The Role of Indian Knowledge System

Dr. Seema Dekate＊

＊**Asst.Prof. (English) Govt. M.B. Arts and Commerce Autonomous College for Women, Jabalpur (M.P.) INDIA**

Introduction - The Indian Knowledge Systems is a specific cell within the Indian government's Ministry of Education designed to integrate traditional indigenous wisdom into modern academic frameworks. It was established in 2020,and this initiative encourages universities to offer credits for learning ancient sciences, Vedic mathematics, and traditional health practices like yoga and Ayurveda. Supporters argue that the programme preserves national heritage and serves to decolonise the education system by reducing Western bias. However, the division faces significant backlash from critics who claim it promotes pseudoscience and historical inaccuracies to serve a political agenda. Opponents further worry that replacing global academic standards with these curricula might hinder the professional prospects of Indian graduates. Despite these debates, the IKS continues to fund research animplement traditional games and philosophies across diverse educational levels.

The need for Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the present day is driven by the desire to address contemporary global challenges while restoring a distinct national and cultural identity.A primary motivation for promoting IKS is its potential to tackle modern crises, most notably climate change. Proponents argue that ancient principles—such as dharma-centric design and ecological balance—can enrich modern technological thinking by aligning it with human values and environmental sustainability. This is rooted in the IKS emphasis on living in harmony between human activity and nature.

There is a significant perceived need to decolonise Indian education by reducing what is viewed as undue Western influence. By integrating IKS, the government aims to preserve Indian heritage and expose students to the country's rich intellectual traditions, fostering a well-rounded worldview and making individuals more culturally and socially conscious.

In present times, education aims to move beyond mere academic excellence toward holistic development. This involves:
• Integrated Learning: Incorporating traditional arts, ethics, and sports (such as the Bharatiya Khel initiative) into the educational fabric.
• Mental and Physical Health: Exploring the therapeutic values of Indian music and consciousness studies to improve the overall well-being of the human body and mind. Economic and Global Competence IKS is presented as a tool to enhance the professional and economic standing of students in a modern, interconnected world:
• Practical Application: It emphasises hands-on learning and honing problem-solving skills to address real-world issues with creativity.
• Entrepreneurial Mindset: The system encourages students to become "creators rather than job seekers" by instilling a spirit of innovation and risk-taking.
• Global Fluency: By providing cultural fluency, IKS seeks to position students for success in a globalised environment where international competence is essential.

Foundational Logic and Critical Thinking Ancient philosophical frameworks, such as Nyaya, are considered relevant today because they laid the groundwork for logical reasoning and debate, which continue to be vital in contemporary philosophy and science.

To understand its role, one might view the integration of IKS as reconnecting a modern building to its ancient, sturdy foundation; while the structure serves modern purposes, it gains its stability and unique character from the original architecture beneath it.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a comprehensive overhaul designed to transform the Indian education system to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Its primary objectives focus on harmonising India's rich intellectual heritage with modern educational practices to create a more inclusive, holistic, and innovative learning environment.

According to the sources, the key objectives of the policy include:

1. Integration and Revitalisation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) - A central pillar of NEP 2020 is the formal recognition and integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge into the mainstream curriculum. This aims to:
• Preserve and transmit India's cultural and intellectual heritage—such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Sanskrit, and ancient

sciences—to future generations.

• Introduce IKS at all educational levels, from primary to higher education, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of national roots.

• Enable students to earn academic credit for courses relating to ancient Indian sciences and arts through the National Credit Framework.

2. Holistic and Multi-disciplinary Development- The policy shifts the focus from purely academic or professional growth to the overall development of the student. This includes:

• Providing a well-rounded education that incorporates moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

• Promoting optimum wellbeing by integrating traditional practices like mindfulness (Vipassana), yoga, and heritage studies.

• Encouraging an interdisciplinary approach that bridges the gap between traditional wisdom and modern scientific and technological advancements.

