Integrating Indian Knowledge System in Higher Education for Holistic Development

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Abstract

A revolutionary trend in contemporary academia, the integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into higher education, seeks to foster a synthesis between traditional wisdom and modern research. IKS encompasses a wide range of intellectual and cultural traditions that nurture students' ethical, social, physical, and spiritual growth alongside their cognitive development. This study examines the current status, policy initiatives, methodological challenges, and strategic approaches to integrating IKS into Indian higher education. The analysis highlights the key objectives, pedagogical frameworks, institutional mechanisms, research gaps, and anticipated outcomes envisioned under NEP 2020 and related reforms. Ultimately, the paper argues that the systematic and thoughtful integration of indigenous knowledge can realize holistic development defined as the harmonious union of mind, body, and spirit resulting in graduates with a strong cultural foundation, globally competitive, and ethically balanced.

Keywords

Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Indian philosophy, Integrating ancient and modern, NEP 2020 (National Education Policy), Pedagogical innovation, Cultural heritage, Holistic education

Introduction

A methodical and structured approach to passing down knowledge from one generation to the next is the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). It sets itself apart as a knowledge transfer process as opposed to just a custom. The IKS is a fundamental idea acknowledged by the National Education Policy (NEP-2020), with roots in the Vedic literature, the Upanishads, Vedas, and Up Veddas. Through a dynamic interaction of knowledge, observation, inquiry, and meticulous analysis, the fundamental elements of the Indian Knowledge Systems Jnan (knowledge), Vignan (science), and Jeevan Darshan (philosophy of life) have developed. Numerous industries, including education, administration, law, justice, manufacturing, and commerce, have been significantly impacted by this practice of validation and real-world application.

IKS has an impact on Bharat (India)'s conventional and other languages, which are spread via a variety of channels, such as written, spoken, and artistic customs. The wisdom of ancient India, including its successes and setbacks, is contained in this all-encompassing wisdom system. It offers a starting point for comprehending India's future goals, addressing important topics like health, education, the environment, and every facet of life. The Indian Knowledge System is essentially a storehouse of knowledge that continuously influences the practical, cultural, and intellectual facets of Indian society.

Ancient institutions such as Takshashila and Nalanda exemplified the harmonious integration of theoretical and practical learning. (Khan, S., & Sharma, M. (2024).

IKS places a strong emphasis on harmony with the environment, with other people, and within oneself. India's sophisticated knowledge of mathematics, surgery, astronomy, and medicinal plants is demonstrated by classical texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas as well as scientific publications like the Aryabhatiya, Charaka Samhita, and Sushruta Samhita (Sharma, 1992; Pingree, 2003). Yoga, Ayurveda, agriculture, metallurgy, and sustainable living methods are examples of practical knowledge systems that are included in IKS (Kapur, 2018).

The Indian Knowledge System provides important insights into social harmony, ethical leadership, environmental preservation, and well-being in the modern era. Students can appreciate India's intellectual legacy and find answers to today's pressing global issues by studying IKS.

Review of Literature

Philosophy, Ayurveda, Yoga, mathematics, the arts, and environmental wisdom are among the diverse disciplines that constitute the rich legacy of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Recent educational reforms, particularly India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020),

emphasize the integration of IKS into formal education as a vital step toward fostering holistic student development encompassing intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual growth

- **Policy Initiatives and Conceptual Foundations**

Several studies highlight that IKS presents epistemological frameworks distinct from Western paradigms, emphasizing the interrelationship between ethics, society, nature, and knowledge. To enable institutional integration through capacity building, digitization, and research initiatives, NEP 2020 mandates that IKS constitute at least 5 percent of the curriculum credits in undergraduate and postgraduate programs .

- **Holistic Development through IKS**

Studies indicate that the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) fosters cultural identity, cognitive abilities, emotional resilience, ethical reasoning, and environmental stewardship, all contributing to the balanced development of personality. The incorporation of indigenous practices such as yoga, meditation, and experiential learning enhances students' physical, mental, and moral faculties, thereby advancing the objectives of comprehensive education.

- **Opportunities and Best Practices**

Research increasingly recognizes IKS for promoting creativity and interdisciplinarity. Engagement is further enhanced through the use of technologies like MOOCs and AR/VR, which simulate traditional learning environments, alongside community partnerships. Key facilitators include faculty development, curriculum redesign emphasizing integrative learning, and fostering translational research on indigenous knowledge (Mishra et al., 2024).

Research Gap

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) integration into higher education faces many unresolved issues, despite growing scholarly attention and policy emphasis, particularly through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Numerous gaps are highlighted by current literature and empirical research:

- Absence of a Standardized Curriculum: The IKS curriculum lacks a standardized framework, which causes uneven and disjointed content delivery amongst institutions .
- Faculty Capacity and Training Deficit: There is a significant shortage of teachers with the pedagogical skills necessary for interdisciplinary instruction and who are sufficiently trained and conversant with IKS.
- Scarcity of Resources and Infrastructure: Many institutions do not have enough digital repositories, translated texts, or IKS focused research centres .
- Problems with Assessment and Accreditation: The experiential and qualitative character of IKS learning is not adequately accommodated by traditional assessment techniques and accreditation standards.
- Institutional and cultural resistance: IKS acceptance is decreased and funding priorities are impacted by prevailing Eurocentric academic paradigms.
- Inadequate Empirical Evidence: Research assessing the best practices, student outcomes, and pedagogical effectiveness of IKS integration is scarce, particularly in environments of diverse higher education.

- Barriers to Language and Accessibility: The prevalence of regional or ancient languages in IKS texts makes them inaccessible to contemporary students, requiring efforts at digital adaptation and translation .

