

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into History Education under NEP 2020: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy 2020 highlights cultural rootedness, multilingualism, interdisciplinarity and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) as important aspects of the educational reform. History education is one especially important domain for such integration as it is a domain in which learners construct their understanding of evidence, identity, continuity, difference and past/present relationship. This conceptual policy-analysis paper explores the possibilities, problems and prospects for introducing IKS into school and university history curriculum. It draws from NEP 2020, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023, the guidelines of the University Grants Commission, the official initiatives by the Indian Knowledge System, the recommendations of the UNESCO, and scholarship on historical thinking and curriculum decolonization, and argues that meaningful integration cannot be achieved by mere celebratory content. It calls for multiple and verified sources, inclusiveness, multilingual access, professionally created teachers, inquiry-based pedagogy, and assessment that values interpretation over memorization. Major opportunities include local history research, environmental history, history of science and technology, oral traditions, community archives, arts, crafts, and regional intellectual traditions. The risks of homogenization, politicization, romanticization, poor source checking, insufficient teacher training, language issues, and examination-based instruction are all significant. It suggests a framework to go through policy alignment, source validation, curriculum design, teacher capacity, classroom inquiry, assessment, community feedback, and independent review in an iterative manner. It concludes that if viewed as a plural field of critical inquiry, rather than an inventory of civilizations, the IKS can enrich the understanding of history.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems, history education, NEP 2020, historical thinking, curriculum reform, decolonization, teacher education

Introduction

History is not just a matter of dates, dynasties, wars and constitutional events. It enables learners to understand how societies remember, how evidence is created, how identities change and why competing accounts of the past emerge. The classroom thus becomes a setting where students learn what occurred, but also how claims of the past can be assessed. This is bound up in the extraordinary linguistic, regional, religious, philosophical, ecological and artistic diversity of the subcontinent in India. In this context, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) calls for teaching India and critical thinking, scientific temper, constitutional values, creativity and global citizenship (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020). In terms of its curricular commitment, one of the most visible ones is the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems at different levels and disciplines.

It is important to understand that Indian Knowledge Systems is a multiple and dynamic entity and is not a single, static mass of information. It comprises intellectual traditions, practical arts, oral and textual transmission, institutions, learning, technologies, environmental knowledge, systems of reasoning, medical traditions, mathematical traditions, legal and political thinking, aesthetic practices and community-based ways of knowing. Kapoor and Singh (2005) highlight the diversity of the Indian knowledge traditions and the diversity of disciplines within them. Official policy documents also define IKS as interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary engagement, in turn, to span across multiple domains (University Grants Commission [UGC] 2023b). This breadth offers a great opportunity for history education; instead of reading history in the textbook, students can read history in the manuscripts, inscriptions, buildings, landscapes, oral narratives, performance, craft practices, local archives and the history of ideas.

Meanwhile, integration is not necessarily 'educational and good. Cultural material can be summarized as slogans, isolated facts, or heroic anecdotes. Uncontested claims may be submitted without this information. One of the finest or one of the languages can be used as a representative of the whole India. Myth, memory and history can be brought together, or they can be detached so severely that the cultural significance of narrative is removed. These risks are particularly high in the discipline of history where evidence, interpretation, power and identity are already intertwined. There is a clear warning against exaggeration or glorification in the guidance from UGC itself and it demands content that is authentic, scholarly, verifiable and backed by primary and secondary resources (UGC, 2023b). The issue of Indian knowledge in history education is not whether it should be there. The more challenging question is how to select it, contextualise it, debate it, teach it and evaluate it.

This paper provides a conceptual and policy discussion on this question. It examines the educational rationale for the integration of IKS, delineates key opportunities and implementation issues, and outlines a framework for the future. The argument is that IKS should not substitute historical method but should expand its archive to which historical method is applied. A robust curriculum would allow students to appreciate the knowledge passed on to them, and to pose historically informed questions regarding authorship, context, transmission, change, social location, evidence, and contemporary relevance. This can be a way to build cultural confidence and intellectual humility.

Method and Scope of the Paper

The narrative policy-analysis and conceptual review method is used in this paper. The sources of its are as follows: NEP 2020, National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 (NCF-SE), official data provided by Indian Knowledge Systems Division (IKSD) and UNESCO's report on culture and arts education in India 2024. These policy sources are read in conjunction with research on historical thinking, decolonization and on-going research into the implementation of IKS in education. While the analysis is not meant to be an attempt to catalogue all Indian knowledge traditions, it does focus on curriculum design, pedagogy, teacher preparation, source criticism, assessment, inclusion, and institutional implementation.

As this is not an empirical impact study, no claim is made that measurable learning gains for the nation have already been achieved because of the integration of IKS. The evidence base is limited, and recent studies offer early evidence of student interest and constraints at the classroom level. Waydande (2025), for instance, found in a study with 50 college students, a general positive attitude, but also issues with resources, teacher preparedness and conceptual unfamiliarity. In the school case study by Uma (2025), it was also identified that there was a disconnect between the policy intent to decolonize the curriculum and the practice of the teachers, which was linked to the inflexibility of syllabi, examinations, and teachers' professional development. Such investigations are good for coming up with implementation questions but cannot be generalized across the country in the absence of a local context.