3. Language Preservation and Promotion - The NEP 2020 views local and classical languages as vital repositories of traditional knowledge. Its objectives in this area are to:

• Promote education in regional languages and dialects to preserve the local knowledge embedded within them.

• Rejuvenate and promote classical languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit alongside contemporary languages.

4. Research, Innovation, and Global Competence- The policy seeks to position India as a leader in innovation by drawing on its past. Objectives include:

• Encouraging research and development in traditional knowledge systems to find sustainable solutions for modern problems, such as climate change and wellness.

• Establishing dedicated research centres for the advancement of IKS.

• Equipping students with unique perspectives and critical thinking skills that enhance their global competence and broaden their worldview.

5. Strengthening Cultural Identity - A major objective is the decolonisation of Indian education by reducing undue Western influences. The policy aims to strengthen a student's connection to their roots, fostering a sense of pride in their heritage and making them more culturally and socially conscious individuals.

In essence, the National Education Policy 2020 seeks to act as a bridge between the past and the future, using the sturdy bricks of ancient wisdom to build a structure capable of weathering the complexities of the modern world.the government's promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) within academic curricula is driven by several primary motivations ranging from cultural preservation to practical modern application.

The core motivations include:

• Decolonisation and Cultural Identity: A major driver is the desire to decolonise Indian education by reducing what is perceived as undue Western influence. The government aims to preserve Indian heritage and expose students to the country's rich intellectual traditions, fostering a well-rounded worldview and making individuals more culturally and socially conscious.

• Addressing Modern Problems with Ancient Wisdom: The sources indicate a mission to apply ancient knowledge to contemporary challenges, such as climate change. Proponents argue that IKS principleslike dharma-centric design and ecological balancecan enrich modern technological thinking by aligning it with environmental sustainability and human values.

• Holistic Student Development: Promotion of IKS is intended to move beyond purely academic excellence to focus on holistic development. This includes integrating traditional arts, ethics, and sports (such as the Bharatiya Khel initiative) to cultivate a diverse skill set and encourage "living in harmony with nature".

• Practical Application and Problem-Solving: The curriculum is designed to emphasise hands-on learning and practical insights, fostering a generation capable of solving real-world problems with creativity. This includes teaching traditional sciences, mathematics (such as Vedic maths), and medicine (Ayurveda and Yoga) to provide students with diverse analytical tools.

• Economic and Global Competence: The government seeks to instil an entrepreneurial mindset in students, encouraging them to become "creators rather than job seekers" through innovation and risk-taking. Furthermore, the emphasis on cultural fluency is intended to position students for success in an interconnected world where global competence is essential.While these are the stated goals, the sources also note that critics interpret these motivations differently. Some assert that the implementation of IKS is a tool for ideological indoctrination or "saffronisation" related to Hindutva politics, rather than a purely scholarly effort. Others express concern that focusing on indigenous knowledge might deprive students of useful Western knowledge or render graduates less employable in the modern workforce.

The primary criticisms of the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) division's curricula focus on scientific accuracy, political ideology, and the future employability of students.

According to the sources, the main criticisms are as follows:

• Promotion of Pseudoscience and Pseudohistory: Critics argue that the curricula often "peddle pseudoscience and pseudohistory". Specifically, some IKS textbooks have been described as a "Trojan horse of pseudoscience" for making historically unsubstantiated claims. For example, one textbook asserts that aeronautics was developed by the Maharshi Bhardwaj an 5,000 years before the Wright Brothers and that the theory of gravity was established in the Rig Veda long before Isaac Newton.

• Ideological Indoctrination: A significant concern among critics is that the IKS initiative serves as a tool for indoctrination by the Hindutva ideology of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Scholars have alleged that the government uses these textbooks to propagate a specific political agenda and far-right Hindu nationalist views.

• Lack of Genuine Decolonisation: While the government frames IKS as a way to "decolonise" the mind, some academics argue the project lacks the necessary critical dialogue with history and dominant modern disciplines. Without this critical engagement, they assert that the program fails to be a genuine scholarly decolonisation effort and instead "boils down to becoming one of indoctrination".