Theoretical Background of the study

Fig 1: The Core Construct: Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

At the heart of the framework lies the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which serves as a comprehensive, multidisciplinary foundation for higher education.

Important Domains (as per the diagram)

• Health and well-being

In order to improve both physical and mental health, this domain includes practices like yoga, ayurveda, and wellness theories with Indian influences.

• Traditional Knowledge in Mathematics

By presenting mathematical theories, algorithms, and concepts that were first created in India, it supports modern STEM education.

• Traditional Medicines, Yoga, and Vedas

For general well-being, this field encourages the use of Vedic wisdom, traditional medical systems, and holistic health practices.

• Preserving the Arts, Tradition, and Culture

India's rich artistic, cultural, and traditional heritage is the main focus of education.

• Historic Structures and Designs

This entails investigating conventional engineering, architectural, and urban planning ideas that are both culturally sensitive and sustainable.

• Consciousness research

promotes mental health and self-awareness by investigating contemporary research in spiritual development, psychology, and consciousness.

Relationships Across Domains
Each field maintains dynamic connections with neighboring disciplines and the central framework of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and mutual influence. Together, these areas cultivate sustainability, creativity, scientific inquiry, holistic health, intelligence, and strong moral values.
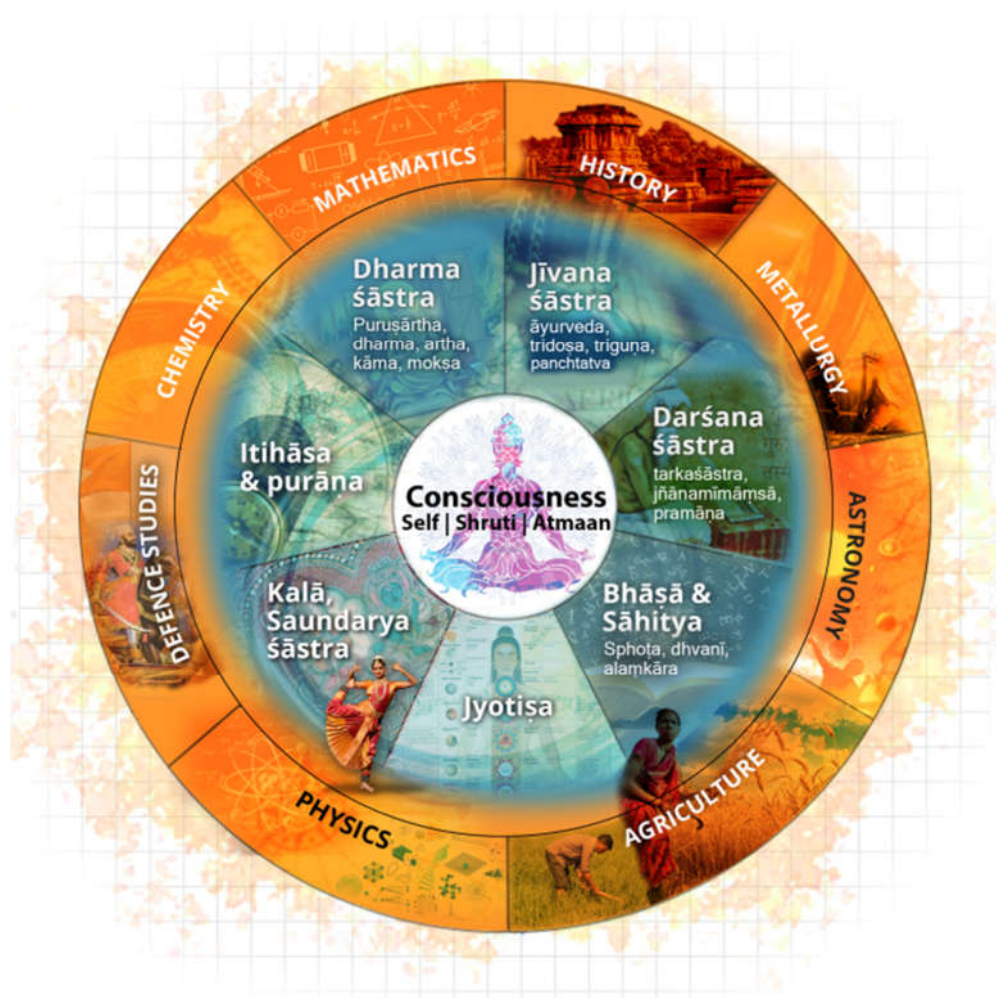
Fig 2: **Central Principle**

Self

Shruti

Atmaan

Consciousness

(Dr. Kapil Kapoor, centre for indic studies)

IKS is fundamentally about the development and comprehension of consciousness, which links holistic learning, scriptural wisdom (Shruti), and personal self-realization (Atmaan).

Inner Domains: IKS Core Shastras

These fundamental "Shastras," or disciplines, reflect fields of traditional science and ancient wisdom:

- Moral principles, life goals (Purushārtha), and the philosophy of Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa are all included in Dharma Śāstra.
- Jīvana Śāstra: Health, vital forces (tridosha, triguna, panchatva), and life sciences like Ayurveda.
- Darśana Śāstra: Indian philosophical, logical, and epistemological systems (tarkashastra, jnana-mīmāṃsā, pramāṇa).
- Bhāṣā & Sāhitya: Semiotics (sphota, dhvani, alankāra), language, and literature.
- Jyotisa: Astronomy and astronomy in the Vedas.
- Kalā, Saundarya Śāstra: Performance arts, aesthetics, and the arts.
- Itihāsa & Purāṇa: Cultural narration, mythology, and epic history.