Conception of IKS in History Education.

Any definition of IKS in history education that expects success will be free of two extremes. The first is reductionism – seeing IKS as a list of well-known persons, creations, scriptures or cultural achievements. The second is boundlessness—all the practices found in India are undifferentiated knowledge systems. Historical education needs categories that are sufficiently exact to facilitate inquiry. A curriculum may differentiate the knowledge found in text, the knowledge found in speech, the embodied or craft knowledge, the institutional knowledge, the ecological knowledge, the aesthetic knowledge, and the systems of the argument or proof. It can then ask how each is produced, authorised, transmitted, modified, translated, patronised, contested, and/or marginalised over time.

This way of thinking considers the historical nature of knowledge. A medical manuscript, an irrigation structure, an astronomical table, a weaving technique, a philosophical commentary, a court chronicle, a devotional poem, a tribal ecological narrative, or a colonial survey does not tell its own story. Both the sources arose in the context of language, labour, gender, caste, region, patronage, belief, and political power. Learners must thus explore the content of knowledge as well as its social history. Who could study it? Who did the work that allowed it to happen? Who saved it for posterity? What if it translated itself in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Urdu, English or any other language? How did something change through translation, institutional fall, colonial categorization, print, nationalism and the professionalization of modern times?

Historical thinking is the disciplinary link between cultural knowledge and critical inquiry. Historical thinking frequently involves both extending beyond the assumptions that are taken for granted in the present and engaging with other logics that are unfamiliar in one's own experience, Wineburg contends (2001). The historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical

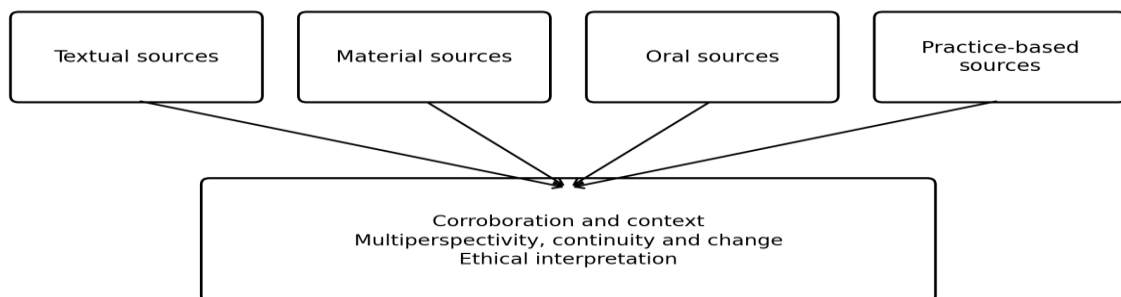
perspectives, and the ethical dimension are used as headings for organizing this work (Seixas & Morton, 2013). These ideas can be directly used in IKS. Learners can evaluate the significance of a tradition, compare manuscript and material evidence, trace change in a tradition, explain institutional change, reconstruct past viewpoints without supporting them and discuss issues of ownership, representation, and cultural appropriation.

The goal is neither reverence nor skepticism but understanding and questioning. It's a disciplined form of engagement. A source can be historically examined and have a sacred, a communal, an aesthetic, or an identity bearing value. Historical criticism, however, should not be employed to demean a tradition of all meaning for those who practice it. Ethical History education recognizes that history sources can be at once evidence, inheritance, performance and living practice.

Figure 1- *Illustrative source ecology for IKS-informed history education.*

Note. This original conceptual illustration shows how textual, material, oral, and practice-based sources can be brought into a common process of corroboration, contextualization, and multiperspectival interpretation.

Illustrative Source Ecology for IKS-Informed History Education



NEP 2020 is the new policy architecture, which is discussed about.

The broad normative support for integration of IKS is found in NEP 2020. It emphasizes learners' grounding in Indian culture and knowledge, their creativity, critical thinking, multilingualism, ethical thinking, and scientific temper (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020). This is a significant combination. Rootedness is not seen in relation to the lack of knowledge about the world but that the local and national traditions can become part of learning in a multidisciplinary and contemporary way. The policy also provides for experiential learning, integration of Arts, less burden of curricular, non-disciplinary boundaries and Indian languages. These features provide room for project-based, object-based, field-based, oral history-based and interdisciplinary-based history courses.

This orientation in school curriculum design has been continued in the NCF-SE 2023, and it focuses on culturally appropriate, competency oriented, multidisciplinary, and experiential education (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2023). For history and social science, this means changing the common notion that coverage of facts is the only way to demonstrate achievement. Pupils should be taught to ask questions, read and comprehend information, link local and national

processes and understand diversity. These goals may be achieved through culture, arts, language and place-based learning activities, provided they are connected to the explicit historical competencies.