• Economic and Professional Disadvantage: There is a strong concern that an emphasis on IKS could bias students against useful Western knowledge or deprive them of it entirely. Critics warn that this could lead to an "intellectual disaster" and render Indian graduates less employable or under-employed in the global workforce. Because of these risks, some stakeholders have urged that IKS courses remain optional rather than mandatory.

In essence, critics view the curriculum not as a bridge to the past, but as a foggy mirror that reflects a mythologised version of history, potentially obscuring the practical skills and objective truths students need to navigate the modern world.

The National Credit Framework (NCF) functions as the primary regulatory mechanism for integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the formal academic structure of India. Its introduction has made it possible for students to earn academic credit for completing courses related to ancient Indian sciences and arts, thereby legitimising these subjects within the national curriculum. Key roles of the NCF in relation to IKS include:

• Credit Standardisation: According to University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines, it is advised that 5 per cent of a student's total credits at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels should be earned through IKS courses.

• Policy Implementation: The NCF is a key tool for delivering the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises the inclusion of IKS at all levels of education.

• Academic Legitimacy: By allowing these topics to carry credit, the framework moves IKS from being merely extracurricular to being a formal part of a student's transcript, covering subjects such as Vedic mathematics, various Shastras, and traditional medicine like Ayurveda.

• Facilitating Research and Collaboration: The ability to earn credits encourages academic and research partnerships, such as the MoUs signed between various Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) to promote IKS projects.

Despite its role in formalising these studies, the NCF's application in IKS has faced scrutiny. Some stakeholders argue that while these credit courses are relevant, they should remain optional to ensure they do not become a burden on students or negatively impact their global employability.

To clarify its function, the National Credit Framework acts as a currency exchange for education; it provides the "exchange rate" that allows traditional, indigenous knowledge to be converted into the standard academic "currency" required for a modern degree.

The impact of Indian Knowledge Systems and Indigenous Knowledge Systems more broadly ranges from educational reform and cultural revitalisation to significant socio-economic shifts and intense academic controversy. The primary impacts identified in the sources include:

Educational and Holistic Development

• Transformation of the Learning Environment: Integrating IKS into the modern curriculum is intended to move education beyond purely academic excellence toward holistic development, incorporating traditional arts, ethics, and sports.

• Enhanced Critical Thinking: Exposure to diverse knowledge systems is expected to foster critical thinking and provide students with a broader worldview.

• Cultural Identity: A major impact is the strengthening of a student's connection to their roots, fostering a sense of national pride and personal growth by exposing them to their rich intellectual heritage.

• Global Competence and Entrepreneurship: By providing unique perspectives, IKS aims to equip students for success in the global arena and instill an entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging them to become creators rather than job seekers.

Socio-Economic and Sustainable Growth

• Poverty Eradication and Economic Redress: In contexts like South Africa, IKS is viewed as a critical tool for redressing historical inequities and eradicating poverty by using indigenous knowledge to make appropriate local interventions.

• Sustainable Solutions: Drawing from traditional practices, IKS offers innovative approaches to contemporary issues such as climate change, environmental sustainability, and wellness.

• Community Empowerment: The promotion of IKS encourages the establishment of small and medium enterprises (SMMEs), particularly in rural areas, and recognises the crucial role of women as primary natural resource managers and custodians of knowledge.

Regulatory and Legal Infrastructure

• Institutionalisation of Knowledge: The impact has led to the creation of formal government divisions and the integration of IKS into the National Credit Framework, allowing students to earn academic credit for traditional subjects.

• Protection Against Biopiracy: To prevent misappropriation, the development of recordable systems

and registries, such as India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, allows indigenous communities to challenge patents granted to others for their traditional practices.

• Healthcare Integration: The formal recognition of traditional medicine, such as Ayurveda and Siddha, has led to the registration and regulation of traditional health practitioners to ensure safety and quality.

