



The new education policy: India's indigenous knowledge system and future

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Abstract

The Indian education system is widely recognized as one of the oldest and most ancient systems found across the globe. Throughout the years, this exceptional system of education has been adhered to with utmost dedication, but unfortunately, its style of teaching has gradually become obsolete and is in dire need of transformative changes. In order to address this pressing issue, a groundbreaking new policy has been officially introduced, promising to revolutionize the Indian education system as a whole. The implications of this policy are momentous, as it holds the potential to render the Indian education system more contemporary, avant-garde, and highly adaptable to the ever-evolving demands of the modern world. Undeniably, the implementation of this new education policy signifies a forward-looking approach and undoubtedly paves the way for comprehensive transformation. Aligned with the overarching objective of catering to the needs of a changing India, a society driven by knowledge, and a world that thrives on 21st-century skills, this policy has been meticulously crafted. Its primary focus lies not only on the development and application of knowledge but extends far beyond, aiming to foster critical thinking capabilities, problem-solving proficiency, creativity, and the acquisition of social, moral, and ethical knowledge. (Sangwan and Singh2022)^[15] (Acharya et al.2021)^[1] An integral aspect of this transformative policy is its unwavering dedication toward fostering a culture of discovery, embracing knowledge that stems from dynamic discussions, and placing due emphasis on thorough examination. Keeping these dimensions in mind the present paper aims to present an overview of the Indian knowledge system deeply rooted in various ancient texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Sutras, Puranas, epics, and Dharma shastras. The paper further examines the new-education policy its diverse objectives and their efficient alignment with Indian Knowledge system.

Keywords: Gurukula, vedas, upanishads, puranas, multi-disciplinary study, primary education

Introduction

The Indian education system has been described as one of the world's oldest and most ancient. This great educational system has been upheld with utmost care throughout the years, but its teaching approach has progressively become antiquated and is in desperate need of radical adjustments. To address this serious issue, a pioneering novel approach has been officially implemented, promising to transform the Indian education system as a whole. The ramifications of this approach are significant, as it has the ability to make the Indian education system more current, avant-garde, and responsive to the ever-changing demands of modern life. Recognizing the intrinsic value of a well-rounded education, this visionary policy not only propagates the acquisition of liberal knowledge but also endows tremendous importance to the rich and diverse knowledge of India itself. Moreover, it magnifies the significance of imparting skill-based knowledge, a crucial component in equipping individuals with the practical abilities they require to thrive in an increasingly competitive world. Consequently, to ensure the effective implementation of this inclusive approach toward knowledge, the policy firmly establishes both traditional knowledge institutions and vocational institutions, catering to a wide spectrum of educational needs. (Deb, 2020)^[4] In conclusion, the introduction of this transformative new education policy signifies a remarkable turning point for the Indian education system.

Overview of Indian Knowledge System

The ancient Indian education system is deeply rooted in the concept of education as a sacred 'Yajna', wherein the profound knowledge was imparted through a harmonious

collaboration between the revered teacher and the eager learner. In this remarkable system, the students would reside with their guru (teacher) for an extended period, embracing the enlightening wisdom within the sacred surroundings of a Gurukula (teacher's abode). Amongst the diverse array of subjects, the knowledge of the awe-inspiring Vedas held the utmost significance, serving as the pinnacle of educational pursuit. Interestingly, education was predominantly bestowed upon the male members of the esteemed top three varnas (social classes) of the Indian society (Jayapriya, 2023)^[6].

The 3rd century B.C. witnessed the establishment of the illustrious Vyasa system, which further expanded the horizons of education. By the advent of the 1st century, India boasted the existence of numerous eminent universities dispersed across the vast country. These venerable institutions, including the renowned Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila, and others, served as magnets, enticing erudite scholars and ambitious students from far and wide. They stood as beacons of advanced learning, fostering an environment where the seekers of knowledge could flourish and explore various disciplines with unparalleled depth and insight. (Jayasree & Sai Baba, 2020)^[7] (Vyas, 2023)^[17].