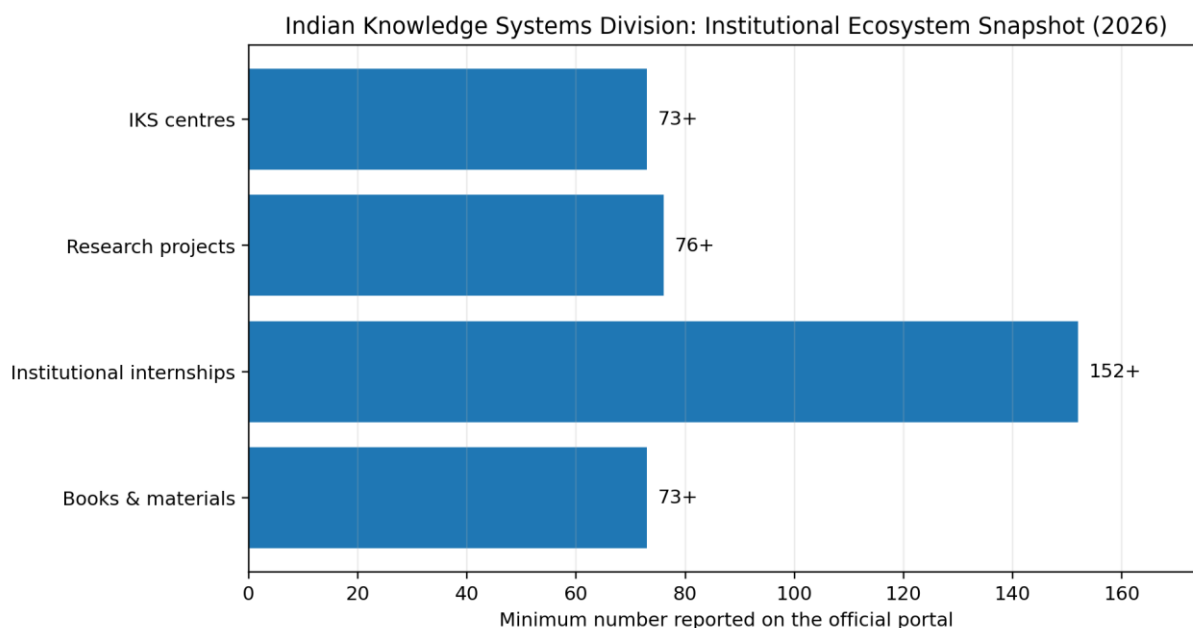
At the higher-education level, UGC guidance brings the integration agenda to life. The guidelines recommend that at least 5% (and ideally a higher proportion) of the total credit required for undergraduates and postgraduates to complete should be completed in IKS courses, with at least 50% of the credit allocated to IKS courses specifically related to their major discipline (UGC, 2023a). This offers an opportunity for discipline-specific courses for history departments like: Histories of Indian Knowledge Traditions, Manuscript Cultures, Environmental Knowledge and Landscape History, History of Science and Technology in India, Oral Traditions and Community Archives or Methods for Studying Intellectual Traditions.

The same architecture is a key component of faculty preparation. The recommendations that UGC makes include broad-based orientation, case studies, field visits, exposure to primary texts, audiovisual resources, micro research and innovative assessment. It also says that unverifiable content should not be used, and it recommends establishing a peer-review database of authentic content (UGC, 2023b). Overall, these provisions are particularly useful in the context of history education, as they foreground the quality of the content of sources and the pedagogical approach to the teaching of history. They also recognize that subject knowledge is not sufficient for teachers to prepare them to work across languages, texts, oral traditions, sciences, crafts, and community knowledge.

These policy statements have been accompanied by institutional development. The Indian Knowledge Systems Division was created to support centres, research, internships, documentation, faculty development, outreach and digital dissemination (Indian Knowledge Systems Division, 2026). According to the official portal's 2026 snapshot, there are a minimum of 73 centers, 76 research projects, 152 institutional internships and 73 books or materials. These numbers represent an increasing ecosystem, but not necessarily classroom impact. The following steps in implementation then should relate funded work more systematically to curriculum materials, teacher learning, and student assessment.

Figure 2- Indian Knowledge Systems Division institutional ecosystem snapshot (2026).

Note. The official portal presents these values with a plus sign; the chart uses the minimum stated number. The figures represent institutional activity and should not be interpreted as measures of learning impact. Source: Indian Knowledge Systems Division (2026).



There are opportunities for History Education.

The Historical Archive is expanding. The Historical Archive is growing.

The first opportunity is an expanded notion of historical evidence. Traditional textbooks tend to emphasize political stories and written state documents. History-oriented I.K.S. may be used to teach students about manuscripts, inscriptions, architecture, ecological landscapes, tools, craft processes, music, performance, oral narratives, genealogies, chronicles from local communities, mathematical procedures, healing traditions and community institutions. That does not imply that every source is of equal value for all questions. It involves the ability to correlate assertions to supporting evidence and to provide supporting evidence for a given type across the other types.