Criticisms and Controversial Impacts

• Scientific and Historical Accuracy: A significant negative impact cited by critics is the promotion of pseudoscience and pseudohistory. For example, some IKS textbooks claim aeronautics existed 5,000 years before the Wright brothers, which critics label a "Trojan horse" for unsubstantiated claims.

• Ideological Concerns: Many scholars argue that the curriculum serves as a tool for indoctrination into specific political or nationalist ideologies rather than being a genuine decolonisation effort.

• Professional Disadvantage: There is a concern that an over-emphasis on indigenous knowledge could bias students against useful Western knowledge, potentially rendering graduates less employable or under-employed in the global workforce.

To understand the varied impact of IKS, one might compare it to restoring an ancient library within a modern glass skyscraper; while it provides the building with a unique character and foundational wisdom that newer structures lack, the integration must be done with precision to ensure it does not compromise the skyscraper's structural integrity or its ability to function in a modern city.

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and indigenous knowledge more broadly into modern academic curricula faces a multifaceted set of challenges, ranging from practical implementation hurdles to deep-seated ideological and scientific disputes.

The following challenges are identified in the sources:

Pedagogical and Institutional Hurdles

• Teacher Preparedness and Training: A significant challenge is the need for capacity building; educators require special programmes to equip them with the specific knowledge and skills necessary to teach IKS effectively. The University Grants Commission in India, for instance, aims to train 1.5 million teachers by 2025 to address this gap.

• Resource Constraints: Developing and implementing a new curriculum requires adequate funding and resources for documentation, research, and the creation of educational materials.

• Curriculum Balance: Educational planners face the difficult task of harmonising traditional and modern knowledge without overwhelming students or diluting the existing academic standards.

• Historical Marginalisation: In some regions, indigenous knowledge was historically suppressed or ridiculed by colonial or apartheid regimes. This legacy has led to IKS

often being viewed as "non-legitimate" or shrouded in mystery, making it harder to integrate into mainstream systems.

Academic and Ideological Disputes

• Scientific and Historical Accuracy: A primary criticism is that some IKS curricula promote pseudoscience and pseudohistory. Critics point to claims in textbooks that aeronautics existed 5,000 years before the Wright brothers or that gravity was discovered in the Rig Veda long before Isaac Newton as examples of unsubstantiated mythology being presented as fact.

• Ideological Indoctrination: There are concerns that the promotion of IKS is used as a tool for political or nationalist indoctrination. Critics argue that without a critical dialogue with history, the initiative may serve an ideological agenda rather than a scholarly decolonisation effort.

• Conflict with Modern Science: Reconciling the contradictions between Western scientific methods and traditional knowledge remains a point of contention. Some argue that giving them equal status inhibits science from questioning claims made by indigenous systems.

Socio-Economic and Global Risks

• Employability Concerns: Stakeholders warn that an over-emphasis on IKS could deprive students of useful Western knowledge, potentially rendering graduates less employable or under-employed in a competitive global workforce. Consequently, some suggest that IKS courses should remain optional rather than mandatory.

• Biopiracy and Intellectual Property: The lack of formal recordal systems makes indigenous knowledge vulnerable to biopiracy, where foreign entities patent traditional practices without providing benefits to the original community. Establishing these legal protections is a complex and ongoing challenge.

• Language Attrition: Because much indigenous knowledge is stored in regional languages and dialects, the rapid disappearance of language diversity due to globalisation threatens the survival of the knowledge itself.

Cultural Transmission

• Threat to Oral Traditions: Many forms of indigenous knowledge are passed down orally across generations. These traditions are under constant threat of extinction due to Westernisation and rapid technological development, which can disrupt traditional community-based learning.

To understand these challenges, the integration of IKS can be likened to weaving a traditional tapestry into a modern high-tech fabric; the challenge lies not only in finding the right thread and skilled weavers but also in ensuring that the new pattern is functionally sound and widely accepted by those who must wear it.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework designed to transform the Indian education system to meet the challenges of the 21st century while rejuvenating the country's rich educational heritage. The primary objectives of NEP 2020, as detailed in the

sources, include:

• Integration and Revitalisation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): A central pillar of the policy is to restore and promote traditional knowledge—including ancient sciences, arts, and languages—alongside contemporary education. This aims to ensure that such knowledge is preserved and transmitted to future generations by integrating it into the mainstream curriculum at all levels.

