

INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM: INTEGRATING ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION WITH MODERN EDUCATION UNDER NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

India has been the centre of learning since ancient times. As we understand, the ancient education system of India focused on the holistic development of the students, both inner and outer-self, thus preparing them for life. Education was free and not centralised. Its foundations were laid in the rich cultural traditions of India thereby helping in the development of the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and artistic aspects of life holistically. This article highlights some of the teaching and learning principles of the ancient Indian education system and their relevance in contemporary times along its coherence with the NEP 2020. A comprehensive national policy- NEP 2020 drafted after thirty-four years in the country under the Chairmanship of Krishnaswami Kasturirangan, the former Chief of ISRO has largely focused on the adaptation of the Takshila model for holistic development of the student and to include interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies to develop the student as a whole. Therefore, the ancient Indian education was not merely theoretical and related to the realities of life, but also regarded as a model for multidisciplinary approach to present education system. Thus, integrating ancient system of Indian education into the present education system aligned with the NEP 2020 presents an opportunity to enrich modern educational practices with ancient wisdom and values.

KEYWORDS: Ancient Education System, Multidisciplinary, Modern Education, Curriculum, NEP 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

India has a rich tradition of education and learning right from ancient times. The ancient system of education was the education of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Dharmasutras. In ancient India, both formal and informal ways of education system existed. Education in ancient India was considered a lifelong achievement of self-realization, and its foundation lay in the pursuit of Jnana (knowledge), Dharma (righteousness), and Karma (action). Ancient texts like the Bhagavad Gita also contributed to this education system by blending knowledge and spiritual development. The ancient Indian education principles and practices like yoga and meditation are extremely relevant even in today's times. In the ancient education system, the practice of yoga and meditation were used to calm the mind, enhance focus, and foster emotional and mental well-being, which were regarded as vital for intellectual

growth. Studies found that the ancient Indian education, particularly the Gurukul system, serves as a model for a multidisciplinary approach in modern education, emphasizing holistic development, teacher-student relationships, and a focus on practical application of knowledge, as reflected in the National Education Policy- NEP 2020. The integration of both systems can foster an education system that addresses the challenges of modernity while remaining grounded in tradition.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the role of the ancient education system in the modern education system.
- To know the historical evolution of education in ancient India.
- To assess the relevance and importance of ancient Indian education in modern multidisciplinary education.
- To analyze how ancient educational practices can be harmonized with modern needs to create a more comprehensive and culturally enriched education system.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review aimed to analyse existing study focused on ancient Indian education and its relevance and importance in the modern education system.

- A vision document- NEP 2020 is indispensable for strengthening ancient education and Indian ethos. The philosophy and concept of skill development, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary courses in NEP 2020 under a single roof is the contribution of the ancient educational system (**Ahmad et al., 2025**).
- NEP 2020 is not just a policy but a vision document. Multidisciplinary education is the gift of ancient India. The essence of the NEP 2020 is traditional methodology to meet the futuristic objectives of the education in India (**Bora, 2024**).
- The National Education Policy- NEP 2020 has placed special emphasis on the rich heritage of ancient Indian culture, taking Yoga, Ayurveda, and Spiritualism as the guiding path and this has translated India today into a global power (**Khushnam, 2022**).
- The paper reviews the evolution from ancient to medieval education, the period from 1986 to 2020, and the current NEP 2020, aiming to enhance the present education system with insights from the past. Ancient Indian education focused on higher knowledge of self and knowledge of strength. The present education system under NEP 2020 emphasizes this concept of self-awareness and skill development through experiential and multidisciplinary learning (**Lohani, 2024**).
- The Indian education system is very popular and diversified among other countries education systems due to its adaptation from the ancient education system. The ancient education system is also based on the three domains of learning given by Bloom's Taxonomy. The main purpose of this paper is to convey what is needed to develop in our current education system, adapting from the ancient education system to fit the modern education system in a robust way. India is a young country, and the

demographic dividend of India is the force behind the growth (Mishra & Aithal, 2023).

- Future educational models could benefit greatly from blending the wisdom of ancient Indian education with the tools and technologies of the modern world. A variety of pedagogical strategies such as blended learning models, incorporating mindfulness and meditation, and interdisciplinary curriculum design may be employed to integrate ancient Indian knowledge systems with modern educational paradigms (Patel, 2025).

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this review article is grounded in a comprehensive literature review of studies that have been published over the recent years. These studies were sourced from academic databases and critical analysis of the findings from various studies, while also integrating insights derived from the researcher's own understanding and professional interpretation of the subject matter. The outcome is a narrative exploration that effectively highlights key themes, indicating the relevance and importance of ancient Indian education in modern multidisciplinary education, and discusses the evolving role of the ancient education system in the modern education system aligned with the NEP 2020.

5. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION

This study, relying on secondary research, reviews the evolution from ancient to medieval education, the period from 1986 to 2020, and the current NEP 2020, aiming to enhance the present system with insights from the past.

5.1 Education during the Vedic period (1500 BCE – 600 BCE)

Holistic education, centered around Chitta-Vritti-Nirodha (control of mental activities), aimed to align individuals with both practical and divine aspects of life. The close teacher-student relationship emphasized transparency, with teachers serving as societal role models. Rigvedic education, rooted in the four Vedas, provided vocational training and secular religious teachings, catering to both the priestly class and the masses.