It is possible to begin the historical inquiry at a local water tank, stepwell, sacred grove, weaving cluster, astronomical observatory, monastery, temple, mosque, gurudwara, church archive, community festival, or family manuscript collection. Students have opportunities to record construction methods, patronage, labour, adaptation to the environment, ritual use, changes in ownership, colonial intervention, post-independence conservation and contemporary community significance. It is the work that helps in making history real and it helps in implementing experiential pedagogy as envisioned by the NEP 2020 and UGC guidelines (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020; UGC, 2023b).

Integrating local and regional histories with national histories.

The integration of IKS can alleviate the tendency to explain history in terms of the national scale only. India's knowledge traditions emerged in regional languages, migration, trade, pilgrimage, courtly

patronage, monastic networks, artisanal communities, agrarian systems and cross-border exchange. A locality can be the starting point of a history curriculum and then extended outwards. A question from a regional textile tradition might generate inquiries into raw materials used in agriculture, caste and community organization, women's work, trade itineraries, courtly consumption, colonial industrial policy, design exchange and current issues regarding intellectual property.

This approach to scale-switching will enable students to recognise that local history is not a veneer on national history. It's where national processes and global processes come to life. It also allows for the portrayal of regional and linguistic differences without having to impose a single civilizational narrative on every topic. UNESCO's 2024 Report on Culture and Arts Education also calls for cultural diversity and social cohesion, teachers' capability, repositories, assessment, and equal access as pre-requisites for meaningful integration.

Teaching Historical Thinking and Source Literacy

Because there are several traditions in each version and media, it is possible to teach source criticism using IKS materials. A learner can compare a section of the manuscript to a later commentary, an oral account to archaeological evidence, a technical description to an existing artifact, or a community memory to a colonial administrative document. These differences do not just represent mistakes that we need to remove, but shifts in purpose, audience, power, and history. Children are taught that evidence is built up by asking questions as well as gathering them.

This can also help to develop digital literacy. Claims of the past are easily accessed through online circulation, but not necessarily accurate. Students must be provided with procedures for identifying source, author, date, translation, institutional ownership, editorial process, citation, image manipulation, and scholarly discussion. Authentic and verifiable content is policy-based support for this work which has been given by UGC (2023b) in its insistence. IKS topics can then be leveraged to teach the same habits required to assess misinformation in the public sphere in a history course.

Supporting Multilingual and Interdisciplinary Learning

Students able to work only in English or only in one modern language have limited access to a large part of the historical archive in India. IKS integration provides a possibility to include alternative translations, contextual notes, glossary, original excerpts, transliteration, and source text in multilingual source packets. With no one able to master a classical language or a regional language, students can compare translations and analyze why the same language has different terms that do not translate exactly. This is developing respect for language as a vehicle for ideas and not a clear vehicle for information.

History departments are also able to work with archaeology, literature, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, environmental science, architecture, medicine, mathematics and the arts. The intent is not to have the historians decide on technical matters beyond their expertise. It is to look at the development of knowledge fields, their interaction with institutions and the changes over time. Interdisciplinary teaching may illuminate the history of proof, classification, observation, apprenticeship, textual commentary, measurement and the transmission of craft.

Enhancing Identity, Belonging and Ethical Reflection

If the regions, languages, communities, landscapes, and inherited practices the nation at large have seem as legitimate objects of study, students are more likely to perceive history as meaningful. The overall attitude of students in one college case towards IKS inclusion was positive and basically regarded as an enriching of cultural value and a meaning of intellectual value. The study is small, but it indicates the motivational benefits of curricular recognition. Students taking part in oral history or community-archival projects may also find that historical knowledge is created through responsibility: consent, accurate representation, attribution, preservation, and the return of historical research to communities. But it is not uniform pride, belonging. The mature historical identity may encompass the experience of admiration, grief, debate, contradiction and recognition of injustice. History that focuses on the IKS can address the achievements as well as exclusion, conflict, hierarchy, and change. It can ask who was canonized and whose work was forgotten, which traditions were ignored and how communities developed and changed over time in response to various political and economic circumstances. This aligns with the moral aspect of historical thinking as outlined by Seixas and Morton (2013).

Table 1- IKS domains and possible applications in history education.