Middle Ring: Combining Applied and Modern Domains, These important areas of current research and education are influenced by or informed by IKS foundations:

- The study of mathematics
- The past
- Metallurgy
- Astronomy
- Farming
- Physics
- Studies of Defence
- The chemical

Dynamics of the Framework

Interdisciplinary Synergy: According to the model, all advanced subjects in the arts, sciences, technology, and humanities can be strengthened and rethought by connecting with the core knowledge domains of ancient India.

The ultimate goal is to prepare students who are not only technically skilled but also morally and culturally aware, and who are developed as whole people, led by their inner selves.

Real-World Uses

Curricular Modules: Workshops and courses that connect, for instance, Vedic mathematics with computational thinking, Ayurveda with contemporary biology, or classical arts with contemporary aesthetics can be created.

Pedagogical Approaches: Instruction based on integrative, experiential, and reflective pedagogies that draw from the central consciousness-focused approach.

Statement of Problem

Despite rich intellectual traditions, the integration of IKS into higher education faces persistent challenges:

- Absence of a standardized curriculum, leading to superficial or inconsistent implementation.

- Lack of trained faculty adept at interpreting and teaching IKS subjects.

- Predominant perception of IKS as archaic or unscientific.

- Resource constraints specifically, funding, educational materials, and access to translated texts.

- Inadequacy of assessment and quality assurance frameworks suited for the holistic and qualitative nature of IKS.

- Limited interdisciplinary research and institutional partnerships for IKS driven projects.

Objectives of the Study

- To outline the scope and significance of IKS for holistic development in higher education.

- To analyze the challenges and research gaps in current integration efforts.

- To examine policy initiatives and institutional mechanisms supporting IKS integration.

Research Methodology

Design of Research:
A descriptive and exploratory, survey-based research design was used in this study. Evaluating higher education stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) was the main goal. Quantitative analysis and cross

sectional comparison between people and institutions were made possible by the method.

Sample Size and Sampling Method
- Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling was applied. Teachers and students who are directly involved in teaching or learning in higher education settings were invited, and colleges were chosen based on their willingness to participate.
- Sample Size: The sample for this study consisted of responses from 100 students, collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The total number of participants was based on the completed responses received within the specified data collection period.

Data Collection Tool:
A structured questionnaire was used to gather data. Both open-ended and closed-ended (Likert scale, multiple choice) questions about knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, perceived advantages and difficulties, and recommendations for incorporating IKS into college level instruction were included in the survey. Google Forms was used to distribute the survey digitally, guaranteeing scalability and accessibility.

Tools for Analysis:
Data analysis of the collected questionnaire responses involved descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize individual item responses; visual representation of main findings through charts and graphs generated from Google Forms and spreadsheet tools; cross-tabulations to compare responses between different respondent groups like teachers versus students or by academic venues; and interpretative analysis aligned with the study's conceptual framework to identify key trends, gaps, and actionable insights for the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems in higher education.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Chart 1: Age of the respondents
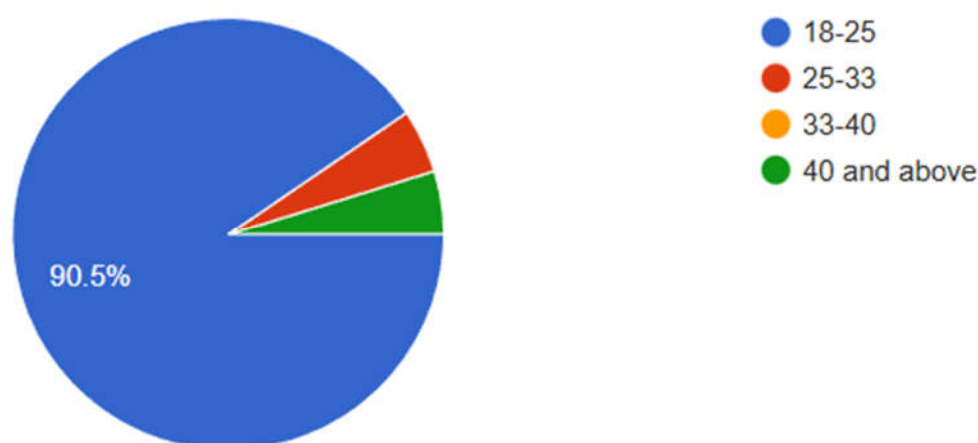
The age distribution of the respondents is extremely skewed, according to the data. Ninety-five percent are between the ages of 18 and 25. This suggests that the majority of respondents to the survey were younger, most likely students or people just starting their careers.

Conversely, there is very little representation of the remaining age groups:

25–33 years old: Only a small percentage of respondents are in this age range, indicating that slightly older young adults do not participate very much.

33–40 years old: There is either very little or no representation in this group, which suggests very low participation.

40 and older: The small number of responders in this group indicates that older adults are not very involved.

Interpretation

According to this distribution, the opinions and preferences of people between the ages of 18 and 25 will be primarily reflected in your survey results. To obtain a more balanced dataset, might need to increase outreach to older demographics if study intends to generalize across larger age groups.

chart 2:Gender of respondents
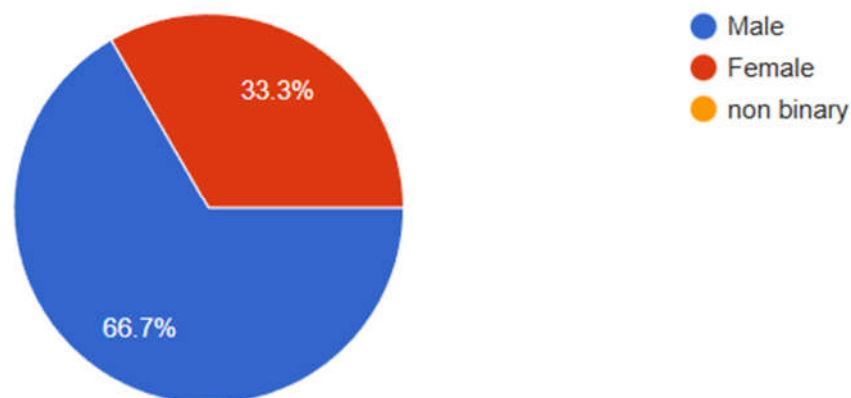
The majority of respondents (66.7%) identified as male, indicating a gender imbalance in the survey results. This indicates that two-thirds of the respondents are men, while the remaining 33.3% identify as female.

