemporary teacher education in India has mostly been concerned with procedural efficiency and subject matter delivery, instead of fostering ethical sensitivities, cultural identity, or place-specific pedagogical imagination. This has resulted in a crisis of meaningful purpose in teacher education, where teachers are trained more as policy implementers than as thinkers, facilitators, or custodians of local knowledge and community wisdom. Here, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a departure from the trend. It unambiguously promotes incorporating IKS into the overall education framework, with a demand for pedagogies that are locally situated, value-based, and multidisciplinary. The launch of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) serves as an expression of this vision by rethinking teacher education as an ethical and integrated undertaking and not an isolated technical training.

A. Rationale

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into teacher education is critical to restore epistemic balance, enhance pedagogical appropriateness, and promote India's civilizational heritage. Based on holistic and moral learning, IKS provides context-specific paradigms that reflect the multicultural demands of Indian classrooms. Its integration enables teachers to shift from content transmission to reflective, values-based pedagogy rooted in local wisdom.

B. Review of Literature

The Indian literature on teacher education has been constantly shifting, keeping pace with larger philosophical and cultural imperatives emphasizing the diversity of knowledge, moral sensibility, and epistemic justice. At the center of this shift is the rediscovery of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) as essential to the re-imagination of teacher education. These systems, grounded in centuries of intellectual, religious, and environmental traditions, provide an integrated method of learning that contrasts with fractured, instrumental pedagogies prevalent in postcolonial models.

In one of the first and most influential international assessments, Darling-Hammond emphasized that teacher education must transcend technical instructions. She contended that genuinely effective teacher preparation cultivates not only instructional skill but also moral reasoning, reflective practice, and social responsibility. While working within a Western framework, her appeal for an integrated emphasis echoes profoundly with the IKS focus on

ethical self-cultivation and dialogical learning.

In an Indian context, Kanojiya and Sankpal offer a detailed explanation of how traditional indigenous pedagogies can transform teacher education. Their critical analysis shows how indigenous ideas like svādhyāya (self-reflection), dharma (moral conduct), and sahavāsa (co-learning through mutual conversation) can be institutionally integrated into teacher preparation programmes. They assert that IKS is not an idyllic look back but a living tradition that can tackle modern-day educational problems.

Bhattacharjee and Warsi discuss the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) as an intervention informed by the National Education Policy. They critique how ITEP seeks to close the gap among general education, pedagogy, and values-based learning through exposure to local contexts, experiential learning, and interdisciplinarity modules. The authors observe that this design is effective in the IKS philosophy but also identify institutional barriers like faculty readiness, dichotomized curricula, and resource constraints. Several studies have contributed to this literature by investigating the philosophical foundation of IKS in teacher development. These studies reinforce that IKS prepares teachers not only as subject experts but as transformative change-makers—persons who can exercise moral judgment, ecological awareness, and community citizenship. The thread running through these contributions is to reclaim the guru–śiṣya dyad in which learning is rooted in trust, dialogue, and shared inquiry.

On the policy front, the government publications such as the National Education Policy 2020, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009, and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 put IKS integration center-stage in support of comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, and culture-relevant pedagogy. Together, these policy documents announce a paradigm shift towards epistemological pluralism in Indian education. Notably, they promote the integration of classic works, local culture, and ethical education as core components of teacher education programs.

The policy-to-practice shift is uneven, and the majority of the institutions have yet to deliver curricular coherence or support faculty for IKS modules. Further, the lack of a standardised framework of assessment complicates the assessment of learning outcomes attached to IKS pedagogy.

Overall, the literature demonstrates robust normative and conceptual support for embedding Indian Knowledge Systems in teacher education. It confirms that IKS can revitalize the moral, ecological, and intellectual underpinnings of teaching in India. However, the path towards systemic integration is bounded by institutional resistance, curriculum fragmentation, and

professional development needs among teacher educators. These observations highlight the imperative for more in-depth research, capacity development, and policy harmonisation to realise the revolutionary vision that IKS holds for teacher education.