IKS domain	Possible historical sources	Classroom inquiry	Historical-thinking focus
Institutions of learning	Monastic centers, gurukulas, madrasas, pathshalas, libraries, courtly and community institutions	Compare patronage, curriculum, access, networks, and institutional change	Evidence; continuity and change
Texts and intellectual traditions	Manuscripts, commentaries, translations, debates, scholastic lineages	Trace authorship, transmission, translation, interpretation, and canon formation	Historical perspectives; evidence
Science, mathematics, and medicine	Treatises, instruments, tables, case descriptions, material remains	Study methods, institutions, circulation, verification, and changing standards of knowledge	Cause and consequence; significance
Crafts and technologies	Tools, workshops, oral instructions, objects, guild or community records	Reconstruct labor, skill transmission, markets, design change, and social organization	Continuity and change; evidence
Ecological and agrarian knowledge	Water systems, sacred groves, cropping practices, seasonal calendars, landscapes	Connect environmental adaptation with economy, belief, governance, and climate history	Cause and consequence; significance

IKS domain	Possible historical sources	Classroom inquiry	Historical-thinking focus
Governance and legal thought	Normative texts, inscriptions, administrative records, local institutions	Compare ideals with practice and examine authority, rights, duties, and dispute resolution	Ethical dimension; perspectives
Oral, tribal, and community traditions	Songs, narratives, genealogies, performances, place memories	Document multiple versions and relate memory to migration, land, identity, and power	Perspectives; evidence
Arts and performance	Music, dance, theatre, iconography, architecture, craft traditions	Study patronage, audience, embodied knowledge, regional exchange, and modern revival	Significance; continuity and change

Note. The examples are illustrative. Selection should be adapted to region, age level, available expertise, and source quality. Challenges and Risks

Conceptual Ambiguity and Homogenization.

The width which renders IKS educationally promising is also rendering it hard to define. Lacking any selection criteria, curricula can turn into a random list of heritage topics. More seriously, a singular use of the term Indian knowledge may mask the plurality of regions, communities, languages, religions, castes, genders, occupations and historical periods. The plural logic of IKS would run counter to the narrow textual canon.

Representation is thus deliberately required for inclusion. Curriculum committees should consider whether materials contain knowledge of the tribal people and Adivasis, Dalit intellectual and social histories, women's knowledge and labour, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Islamic, Christian and other traditions, archives of regional languages, artisanal communities and borderland and diasporic exchanges. Token boxes should not be used for representation. These traditions should look significant and different within the context of history.

Romanticization, Presentism and Politicization

The other difficulty is judging history by contemporary pride or contemporary condemnation. Romanticization makes all claims inherited as facts and turns inquiry into celebration. Presentism is the use of present-day assumptions to evaluate historical people and events, and the failure of students to understand history in terms of the historical world. In politicizing evidence, one seeks to endorse a current identity or ideological stance. All three are detrimental to the quality of history education.

What is not needed is to avoid controversial topics but to teach procedures for productive disagreement. Claims must be related to dated sources, translation decisions, material evidence, historiographical debate, and levels of certainty. There should be a clear distinction between established evidence, plausible interpretation, contested interpretation, community belief and unsupported assertion in the textbooks and digital resources. The warnings and prohibitions of UGC on exaggeration and

glorification, and against unverifiable content should be regarded as a minimum quality standard (UGC, 2023b).

The teacher preparedness and the resource inequality.

Policy to classroom is the final link of critical importance: the teacher. The history curriculum must be oriented to the IKS and must include some skills in source criticism, local research, oral history ethics, basic manuscript literacy, museum or site pedagogy and working with specialists. Many teachers are not so prepared. Other challenges for faculty include having to grapple with new terms, inadequate translations, unavailable teaching packets, and deadlines for exam syllabus completion. However, when teachers were not provided with their sufficient time, flexibility, and professional development, support for curriculum decolonization did not necessarily shift textbook-centered practice (Uma, 2025).

These issues can be exacerbated by resource inequality. High-tech tools, travel, experts, and access to archives are all more readily available to well-resourced urban institutions, while rural or under-resourced schools can have limited accessibility to connectivity, libraries, and staff. However, when carefully designed, local history pedagogy can also alleviate the need for expensive resources. Low-cost recording and documentation protocols can be used for community sites, oral accounts, local objects and local landscape. To achieve equity, grants, open resources, translation support, digital formats and alternatives to in-school travel must be made available.

Identifying the origin of a source and its translation and protecting IP rights.

The web may have lots of questionable heritage information that is not credited, not dated, or has circular citations, or quotes that were fabricated. Add to this the difficulty of translation, as some specialized concepts can have more than one meaning during different periods and different schools. An extract translated without any manuscript information, editor, date, and interpretive note can give a false sense of security. National and institutional repositories are thus required to provide metadata, images or stable editions (where legally allowed), history debates, scholarly commentary, and unambiguous statements of debate.

Ethical and intellectual-property issues arise when the community knows. All knowledge is not to be recorded, digitized or made public. Traditions have limitations regarding custodianship, gender, initiation, sacredness, season, and community consent. No extraction for educational projects. Oral history and community research protocols should make explicit a variety of points: informed consent, agreed use, attributions, secure storage, right to withdraw when possible, and returning outputs to participants.

The process of assessing and the persistence of rote learning

If the exam continues to focus on recall, then the inquiry-based curriculum will not work. The assessment system is rationally used by the students and teachers. When measured in terms of lists of ancient texts, dates, personalities and achievements, then IKS will just be another memorisation task. But instead of assessment based on source comparison, an explanation supported by evidence, annotated

timelines, object biographies, local-history reports, oral-history reflection, map interpretation, and short historiographical essays.