Notably, non-binary people did not respond to the survey, indicating that either they did not receive it or they opted not to take part.

Interpretation

The male-dominant nature of the dataset suggests that male viewpoints may have a greater influence on the overall results. Non-binary voices are lacking, and while there is some female representation, it is much less. might need to increase outreach to guarantee greater gender inclusivity if study requires balanced gender insights, particularly for subjects like consumer behaviour, social perception, or product preferences.
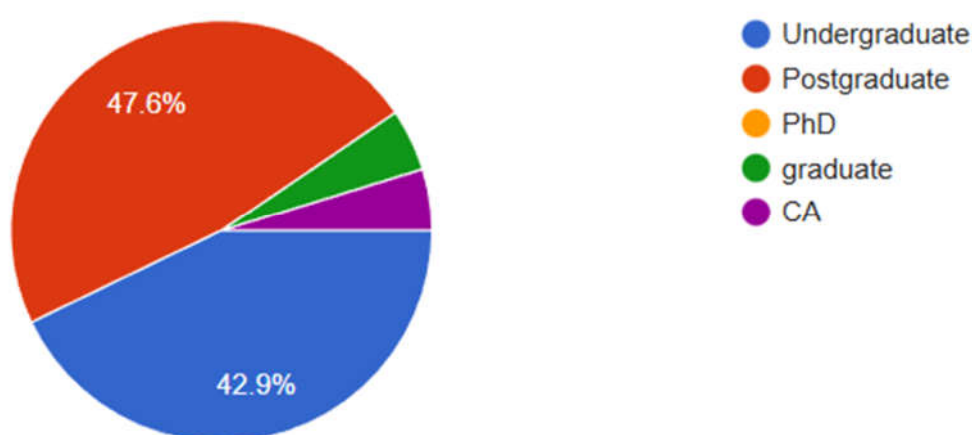

Chart 3: Highest educational qualification of respondents

Interpretation
About 90% of the sample is made up of undergraduate and graduate students, indicating that the survey was primarily completed by people with a strong academic background.

Few respondents have professional credentials (such as a CA), and none are pursuing or have finished a PhD.According to the overall educational distribution, the audience appears to be academically inclined, which, depending on the context of your survey, may have an impact on their level of awareness, analytical thinking, or expectations for products or services.

Chart 4: Respondents aware of Indian knowledge system

Interpretation

With over two-thirds of respondents already knowing about IKS, the results show a generally positive awareness.The combined 33.3% of respondents who selected "No" or "Maybe" offer a chance for educational or awareness-raising campaigns, particularly if the objective is to encourage a wider audience to have a deeper comprehension of IKS.

This distribution suggests that additional IKS training or communication could aid in closing the knowledge gap for the less knowledgeable group.
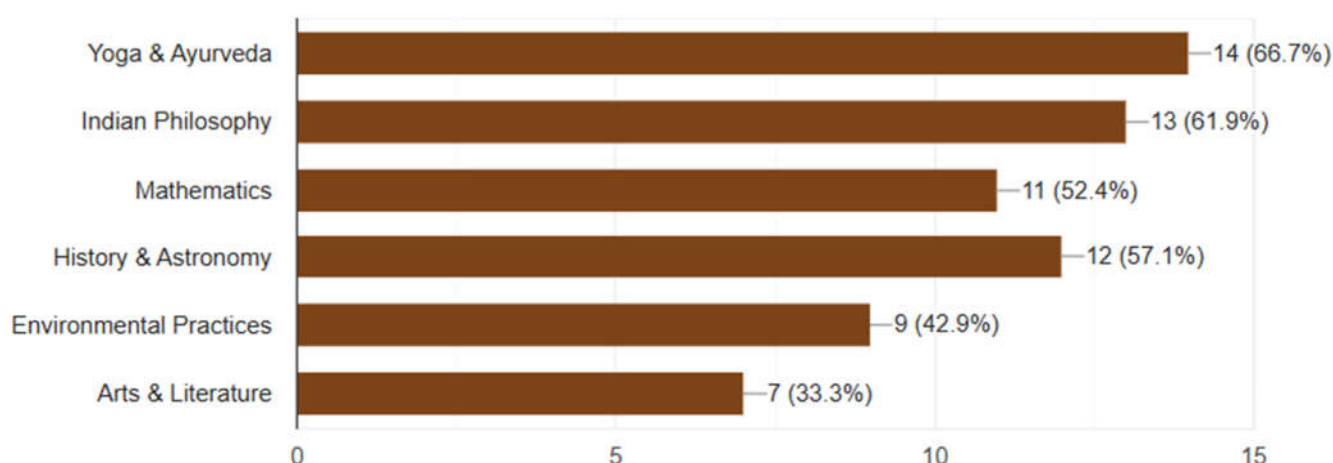