C. Research Gap

Existing literature confirms the philosophical and policy relevance of incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in teacher education, but there are critical gaps. More studies remain theory-based, with limited empirical data regarding the implementation of IKS among teacher education programmes. Critical areas like faculty readiness, curriculum alignment, evaluation strategies, and institutional readiness are underresearched. Notably, little evaluative research exists that assesses the effectiveness and scalability of programs such as ITEP, which means that the practical implications of integration remain poorly understood.

D. Research Questions

1. How have Indian Knowledge Systems been incorporated in the form and content of teacher education courses like B.Ed., M.Ed., and ITEP?

2. What are the pedagogical and institutional challenges encountered in mainstreaming IKS in teacher education?

3. To what degree are teacher educators and institutions ready to provide IKS-informed pedagogical content and values in professional training courses?

E. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative and conceptual research style, using document analysis and thematic interpretation. The aim is to investigate the changing role of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in teacher education in India, with emphasis on policy vision, curricular integration, and institutional readiness.

1. Nature of the Study

The research is conceptual and descriptive and is intended to examine philosophical and curricular changes rather than to gather empirical data. It attempts to interpret how IKS is constructed in the teacher education discursive space in India and determine the challenges and potentialities of its operationalization.

2. Data Sources

The research relies on a comprehensive review of:

- Policy documents and curriculum frameworks pertinent to Indian education and teacher

training,

- Institutional reports and guidelines on the integration of IKS,

- Peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly literature examining IKS and teacher education conceptual, pedagogical, and policy considerations.

All the materials were chosen for their applicability to the subject themes of teacher preparation, knowledge systems, and educational reform within the Indian context.

3. Analysis Method

The materials were interpreted using thematic content analysis. The analysis was geared towards major dimensions such as:

- Philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of IKS,

- Pedagogic and curricular models in teacher education courses,

- Institutional preparedness and challenges to implementation,

- New trends in the incorporation of IKS into teacher education.

The approach facilitated systematic as well as context-oriented comprehension of the manner in which IKS is being conceptualized and utilized in modern teacher education programmes.

4. Delimitations

- The study focus is restricted to the Indian scenario and is limited to the timeframe of 1968-2023.

- Although pre-service teacher education is the main concentration, the research also borrows pertinent references to in-service teacher development and faculty training within institutions, where they refer to issues of implementation and academic readiness.

- •The research is based entirely on textual and documentary analysis; there was no primary data gathering involved in the study.

II. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in teacher education in India is not so much a curricular reform but an epistemological shift in the direction of redefining the goals, content, and methods of professional teacher education. IKS, as an aggregate of indigenous knowledge traditions, is based on holistic, dialogical, and experiential patterns of learning that differ from the segmented and technocratic bent of mainstream teacher education. The philosophical underpinnings of IKS highlight interconnectedness of self, society, and environment,

prioritizing ethical thinking (dharma), self-reflection (svādhyāya), and environmental empathy (prithvī-sambandha) as central educational values. These are not ideals to be pursued but utilizable templates for teachers' identity development and pedagogical practice. Indian teachers traditionally have not just acted as subject specialists but as wisdom facilitators, moral exemplars, and community well-being promoters. In this regard, the integration of IKS into teacher education promises to yield teachers who are pedagogically creative, socially conscious, and morally ethical. This potential has been increasingly acknowledged in policy discourses and academic work over recent years. Policy contexts varied in their expression, but a unifying focus lies in the reconstruction of the teacher as a culturally situated facilitator of knowledge rather than an inert transmitter of decontextualized facts. Literature supports this vision through highlighting IKS's epistemic foundations—foundations that have the power to turn teaching into a reflective, ethical, and transformative practice. To realise this vision, however, curricular integration must transcend symbolic references or isolated modules. An in-depth review of national curricula indicates progress and lacunae alike in this direction.