Standards must also be protected in the process of assessment reform. The grading of project work should not be primarily for decoration, and for expressions of pride. Rubrics should assess the quality of the question(s), source identification, corroboration, context, accuracy, recognition of uncertainty, multiple perspectives, argument, citing, and ethical practice. This is congruent with Wineburg's (2001), and Seixas and Morton's (2013) emphasis on historical learning and the competencies that they identified.

Table 2- Opportunities, risks, and safeguards for IKS integration.

Opportunity	Corresponding risk	Safeguard
Greater cultural relevance	Symbolic celebration without analysis	Link every topic to historical questions, evidence, and explicit learning outcomes
Expanded use of local and community sources	Uncritical use of memory or community authority	Corroborate sources; teach differences among memory, tradition, and historical claims
Multilingual access	Poor or decontextualized translation	Provide metadata, translators' notes, glossaries, and alternative renderings
Interdisciplinary learning	Teachers making technical claims beyond competence	Use team teaching, specialist review, and historically bounded questions
Decolonization of curriculum	Replacement of one dominant canon with another	Ensure plural representation and transparent selection criteria
Digital dissemination	Rapid spread of misinformation	Create peer-reviewed repositories with stable citations and provenance
Fieldwork and experiential learning	Unequal access, safety issues, or tourism without inquiry	Offer low-cost local alternatives, risk protocols, and inquiry worksheets
Community participation	Extraction or misuse of restricted knowledge	Use consent, attribution, benefit-sharing, and culturally appropriate access rules
Identity and belonging	Polarization or exclusion	Teach multiperspectivity, constitutional values, and the ethical dimension of history

This is a Pedagogical Framework for Responsible Integration.

Responsible integration should be planned in a sequence and not as an addition to content. The first step is policy alignment: the institutions determine the learning objectives to be met by IKS material. They can be the evaluation of the evidence, the awareness of local history, multilingual literacy,

environmental understanding, or the history of ideas. The second stage is source validation. Provenance is reviewed, dating is examined, editions and translations are considered, scholarly debate is discussed, community permissions are considered, and age appropriateness is considered by interdisciplinary teams. The third stage is inclusive curriculum design, as topics are chosen from regions, communities, media and social locations.

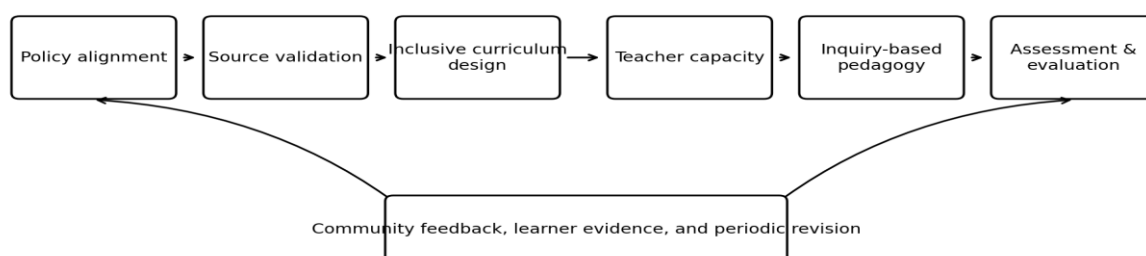
The fourth step is teacher capacity building. Professional development should reflect and embody best practices in classrooms. Teachers should use manuscript excerpt, object, oral testimony, site map, technical description, or digital claim rather than lectures to convey IKS content. They should have experience with sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and designing questions of inquiry. UGC's suggested orientation model based on overview, case studies, pedagogy, field studies, primary sources, micro research, and new approaches to evaluation is useful to begin with (UGC, 2023b). Mentoring and/or subject networks will be required following the initial workshop to help teachers get feedback as they implement the units.

The fifth stage is pedagogy within a classroom that is inquiry based. It is not necessary to start a unit with a summary chapter; it can start with a puzzling source. Students ask questions like the following: What is it? Who made it? For whom? When? Why? They present evidence, outline changes, assess claims and provide an argument. Aligned Assessment with clear rubrics is the sixth stage. The last step is evaluation and revision. Materials should be revised with the support of student work, teacher reflections, community feedback and external review. This cycle helps the curriculum to avoid becoming static and helps fix errors and exclusions.

Figure 3- Evidence-based framework for integrating IKS into history education.

Note. This original model treats integration as an iterative process. Community feedback and learner evidence inform periodic review rather than serving as a one-time consultation.