Graph 1: Domain of IKS

Interpretation
Perceptions of IKS are dominated by wellness and philosophy, indicating that these areas are most prevalent in modern culture and education.The moderate recognition of scientific and technical fields (such as astronomy and mathematics) reflects a lack of awareness of India's rich intellectual legacy.
There is room for more promotion and education in the ecological and artistic domains, as they are relatively less visible.
Although respondents have a general understanding of IKS, the overall distribution reveals that the level of recognition varies greatly across domains.
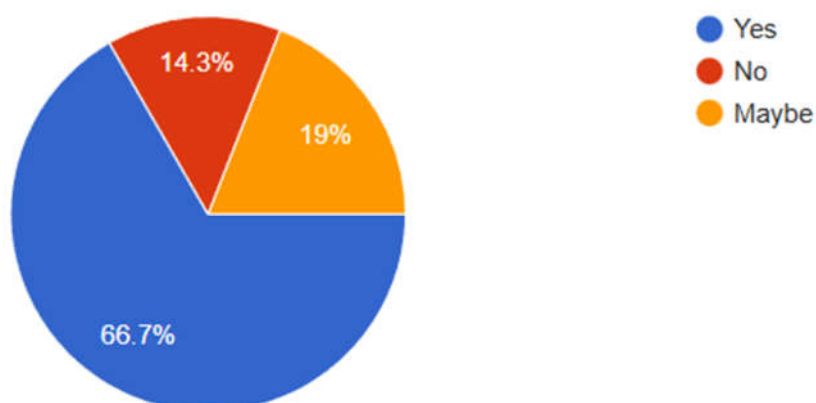
Graph 2: Understanding of IKS
On a scale of 1 to 5, the chart shows how respondents assessed their comprehension of IKS (Indian Knowledge Systems). The following is the distribution:

1 (Very Low Understanding): 4 (19%) of the respondents

2 (Low Understanding): 2 (9.5%) of the respondents

10 responders (47.5%) selected option 3 (Moderate Understanding).

4 (Good Understanding): 4 responders (19%)

5 (Very High Understanding): 1 respondent (4.8%)

Major Findings

1. The majority only comprehend at a moderate level. Level 3 clusters the greatest number of responses (10 out of 21), suggesting that most participants are somewhat familiar with IKS but lack a thorough understanding.This implies exposure without competence.

2. A sizable percentage lacks comprehension IKS is poorly understood by a total of 28.5% of respondents (levels 1 and 2).This indicates that over 25% of the group finds the concept difficult to understand or is not sufficiently aware of it.

3. Few show a high level of comprehension. Only 23.8% of responses come from Levels 4 and 5. Advanced knowledge of IKS is uncommon in this group, as evidenced by the fact that only one respondent (4.8%) feels they have very high understanding.

The understanding of IKS among the participants is average to below-average, with relatively few respondents having deeper knowledge.
This indicates that IKS-related content or training is necessary for this group to elevate their comprehension to higher levels.
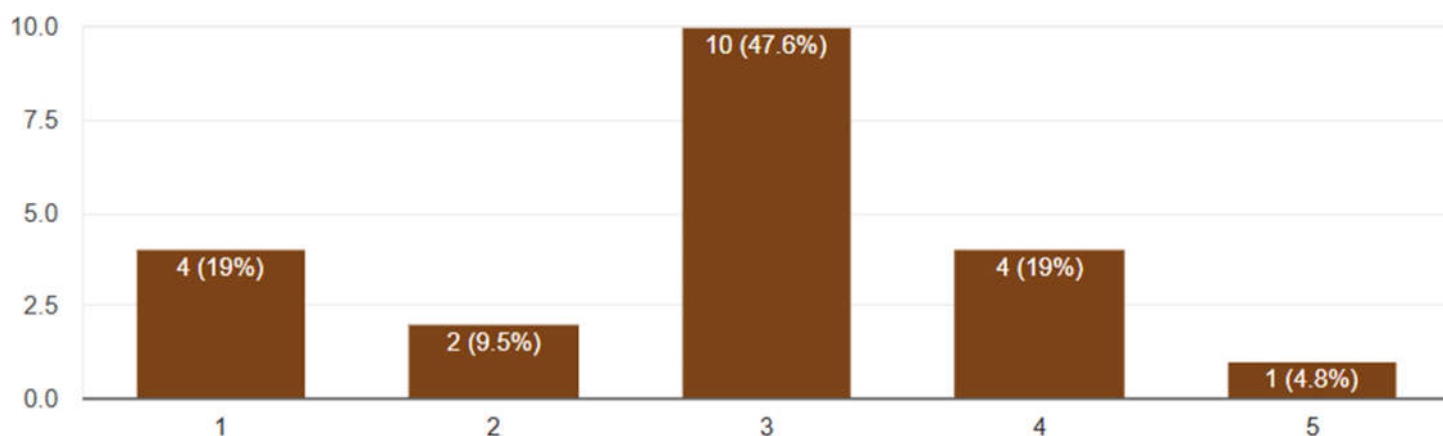
Chart 5: Integrating IKS in higher education

Interpretation

1. The majority of respondents are positive (57.1% agree or strongly agree). More than half of the respondents think that incorporating IKS into higher education can support holistic development.This demonstrates a strong commitment to and willingness to include IKS-based curricula.

2. A sizable neutral segment (42.9%) denotes ambiguity or unclear information. Nearly 50% of those surveyed chose "Neutral," indicating:

- They might not know enough about IKS's role in holistic development.
- It is possible that they have not yet encountered IKS-based programs.
- They don't strongly support or oppose the idea.

This is consistent with the previous chart, which showed that a large number of respondents understood IKS only moderately.

3. No adverse reactions Strongly Disagree and Disagree both scored 0%, suggesting:

- Nobody thinks IKS integration is bad.
- Adopting IKS in education is not met with opposition or hostility.
- This is encouraging for the implementation of curriculum elements or IKS initiatives.