• Holistic and Well-Rounded Development: The policy moves beyond purely academic excellence to focus on the overall development of students. This includes incorporating moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions into education, as well as practical health and wellness practices such as Yoga and mindfulness.

• Promotion of Local and Classical Languages: NEP 2020 seeks to promote education in regional languages and dialects, which are viewed as vital repositories of traditional knowledge. It also places a heavy emphasis on preserving and promoting classical languages like Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit.

• Fostering an Interdisciplinary Approach: One of the fundamental goals is to bridge the gap between modern scientific advancements and traditional wisdom. By encouraging the blending of these systems, the government hopes to foster innovation and find sustainable solutions to contemporary problems like climate change.

• Strengthening Cultural Identity and Pride: The policy aims to decolonise the Indian mind by reducing undue Western influences and strengthening a student's connection to their roots. This is intended to foster a sense of national pride and a more socially conscious worldview.

• Developing Global Competence and Innovation: While focusing on heritage, the policy also aims to equip students with unique perspectives and critical thinking skills necessary for success in the global arena. It seeks to instill an entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging students to become "creators rather than job seekers" through a premium on practical application and problem-solving.

• Inclusive and Equitable Education: By valuing diverse knowledge systems and indigenous practices, NEP 2020 intends to create a more inclusive learning framework that respects diversity and promotes educational equity.

To understand these objectives, you might think of NEP 2020 as upgrading a historic university's software while reinforcing its ancient foundation; the goal is to provide students with the latest tools to navigate the modern world without losing the foundational wisdom that gives the institution its unique identity and strength.

Implementing Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) — and indigenous knowledge systems more broadly — into modern education faces a multifaceted array of challenges. These hurdles range from practical institutional requirements to deep-seated academic and ideological disputes.

According to the sources, the primary challenges

include:

Pedagogical and Institutional Hurdles

• Teacher Preparedness and Training: A significant barrier is the lack of educators equipped with the specific skills and knowledge required to teach IKS effectively. The scale of this challenge is evident in India, where the University Grants Commission (UGC) aims to train 1.5 million teachers by 2025 to bridge this gap.

• Curriculum Balance: Educational planners must find a way to harmonise traditional and modern knowledge so that the curriculum remains balanced and does not overwhelm students.

• Resource Constraints: Developing IKS-integrated curricula requires substantial funding and resource mobilisation for the documentation, preservation, and dissemination of traditional knowledge.

Academic and Scientific Disputes

• Accuracy and Pseudoscience: A major criticism is that some IKS materials promote pseudoscience and pseudohistory. Critics point to claims in textbooks that aeronautics existed 5,000 years before the Wright brothers or that gravity was discovered in the Rig Veda long before Isaac Newton as examples of historically unsubstantiated mythology being taught as fact.

• Ideological Indoctrination: Some scholars argue that the curriculum serves as a tool for political indoctrination rather than a genuine scholarly decolonisation effort. Critics assert that without a critical dialogue with history and dominant modern disciplines, the project can become a means of propagating specific nationalist ideologies.

• Conflict with Modern Science: Reconciling the contradictions between Western scientific methods and traditional knowledge remains difficult. Some argue that giving them equal status may inhibit science from questioning the claims made by indigenous systems.

Socio-Economic and Global Risks

• Employability Concerns: There is a strong concern that an over-emphasis on IKS could deprive students of useful Western knowledge, potentially making Indian graduates less employable or under-employed in a competitive global workforce.

• Intellectual Property and Biopiracy: Defining the ownership of indigenous knowledge—which is often communal rather than individual—presents a complex challenge for legal and intellectual property systems. Without robust recordable systems, this knowledge remains vulnerable to biopiracy.

• Language Attrition: Much indigenous knowledge is stored in regional languages and dialects. The rapid disappearance of language diversity due to globalisation threatens the survival of the knowledge itself.