Practical teachings based on Oral (verbal) and Thinking (chintan) shaped character, personality, and vocational skills during the Vedic period. In the modern days too, the teacher guides the students to research, apply, evaluate, and create. Vedic education, particularly through Yajurveda and Atharvaveda, emphasized practicality, contributing to the evolution of Aryan culture. Hearing, thinking, and meditation were the three principal methods of instruction. The question-answer system too evolved during the later period. The teacher was the greatest guide for the pupils. The rules of conduct and discipline were an inseparable aspect of education in those days. The duration of Vedic education was twelve years and education were imparted through Gurukuls, Parishads (Academic Institutions), and Sammelans (Conferences). The modern education system also resonates with the same structure. For the Vaishyas, i.e., the business class, agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade were their chief occupation. To understand business, a study of arithmetic, geography, economics, the science

of agriculture, and business method was extremely essential. However, the caste system led to educational limitations, with no higher education provision for the Shudras.

The biggest demerit of the system was the watertight compartments in education and training, based on the caste system.

5.2 Education in the Sutras (600 BCE- 200 BCE)

The need for education and training, during the Vedic period, gave rise to the Sutras education, which was a more towards practical method of education. One special feature of this education was the specialization branches of learning offered to the students. Many branches of knowledge, such as Geometry, Algebra, Physiology, Astronomy, Astrology, and Vedas reached the peak of learning. The sole objective of the entire system of education was character formation and personality development. This was achieved through Yoga (Integration of mind and body), Nyaya (Justice), Karma (Deeds), and Vedanta (conclusion of Vedas).

5.3 Education in the Epics

The scattered facts in the epics, like Ramayana and Mahabharat, give us glimpses into military education during that period. The word Kulapati (Chancellor) and Upkulapati (Vice-Chancellor) in modern-day University structure is derived from the mention in the epics. During this period military education science was very important. Many institutions such as Taxila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Banaras, and Madura were established. To summarise, education in the epics was mainly vocational training, essentially practical and application oriented.

5.4 National Policy on Education 1968

The National Policy on Education of 1968, enacted as part of India's post-independence educational reform efforts, aimed to address the country's educational needs by instituting free and compulsory education up to the age of 14. This initiative, aligned with Article 45 of the Directive Principles of States Policy, sought to improve educational quality, particularly in science and technology, while emphasizing moral and social values. The policy also prioritized language development, education for marginalized groups, and a standardized educational structure across regions. Criticisms included the policy's overwhelming objectives, centralized approach lacking state involvement, and resource scarcity hampering effective implementation. In the field of science, education received a notable boost, with a special focus on research in agriculture and industry.

5.5 National Policy on Education 1986

The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 marked a significant departure by embracing a 10+2+3 structure and granting states autonomy in designing their curricula. Prioritizing technical education, the policy aimed to equip India for the challenges of the 21st century. Emphasizing pre-primary education, it focused on holistic development encompassing health, nutrition, and play-based learning, aiming to improve enrolment rates and address disparities among social groups. While merits included recognition of technical education and the expansion of higher education opportunities, challenges encompassed lack of uniformity, enrolment issues, and implementation obstacles, notably in mobilizing teachers and local communities.

5.6 National Education Policy -NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 aims to reboot the legacy of the higher learning centers of ancient India by emulating the teaching-learning that prevailed during the time and making it relevant and contemporary. The NEP 2020 also attempts to develop social, physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral capacities of human beings in an integrated manner.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

While there are differences in the methods, tools, and societal contexts between ancient and present education system, there are also valuable principles and insights from ancient educational system that can be considered relevant today. The following key areas have been identified where ancient Indian education can serve as a model for a multi-disciplinary approach to present education system:

6.1 Holistic Development

Ancient Indian education emphasized the interconnectedness of knowledge, ethics, and action. This approach fosters not just intellectual growth but the development of character, social responsibility, and a deeper understanding of one's role in society and the environment.

This holistic approach aligns with the goals of present education system, which seeks to develop well-rounded individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

6.2 Interdisciplinary Learning

The Vedic system promoted interdisciplinary learning by integrating arts, sciences, and spirituality into a cohesive educational experience.

The present education system recognizes the interconnectedness of various disciplinary, encouraging students to explore the relationships between different areas of knowledge and apply them to real-world problems, fostering a broader understanding of the world.

6.3 Sustainability and Ethical Learning

Ancient Indian education placed a strong emphasis on moral and ethical development, teaching students about dharma, truthfulness, and discipline.

In today's world, where values and character are increasingly important, the ancient emphasis on these aspects remains relevant, fostering a sense of responsibility and social awareness.

6.4 Mindfulness and Emotional Well-being

Practices such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness are rooted in the ancient Indian education and can enhance mental clarity, focus, and emotional resilience.

Incorporating these practices into present educational frameworks could help address the growing concerns about stress, anxiety, and depression among students.

6.5 Practical Application of Knowledge

Ancient Indian education emphasized the practical application of knowledge, encouraging students to engage in activities that would prepare them for life.

This practical approach aligns with the modern emphasis on skills-based learning such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and craftsmanship and experiential education, thus preparing them for various roles in society.

7. CONCLUSION

Ancient Indian education as a model for multidisciplinary approach could lead to an education system that not only prepares students for the demands of the 21st century but also nurtures their personal, ethical, and emotional growth. The New National Education Policy-NEP 2020 proposes a significant shift towards a more holistic and flexible curriculum, emphasizing multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and a strong foundation in the arts, sciences, and humanities. The fusion of ancient Indian education with the modern education system presents a promising pathway towards creating a more balanced, ethical, and holistic educational framework.

As we move forward, it is imperative for educators, policy makers, academicians and researchers to work together in developing curricula that balance the strengths of both ancient wisdom and modern innovation, thus creating a truly global educational system that may be regarded as both innovative and grounded in timeless human values. However, challenges such as cultural resistance, technological integration, and the need for teacher training must be addressed.

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