4. General Interpretation

The answers reveal that:

- Most students are aware of the possible advantages of incorporating IKS into higher education.
- A sizable percentage is still unsure, most likely as a result of inadequate exposure or in-depth knowledge.
- Since there is no resistance, the atmosphere is very open to workshops, awareness campaigns, or curriculum improvements.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

42.9%
38.1%
19%
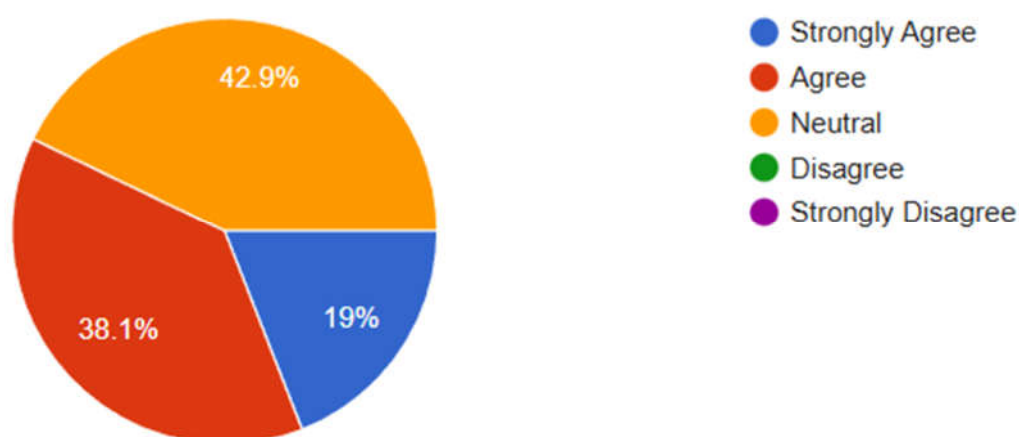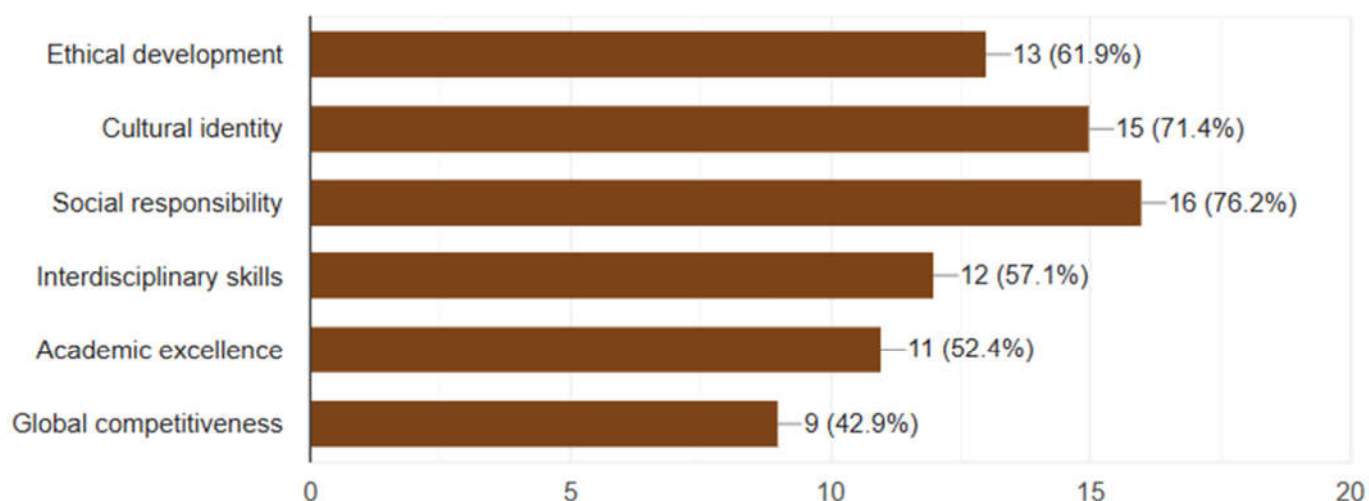
Graph 3: Benefits associated with IKS integration

Interpretation

1. According to 76.2 percent of respondents, social responsibility is the greatest advantage. The majority of participants believe that IKS can promote civic duty, community values, and social awareness. This illustrates the idea that IKS is firmly anchored in environmental harmony, social ethics, and group well-being.

2. Cultural identity strengthening is highly regarded (71.4%) The vast majority of people think that IKS improves appreciation of traditional knowledge, heritage awareness, and cultural rootedness. This implies a favorable outlook on education that is inclusive of all cultures.

3. Most people acknowledge ethical development (61.9%) Respondents believe that IKS helps students develop an ethical foundation because they link it to morals, values, integrity, and responsible behavior.

4. Strong support is also given to interdisciplinary skills (57.1%). IKS is thought to foster multidisciplinary and holistic thinking, bridging disciplines such as philosophy, science, the arts, and the environment. This is consistent with the integrative nature of IKS.

5. Half (52.4%) mention academic excellence. It appears that students view IKS as both intellectually and culturally enriching, as more than half think it can boost academic achievement.

6. Global competitiveness received the lowest rating (42.9%), but it was still significant.Despite having the lowest number, almost half still believe that IKS can help students compete internationally, suggesting potential in:

- Local creativity
- Conventional knowledge-based remedies

- Distinct intellectual viewpoints that are still relevant today

Uncertainty regarding IKS's global applicability could be the cause of the lower rate.