Indian knowledge system, rooted in various ancient texts

The Indian knowledge system, deeply rooted in various ancient texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Sutras, Puranas, epics, and dharmashastras, is a magnificent treasure trove of boundless wisdom that transcends time itself (Jayapriya, 2023)^[6]. These sacred texts, meticulously crafted in the extraordinary depths of the ancient Sanskrit

language, are veritable reservoirs of knowledge that encompass the vast expanse of the ultimate reality, the innate sacredness of existence, profound spiritual truths, the enigmatic origins of the boundless universe, and the intricate tapestry of humanity, as well as the mesmerizing intricacies of the natural and social orders that govern our world. Across the vast tapestry of generations, this deep reservoir of knowledge has been meticulously and reverently passed down from one enlightened soul to another, forming the very bedrock of a comprehensive and highly sophisticated education system that has stood the test of time. (Mahesh et al.2023) ^[10] (Naik & Tari) ^[13] It is through the sublime teachings and profound principles embedded within these ethereal texts that a profound understanding of life's enigmatic dance, the cosmic symphony that orchestrates the universe, and the kaleidoscope of wonders that lie betwixt came to fruition, nurturing the souls of seekers and scholars alike, paving the path to unparalleled enlightenment and holistic growth (Kakarla, 2023) ^[8].

Within the Vedas, one discovers the cosmic hymns that resonate with the very essence of creation, exuding a divine energy that permeates every atom of existence. Through the Upanishads, the secrets of the self are unveiled, unraveling the mysteries that lie within one's own consciousness. The Smritis provide a guidebook for righteous living, offering practical wisdom to navigate the complexities of human existence. Meanwhile, the Sutras present concise aphorisms, capturing complex ideas in succinct formulations. The Puranas, with their myriad tales and fables, bring alive the rich tapestry of mythology and folklore, infusing life into the lessons of morality and virtue. The epics, such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, transport us to ancient times, where divine incarnations and heroic deeds unfold, leaving indelible imprints on our collective consciousness. And then there are the dharmashastras, the texts that delve into the intricate web of social and moral laws, providing guidelines for the harmonious functioning of society. From the laws of dharma, which govern individual conduct, to the principles of governance and justice, these texts lay the foundation for a just and equitable society. It is through the study and understanding of these dharmashastras that the great minds of ancient India developed a system of governance that balanced individual freedom with social responsibility, aiming to create a society where the welfare of all was upheld and protected. (VS & Variath, 2021) ^[16] (Adhikary, 2023) ^[2]. In essence, the Indian knowledge system encapsulates the wisdom garnered by generations upon generations of seekers, sages, and scholars.

Key Features of the New Education Policy

The most important feature of the new education policy is its stress on Indian knowledge system which was neglected earlier and a multi-disciplinary approach of education. This means that students now have the opportunity to explore and delve into various subjects from science, social science, and the humanities, allowing them to acquire a diverse and well-rounded education. This emphasis on multi-disciplinary learning ensures that students develop a holistic understanding of different fields, enabling them to make connections and apply knowledge across disciplines. Another crucial aspect of the new education policy is its strong focus on primary education. The policy mandates that children must complete their education up to grade 12 in

school, ensuring that every child receives a foundational level of education. This move aims to enhance literacy rates and provide a strong educational base for all individuals. (Muralidharan & Singh, 2021) ^[12] (Raina, 2020) ^[14]

The policy also includes significant changes in the education system at various stages. It emphasizes the importance of early childhood care, providing educational opportunities for children as young as 3 years old. This early initiation into education sets the stage for a solid educational journey. From the age of 6 to 14, known as the foundational stage, the policy looks to provide comprehensive educational support. During this crucial period, students will receive quality education, building a strong foundation that will serve them well in their future endeavors. India has made notable progress in terms of enrollment ratios in the secondary level. With a considerable increase from 81% to 89% between 2013 and 2016, the policy acknowledges this positive trend and aims to further strengthen secondary education. It recommends the establishment of a school complex, which will incorporate a secondary school as well as up to 12 years of schooling.

Additionally, the school complex will house teacher education institutions and schools for continuing teachers' education at the state, district, or sub-district level, creating a comprehensive learning environment (Mehendale and Mukhopadhyay2021) ^[11]. To enhance the evaluation system, the new policy suggests restructuring the boards of secondary and higher secondary education. It proposes the adoption of competency-based examinations, which intend to make board exams more approachable for students. These exams will focus on the core knowledge of each subject, aligning with the existing laws of physics, chemistry, biology, and other disciplines. By streamlining the curriculum, the policy aims to alleviate the burden on students while ensuring a thorough understanding of fundamental concepts. Moreover, the new education policy recognizes the significance of promoting creativity and practical application of knowledge. It advocates for the inclusion of creative subjects that extend beyond traditional learning, allowing students to explore their interests and deepen their understanding in hands-on and practical ways. This comprehensive approach ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded educational experience for students (Kumar et al., 2021) ^[9]. In summary, the new education policy focuses on multiple aspects, including multi-disciplinary study, primary education, early childhood care, secondary education enrollment ratios, the establishment of school complexes, restructuring of education boards, and competency-based examinations. By prioritizing these areas, the policy aims to provide a holistic and inclusive education that equips students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and creativity to thrive in the modern world. (Mehendale and Mukhopadhyay2021) ^[11] (Aithal and Aithal2020) (Kumar et al., 2021) ^[3, 9].