In teaching training courses like B.Ed., M.Ed., and especially in the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), there is a clear effort to integrate IKS into formal curriculum frameworks. The ITEP model is unique because of its self-conscious effort to synthesize general education, professional studies, and experiential learning in a way that seeks to express the holistic philosophy of IKS. It suggests a model of teacher education in which value education, local contexts, and local knowledge traditions are not additions on the margins but integral pedagogical elements. In this program, future teachers are exposed to the concept of education as a tool for inner cultivation and social accountability. However, despite the innovative structure of ITEP and other such syllabi, their execution across teacher education institutions is patchy. B.Ed. and M.Ed. curricula, in most instances, include IKS in the title, but not in organisation or content. Where they are included, courses related to IKS tend to lack thematic organisation and are confined to brief introductions without sufficient depth or progression between semesters. The pedagogical texts employed—textbooks and resource manuals—often do not concern themselves with the primary sources or living traditions, consequently limiting IKS to either ritual or folklore, devoid of intellectual depth. In addition, the integrative ambition of such programmes is usually undermined by disciplinary silos that remain within institutions of teacher education. For example, ethical education can be separated from pedagogical theory, and indigenous knowledge systems can be used as community extension and not as epistemic systems per se. This compartmentalization precludes the potential for genuinely integrative learning.

A more fundamental challenge is at the operational level of this integration. Introducing IKS is fraught with monumental institutional and pedagogical challenges. Teacher education curricula are already full to the brim with content demands, and imposing IKS without top-down restructuring threatens tokenistic or superficial inclusion. Most faculty members are not yet ready to teach IKS-informed courses because of a lack of content knowledge and pedagogical inclination. The dominant model of teacher preparation, typically based on positivist and standardized pedagogy, is ill-suited for the dialogical and reflective approaches required by IKS. Not only is such a mismatch symptomatic of the diminished intensity of learning engagement, but it also inhibits teachers' willingness to try out profane forms of education. Besides, the unavailability of high-quality teaching-learning materials, multilingual material, and context-based case studies hinders the formulation of efficient IKS-based modules. Even when there is interest, institutional culture, fashioned by decades of bureaucratic stagnation and pressures of accreditation, tends to resist extreme curricular innovation. The issue is further complicated by the lack of clearly articulated evaluation frameworks for measuring IKS-grounded teaching. In a system based on measurable indicators and examination grades, elusive qualities such as ethical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and ecological consciousness are difficult to measure. Without serious metrics, the addition of IKS can be trivialized as utopian or intangible, widening its margins from mainstream assessment systems even further.

Institutional preparedness is indispensable for genuine change. Teacher education courses and training modules are there, but they remain immature and dispersed. Most teacher education institutions do not have the structural and intellectual capital to impart IKS content consistently and comprehensively. This involves not just faculty expertise but also library collections, partnerships with indigenous knowledge holders, and interdisciplinary exchange. Administrative reluctance or lack of awareness may inhibit adoption in some instances. Institutional transformation must transcend compliance for integration to succeed; it must nurture a scholarly culture that sees indigenous knowledge as an equal, if not foundational, component of the academic discourse. This entails creating centres of excellence in IKS, building peer-reviewed depositories of teaching materials, and facilitating collaborative research that bridges traditional knowledge and modern educational theory. It further entails the redefinition of the teacher educator's role—not as an objective expert, but as a facilitator of lived traditions and local knowledge. Furthermore, moving from vision to practice requires accompanying long-term policy alignment, funding, and academic mentorship. Hiring faculty, scholarly publishing, and academic conferences should acknowledge IKS as a valid field of study and pedagogy, thus achieving its institutional legitimacy. Notably, the inclusive and