Evidence-Based Framework for Integrating IKS into History Education



The four-week inquiry unit teaches. Illustrative Teaching Model: a Four-Week Inquiry Unit The following 4-week unit is an example of how the framework could be used: “Knowledge, Water and Society in the Local Region”. In Week 1, students look at images, maps, oral histories, inscriptions, revenue records or municipal documents about a water structure or traditional system in their local community. They pose questions about date, building, upkeep, entry, workers, ritual, farming, and

environmental change. Teacher introduces source provenance and introduces the concept of observation vs. inference. During Week 2, groups compare the local case to a second regional case from a provided source packet. They recognise continuity and change and consider how the word 'traditional' can conceal innovation over time. Week 3: Students visit a site (or virtual/local site) and interview a custodian or community member, then they record current uses in a consent process. They examine evidence, both written and material, and testimony. In week 4, students create an evidence-based exhibit panel or essay with a specific question, for instance: How was the use of this water system influenced by the social organisation and how has this changed? The rubric is designed to give credit for sourcing, corroboration, context, argument, citation, ethical reflection, and acknowledging uncertainty. The unit brings together the elements of the environmental history, local knowledge, material culture, oral history, and civic questions, without assuming an inherited practice is automatically better or worse or is inherently a "thing of the past. It also does not leave a dichotomy between IKS and modern science. Students can explore how a historical system functioned in a specific environment and social context and analyze what adaptations would be necessary in modern times.

Future Directions

Create a Verified, Multilingual, Open Educational Repository

The need most in need and the most pressing is a curated national repository for teaching, rather than a collection of links. Each item must contain an introduction, the author or creator, date, place, language, rights situation, transcription, translation, scholarly annotation, grade-level suggestion, historical questions and sources. Materials should be peer reviewed and versioned to allow for corrections to be seen. Regional institutions such as universities, archives, museums, libraries, manuscript missions, tribal research institutes and community groups should participate in common metadata and ethical terms. Open access is paramount, but openness cannot be at the expense of custodianship. The repository should have restricted access levels for restricted community materials and should include culturally appropriate use conditions. Low-bandwidth formats, screen-reader compatibility, captions, transcripts, image descriptions, and downloadable printable packets are examples of accessibility features. Shared infrastructure is reiterated in UNESCO's call for a national culture and arts educational repository (UNESCO, 2024).

Develop Sustained Teacher Learning Pathways

Short orientation programs should be complemented by micro-credential modules on local history, oral history, the use of manuscripts and archives, material culture, digital source verification, museum pedagogy, and inclusive curriculum design. It is possible to establish district-level mentor networks that connect historians, archaeologists, language scholars, artisans, community knowledge holders and schoolteachers. For teachers to develop and test inquiry units, provide small grants and workload recognition for teachers.

Professional learning should also prepare teachers in how to handle controversy. They require ways of separating evidence from belief without embarrassing learners, ways of getting learners to disagree, ways of marking uncertainty, ways of preventing exclusion of minority learners etc. Teacher assessment

should not only cover the knowledge and terminology of the IKS, but also the capacity to plan and assess student reasoning on work using sources.

Apply the Principles of Pilot before Scaling and Evaluate Learning

Don't rely on policy enthusiasm in place of evaluation. Materials should be piloted in a variety of school types, languages, regions and resource levels. Students should be assessed for their improvement in sourcing, corroboration, contextualization, chronological reasoning, perspective-taking, and written arguments. It should also explore the issue of belonging, the role of classroom participation, teacher workload, community experience, and unintended exclusion. Comparisons with other groups or well-designed pre-post designs can support more evidence than just satisfaction surveys.

Madhu and Mantry (2026) warn that while there may be symbolic representation of indigenous knowledge, there must also be a shift in curricular changes, including shifts in curriculum assumptions and pedagogy. This knowledge indicates that assessment should not focus solely on the number of IKS courses, centres or materials. So, has the nature of the relationship in the classroom changed in relation to knowledge: Are pupils asking better questions? Do you have more source traditions? Can teachers deal with ambiguity? Does there exist a voice for the marginalized, or is that voice being heard? Is it true that claims are substantiated?

Adopt Participatory and Plural Curriculum Governance

Historians, teachers, language specialists, archaeologists, scientists, archivists, education researchers, representatives from the diverse community, and child development and assessment specialists should be part of curriculum governance. The public review should not be based on popularity but should be organized in terms of evidence and criteria. Draft material should show sources selected, scholarly differences, and representation audits. Independent review panels may consider factual accuracy, pedagogical quality, inclusion, and political balance.

The need for plural governance is especially relevant as IKS is not a neutral inventory. Who gets to claim knowledge, when, and for which community is a historical and political matter. Agreements cannot be avoided through transparent procedures, but they can be held accountable and revisable.

Connect History Education to Living Heritage but not Freeze It!

There are still knowledge traditions in existence that are undergoing practice-based change. Artisans use new tools, performers reinterpret repertoires, healing traditions engage with regulation, farmers blend local and scientific knowledge, and communities renegotiate heritage in the presence of tourism, markets, migration and environmental stress. History should communicate this dynamism, not the idea of living communities as "survivors" from a "static past".