Chart 6: Introduction of IKS in institution
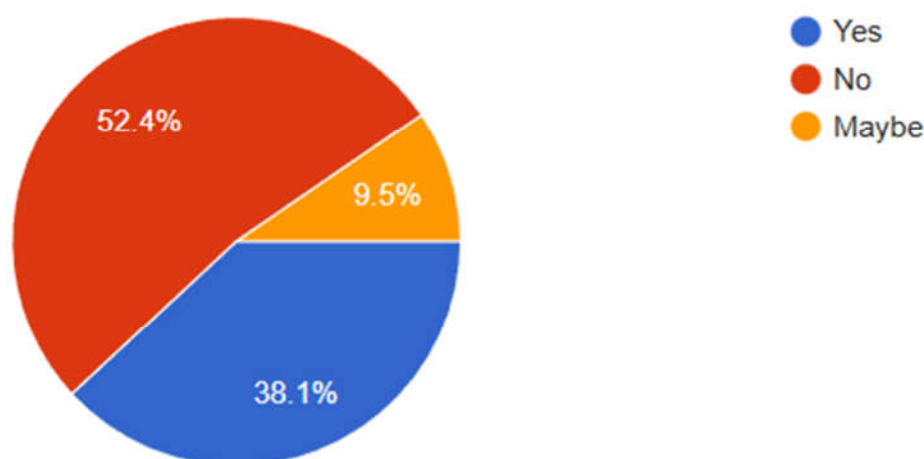
Interpretation

1. The majority (52.4%) state that IKS has not been implemented at their institution. The fact that more than half of the respondents said "no" indicates that many institutions have yet to adopt IKS modules or activities. This implies that despite policy-level emphasis on incorporating indigenous knowledge in higher education, there has been little formal exposure to IKS.

2. IKS initiatives are reported by a sizable minority (38.1%). Approximately two out of five participants reported that their organization has implemented activities or content related to IKS. This suggests that although adoption is increasing, it is still not widespread. These projects could consist of:

- Lectures by guests
- Workshops
- Basic education
- Cultural initiatives associated with IKS
- Research endeavors

3. Students' apprehension (9.5%) A tiny percentage made the decision to Perhaps, which probably reflects:

- Clear communication regarding IKS initiatives is lacking.
- Such activities are not very visible.
- ignorance of whether a particular activity qualifies as "IKS"
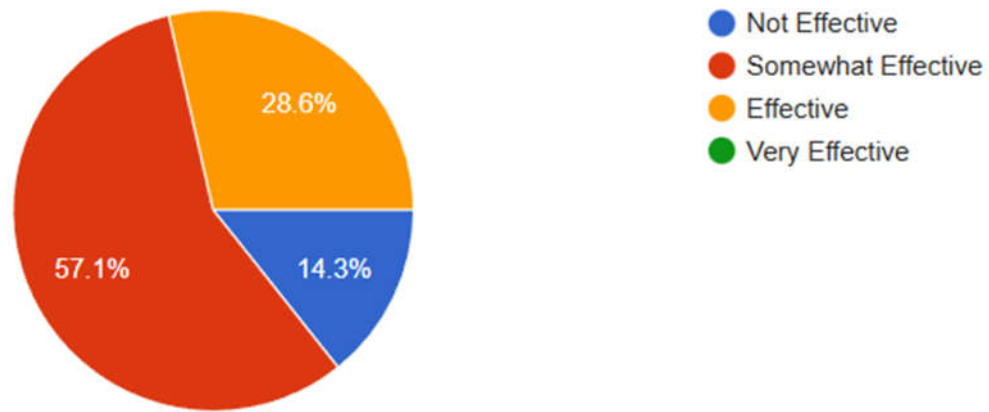
This is consistent with past research showing that a large number of participants understood IKS only moderately or not at all.

Chart 7: IKS related activities engaging students and faculty

Interpretation

1. The majority believe that IKS activities are only partially successful. IKS activities, according to the majority of respondents (57.1%), are "Somewhat Effective" as opposed to having a significant impact. This implies that although there are initiatives, they might not be completely focused or developed. Potential causes:

- Infrequent activity
- Absence of experiential or hands-on learning
- Very little incorporation into the regular curriculum
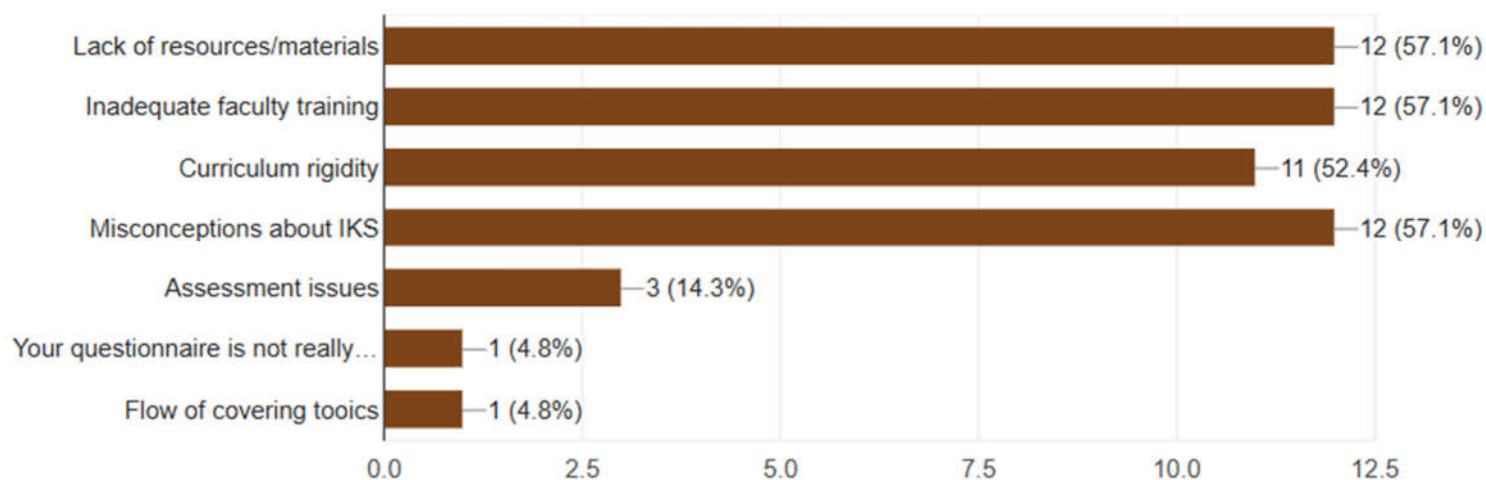- Faculty participation was limited.