Impact of the New Education Policy on Indian Knowledge System and its Far-Reaching Consequences

On school education, the New Education Policy places a substantial focus on achieving universal enrollment and ensuring the universal retention of students. This encompasses a strong emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, which have been identified as vital factors in enabling effective learning outcomes. The envisaged policy aims to comprehensively address all aspects of the

education structure in India, encompassing a formal education system that commences from the tender age of three and extends until the completion of 18 years. Moreover, the policy recognizes the paramount importance of digital literacy and coding, underscoring their potential to enhance the quality of education and foster a sense of global citizenship among students.

Additionally, the New Education Policy integrates vocational education into the school curriculum and higher education institutions, aligning with the government's objective of providing practical learning experiences from an early age (Mehendale and Mukhopadhyay, 2021) [11]. Shifting the focus towards higher education, the New Education Policy brings forth a multitude of transformative changes. One noteworthy change is the introduction of a multiple entries and exit system within colleges, offering students the flexibility to accumulate a specific number of credits and decide whether to pursue further studies or conclude their education at a particular stage. This reform seeks to empower students and cater to their evolving needs and aspirations. Moreover, the higher education system itself will undergo a substantial evolution, transitioning into a research and innovation-oriented framework.

This shift aims to cultivate a culture of curiosity, critical thinking, and creativity among students and educators alike (Aithal and Aithal 2020) [3]. In an endeavour to enhance knowledge exchange and foster cultural diversity, the policy warmly welcomes foreign universities to establish campuses in India. This proactive initiative acknowledges the invaluable benefits of internationalization and globalization in the field of education, nurturing cross-cultural awareness and collaboration. These arrangements have gained immense popularity amongst countries worldwide, and their implementation within India will undeniably contribute to the nation's growth and development. Lastly, the policy proposes the establishment of a new governing body, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), which will supersede the University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). The creation of HECI aims to streamline and regulate higher education institutions more effectively, ensuring that they adhere to the highest quality standards and contribute significantly to the nation's educational landscape. With all these visionary proposals and initiatives encompassing all levels of education, the New Education Policy aspires to catalyze a transformation that will enable India to emerge as a vibrant and dynamic knowledge society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Indian knowledge system is a meticulously crafted and all-encompassing process of seeking the ultimate truth, acquiring vast and profound knowledge, and significantly expanding our insights and perspectives. It serves as a guiding light for individuals who possess an insatiable curiosity to explore new horizons and cultivate their intellect to unprecedented levels of brilliance and enlightenment (Gupta, 2021) [5]. Moreover, the new education policy has been envisioned as an enlightened and revolutionary path that aims to imbue education with its inherent true meaning and purpose, effectively catering to the holistic growth and development of students on multifaceted dimensions - social, physical, emotional, and cognitive. This visionary policy will inevitably lead to an all-encompassing and awe-inspiring revamp of the essential

components of the educational landscape in the country, unleashing a tidal wave of profound transformation and extraordinary progress (Kumar, 2021) [9] (Gupta, 2021) [5]. Adopting this groundbreaking and visionary policy will streamline the collective and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, igniting a collective and fervent celebration of the diverse knowledge and rich cultural heritage that India proudly possesses. The resounding success, efficacy, and transformative power of the new education policy, synergized harmoniously with the invaluable and time-honoured Indian knowledge system, will undoubtedly and unequivocally set the stage for monumental academic progress, unrivalled excellence, and epochal achievements on the global platform. It will position India as a resolute and trailblazing frontrunner in the illustrious realm of education, showcasing the nation's unwavering commitment, unwavering determination, and unwavering resolve to fostering an intellectually invigorating, phenomenally nurturing, and exceptionally enlightening environment for its prodigious students. Through this visionary and epoch-making policy, India will indelibly leave an indelible mark on the world stage, serving as a luminous beacon of inspiration for countries across the globe that aspire to redefine, reinvigorate, and revolutionize their own educational landscapes and ignite the fires of knowledge, innovation, and transformative progress in their own societies.

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