ethical potential of IKS should be maintained by accepting its pluralism. Any effort to incorporate IKS should avoid homogenizing diverse traditions into a single cultural story. Rather, it will have to open pedagogical spaces for tribal, regional, and linguistic knowledge systems that constitute the fabric of India's intellectual past. Overall, the analysis brings to the fore that the assimilation of Indian Knowledge Systems within teacher education is a much-needed and multi-faceted endeavour. It will call for a shift in philosophy, curriculum innovation, institutional readiness, and scholarly integrity. The vision set out in policy literature is powerful, but its translation into reality hinges on the way institutions, teachers, and communities construe and act on that vision in practice. Although overload, fragmentation, and unfamiliarity are genuine challenges, they are not impossible challenges. With a dedicated policy context, a cooperative academic culture, and a clear moral direction, Indian teacher education can be rejuvenated to depict its civilisational heritage, coming up with teachers who are not only professionally skilled but also culturally grounded and ethically enlightened.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in teacher education is more than a curricular addition but an epistemological and civilizational repositioning that is imperative. As the above analysis shows, IKS are not something from the past but living, dynamic traditions that provide contextually specific, ethically informed, and pedagogically useful alternatives to dominant educational paradigms. Drawing on integrative principles like svādhyāya (self-reflection), dharma (moral obligation), and prithvī-sambandha (ecological balance), these frameworks offer basic lessons in preparing teachers—lessons that resonate with India's diverse cultural tradition and respond to the ethical, cognitive, and environmental challenges of modern education.

While there is unequivocal policy support in papers like NEP 2020 and curriculum blueprints like ITEP, the real adoption of IKS in teacher education is patchy and sometimes cursory. Even as the conceptual foundation grows more solid, challenges of operation across institutions continue to include everything from a lack of curricular depth to unpreparedness among faculty, infrastructural shortcomings, and lack of integrated models for evaluation. Denying IKS a serious epistemological partner in the production of knowledge threatens its reduction to tokenistic inclusion and dismissal of its transformative potential.

For India's teacher education system to genuinely reflect its constitutional and cultural principles, a strategic and long-term strategy is necessary—one that seeks to remove structural bottlenecks while maintaining the diversity of local traditions. With this aim, the following suggestions are made:

1. Curricular Coherence and Depth: Teacher education programs need to go beyond survey or elective courses on IKS and integrate them as integral parts throughout semesters. Curriculum needs to be scaffolded to develop conceptual coherence, interdisciplinary connections, and experiential engagement, mining classical texts, oral traditions, and new reinterpretations.

2. Faculty Capacity Building: Institutional investment in faculty capacity building is essential. This encompasses ongoing professional development workshops, academic exposure to IKS texts and practices, and collaborative learning with knowledge-holders outside the formal university structure. Teacher educators need to be enabled to obtain the philosophical, cultural, and pedagogical skills needed to teach IKS with integrity and depth.

3. Pedagogic Innovation and Resource Development: Multilingual, culturally appropriate, and thematically structured teaching-learning material must be developed. University-cum-traditional knowledge institution-cum-cultural organisation partnerships can provide rich collections of case studies, audio-visual material, and experiential modules well-tailored to divergent learner profiles.

4. Institutional Arrangements and Research Ecologies: Teacher education institutions' Centres for IKS should be formalized with allocated funds, interdisciplinary management, and a mandate to do research, publish resources, and work with community knowledge systems. The centres can also be experimentation and innovation hubs as well as places for disseminating IKS-grounded pedagogies.

5. Assessment and Accreditation Reform: Contextually situated assessment frameworks need to be developed to measure not only content attainment but also affective and ethical learning outcomes related to IKS. Accreditation agencies have to be sensitised to such alternative paradigms and urged to incorporate IKS-related benchmarks into quality assurance procedures.

6. Securing Pluralism and Inclusion: IKS integration has to be grounded in pluralism so that the indigenous, regional, tribal, linguistic, and marginalised knowledge traditions are not effaced for the benefit of elite narratives. Representative participation of inclusive voices in curriculum development, teaching staff, and institutional leadership is essential to secure the integrity and diversity of India's knowledge terrain.

To sum up, it is not just a question of curricular reform that Indian Knowledge Systems are to be brought into teacher education. It is a civilizational duty. While India dreams of educational autonomy and thought leadership in the world, its system of teacher education must demonstrate

the depth, the diversity, and the ethical potential of its intellectual heritage. With philosophical commitment, institutional creativity, and continued inter-sectoral cooperation, IKS can assist in reimagining the Indian teacher, not just as a trainer, but as a facilitator of wisdom, social concord, and ecological awareness.

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