Co-designed exhibitions, community archives, observing apprenticeships, oral history projects and student documentation are all possible kinds of partnership. The learning process should be two ways, communities should be able to have access to recordings and outputs and opportunities to correct representation and be recognised as contributors. Students are then introduced to the idea that heritage isn't just passed on, it is chosen, discussed, preserved, changed, even forgotten.

Table 3-Phased implementation roadmap.

Phase	Key actions	Responsible actors	Expected outputs	Illustrative indicators
1. Design and source audit	Define learning outcomes; map existing curriculum; identify regional and community sources; verify provenance and rights	Curriculum bodies, historians, archives, community representatives	Reviewed source bank and representation audit	Share of materials with complete metadata; diversity of source types and regions
2. Teacher preparation	Develop inquiry modules; train mentors; model source criticism, fieldwork, ethics, and assessment	Teacher-education institutions, universities, SCERTs, HEIs	Teacher packets, micro-credentials, mentor networks	Teacher competency portfolios; quality of lesson plans
3. Pilot implementation	Test units in diverse institutions; provide grants and coaching; collect learner work and feedback	Selected schools/colleges, district teams, researchers	Pilot reports and revised materials	Historical-thinking gains; teacher workload; participation and equity
4. Responsible scaling	Release multilingual OER; adapt assessments; fund low-resource settings; establish support networks	NCERT/SCERTs, UGC, boards, universities, governments	Scaled courses and accessible repositories	Usage across languages and regions; accessibility; trained-teacher coverage
5. Independent evaluation and revision	Conduct external review; audit accuracy, inclusion, outcomes, and community ethics; publish corrections	Independent panels, researchers, public stakeholders	Evaluation reports and new editions	Correction rate; learning outcomes; representation indicators; community satisfaction

Discussion

Integrating IKS into history education is part of a global discussion on the relation between formal education, cultural diversity, indigenous knowledge and epistemic justice. But in India, it is a scale and complexity all its own. Any national system should facilitate coherence, but not uniformity in terms of regional/community diversity. It must be a space that promotes cultural recovery without creating certainty. It should facilitate access to classical and vernacular archives and emphasize oral, embodied and labour-based knowledge. It also needs to make sure that the rhetoric of decolonization is not used as a pretext for riding oneself of historical criticism or international scholarly dialogue.

Positive policy measures have paved the way for a positive institutional setting. NEP 2020 provides a normative direction, NCF-SE 2023 supports competency, culture, arts and experiential learning, UGC

guidelines provide curricular and faculty-development mechanisms, and the IKS Division supports centers, projects, internships and materials. But implementation should be assessed according to the quality of learning not the presence of the label 'IKS'. Bhandarkar (2026) also mentions that curriculum design, teacher preparation, and evidence-based practices are conducive to successful integration. The key work is to take a broad policy aspiration and turn this into well resourced, inclusive, classroom-ready historical enquiries.

One test is: Would it be a good history education if the cultural label were dropped on an IKS unit? Is it a profound question? Does it employ suitable primary and secondary sources? Does it make a distinction between observation, interpretation and claim? Does it take several viewpoints? Does it show continuity and change? Does it allow for disputation and doubt? Is it ethical towards communities? If the answer is yes, then it is likely the unit will enhance both historical thinking and historical content. Otherwise, it can turn into fluffy fluff content.

The proposed framework thus views IKS integration as curricular transformation, instead of content insertion. It alters who is a source, who can be sources of knowledge of the past, where learning takes place, what languages are important and how understanding is demonstrated. This at its best can make history more rigorous as learners have to work with heterogeneous evidence. It has the potential to make history more inclusive, because local, regional, community and embodied knowledge are deposited in the archive. It can make history more relevant because students relate inherited practices to questions that are current, but do not believe that the past has the answers.

Conclusion

The incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems in the education of History with NEP 2020 will provide a great opportunity to expand the archive, enrich cultural and linguistic relevance, support experiential learning and develop Historical thinking. The opportunity is not so much to include more facts about India. To allow learners to learn about the production, circulation, contestation, inscription, translation, institutionalization, disruption and renewal of knowledge in the various histories of India.

The task is also massive. Ambiguous definitions, homogenization, romanticization, politicization, unverifiable claims, weak translation, teacher unpreparedness, resource inequality, examination pressure and ethical issues in community research can all affect the project. Avoiding IKS will not resolve these risks. They need better history education: authentic sources, clear uncertainty, multiple representation, multilingual materials, professional learning, inquiry assessment, participatory governance and external evaluation.

It should thus be evidence-based and iterative. Institutions should establish verified repositories, provide teacher preparation through repeated practice, test materials in a variety of contexts, assess historical reasoning and inclusion, and engage in scholarly and community review of curricula. Cultural rootedness combined with source criticism and Mult perspectivity can make IKS a strong tool to engage students with the past of India without closing the past to debate. The outcome would not be a history education to merely glorify what has come before it, but rather an education to help students understand, question, preserve, reinterpret and responsibly carry forward.

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