2. Almost one-third (28.6%) believe the activities are effective. Because they observe value and engagement occurring, a sizable portion of participants think the activities are actually effective. This indicates that there is potential, though it might not be equal across institutions or departments.

3. A tiny but significant percentage (14.3%) believes they are ineffective. A few students expressed dissatisfaction with the activities, suggesting possible problems like:

- Ineffective event communication
- Activities of poor quality or design
- Sessions that seem more theoretical than useful
- Not pertinent to the interests or fields of the students

4. Nobody gave them a "Very Effective" rating. It is noteworthy that there were no "Very Effective" answers. It indicates that IKS programs may need to be improved in order to reach their full potential, including:

- Improved preparation and delivery of content
- Sessions that are more immersive and interactive

Graph showing challenges in integrating IKS:
- Lack of resources/materials — 12 (57.1%)
- Inadequate faculty training — 12 (57.1%)
- Curriculum rigidity — 11 (52.4%)
- Misconceptions about IKS — 12 (57.1%)
- Assessment issues — 3 (14.3%)
- Your questionnaire is not really… — 1 (4.8%)
- Flow of covering tooics — 1 (4.8%)

- Increased participation of faculty
- Integration with practical uses

Graph 4: Challenges in integrating IKS

Interpretation

1. The most frequent difficulties (chosen by more than 50% of the participants) The following are the main structural obstacles to IKS integration:

a. Insufficient materials or resources (12 responders, 57.1%) This challenge is tied with two others for the most citations. It implies:

- Not enough reference materials, modules, or textbooks.
- an absence of trustworthy, verified IKS content.
- Accessing community resources or local knowledge holders can be challenging.

b. Insufficient training for faculty (12 responders, 57.1%)

This illustrates:

- Teachers feel unprepared to teach IKS in a genuine way.
- a need for professional development, exposure, and workshops aimed at increasing capacity.
- Potential uneasiness or insecurity when dealing with unfamiliar or culturally sensitive information.

c. IKS misconceptions (12 responders, 57.1%) This suggests:

- enduring misconceptions or stereotypes (such as the idea that IKS is "unscientific" or out of date).
- difficulties persuading stakeholders of the legitimacy and applicability of IKS.
- ignorance of the ways in which IKS complements contemporary scientific and pedagogical methodologies.

d. Rigidity of the curriculum (11 respondents, 52.4%). This draws attention to structural obstacles:

- There isn't much space in the current curricula for new material.
- Innovation is hampered by strict evaluation or accreditation requirements.
- It could be difficult for teachers to naturally incorporate IKS into predetermined topics.

These four issues together suggest that systemic, structural, and knowledge-related constraints are the main obstacles, not lack of interest.

Findings

- The majority of teachers and students surveyed reported moderate awareness of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), with only a small fraction exhibiting high familiarity with its core domains such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic Mathematics, and Indian philosophy. Most participants could identify key areas of IKS but often lacked detailed understanding or practical exposure to these traditions
- Respondents displayed positive attitudes toward the integration of IKS, believing it can enhance holistic development, ethical reasoning, and cultural identity among students. Teachers especially expressed strong support for curriculum reforms rooted in IKS, though actual classroom use and practical implementation remain limited

Suggestion

- Ideas for Including IKS in Collaborative Curriculum Design in Higher Education: Collaborate with faculty, traditional practitioners, and IKS specialists to jointly develop multidisciplinary modules that blend academic rigor with real indigenous content.
- Faculty Development Programs: To guarantee accurate and interesting delivery, plan frequent workshops, training sessions, and practical advice for teachers in IKS pedagogy and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Flexible Curriculum Frameworks: Promote curriculum designs that are flexible enough to accommodate region-specific modifications and the integration of IKS across a range of subject areas.
- Contextual and Experiential Learning: To make learning more engaging and culturally relevant, include experiential techniques like yoga, meditation, storytelling, and field trips.Digital Repositories and
- Resources: Establish and grow digital platforms to give teachers and students easy access to IKS materials (texts, audio, video, and multimedia).

Conclusion

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education is a transformative and strategic approach that blends India's rich intellectual heritage with contemporary academic innovation. The survey results and literature confirm that IKS, when systematically embedded in curriculum and pedagogy, can foster holistic student development by enhancing ethical sensitivity, cultural awareness, intellectual rigor, and social responsibility. Despite moderate levels of awareness and acceptance, barriers such as limited curriculum materials, faculty capacity, and resource constraints confront the integration of IKS. However, both teachers and students recognize its relevance and support ongoing reforms, as outlined in recent policies like NEP 2020. To realize the full potential of IKS in higher education, a deliberate and interdisciplinary effort is required encompassing curriculum reform, faculty training, digital resource creation, and community partnerships. Ultimately, this fusion of ancient wisdom with modern knowledge will create graduates who are culturally grounded, globally competent, and prepared to tackle contemporary challenges with innovative and sustainable solutions. Institutions adopting IKS not only enrich their academic ecosystem but also contribute to a globally recognized and culturally rooted model of holistic learning for future generations.

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