Historical and Cultural Barriers

• Legacy of Marginalisation: In regions like South Africa, IKS was historically suppressed or ridiculed under colonial or apartheid regimes. This has resulted in traditional

knowledge often being viewed as "non-legitimate" or "shrouded in mystery," making its formal integration into education more difficult.

• Threat to Oral Traditions: Many forms of indigenous knowledge are passed down orally across generations. These traditions are under threat from Westernisation and rapid technological development, which can disrupt traditional community-based learning.

To clarify these complexities, the integration of IKS into modern education is much like retrofitting an ancient, intricate plumbing system into a high-tech smart home; while the ancient system may hold unique wisdom and sustainable value, the challenge lies in ensuring it can interface with modern standards without causing leaks or compromising the overall structure's functionality.

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and indigenous knowledge more broadly into modern frameworks involves significant institutional, ideological, and socio-economic challenges. According to the sources, these obstacles range from the practicalities of teacher training to deep-seated debates over scientific validity.

The primary challenges are categorised as follows:

1. Institutional and Pedagogical Barriers

• Teacher Preparedness: A major hurdle is the lack of educators equipped to teach traditional knowledge alongside modern subjects. In India, the University Grants Commission aims to train 1.5 million teachers by 2025 to address this capacity gap.

• Resource Allocation: Implementing a new curriculum requires substantial funding and resources for documentation, research, and the creation of new materials.

• Curriculum Balance: Educational planners struggle to harmonise traditional and modern knowledge without overwhelming students or diluting existing academic standards.

• Resistance to Change: There is often institutional resistance to shifting from established Western models to more indigenous-centric frameworks.

2. Intellectual and Ideological Controversies

• Scientific and Historical Accuracy: Critics argue that some IKS curricula promote pseudoscience and pseudohistory. Specific textbooks have been called a "Trojan horse" for claiming that aeronautics existed 5,000 years before the Wright brothers or that gravity was discovered in the Rig Veda.

• Ideological Indoctrination: Scholars express concern that IKS is being used as a tool for propagating political agendas, specifically the Hindutva ideology, rather than serving as a genuine scholarly effort to decolonise education.

• Lack of Critical Engagement: Critics suggest that the initiative fails to engage in a "critical dialogue with history," which is essential for a legitimate decolonisation project; without this, it risks becoming mere indoctrination.

3. Professional and Economic Risks

• Global Employability: There is a strong concern that prioritizing IKS could bias students against useful Western knowledge, potentially rendering Indian graduate's unemployable or under-employed in the global workforce.

• Optional vs. Mandatory: Stakeholders have urged that IKS courses remain optional to ensure they do not become a burden or professional disadvantage for students.

4. Legal and Preservation Challenges

• Biopiracy and Intellectual Property: Indigenous knowledge is often communal, making it difficult to protect using modern IP laws designed for individuals or companies. Without proper recordable systems, this knowledge is vulnerable to biopiracy by foreign entities.

• Language Attrition: Much indigenous knowledge is stored in regional languages. Globalisation has led to the disappearance of roughly 100 languages per year, threatening the survival of the knowledge they contain.

• Threat to Oral Traditions: Many traditions are passed down orally and are at risk of extinction due to rapid technological development and Westernisation.

• Legacy of Marginalisation: In many regions, indigenous knowledge was historically suppressed or ridiculed under colonial or apartheid regimes, leading to it being viewed as "non-legitimate" even today.

To clarify these challenges, the integration of IKS is much like retrofitting an ancient, intricate plumbing system into a high-tech smart home; while the ancient system may hold unique wisdom and sustainable value, the difficulty lies in ensuring the pipes actually fit modern connectors without causing leaks or compromising the overall structure's functionality.

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and indigenous knowledge into modern frameworks represents a significant paradigm shift aimed at revitalising traditional intellectual heritage alongside contemporary education. This movement is driven by a global effort to decolonise academic curricula, affirm cultural identities, and find sustainable solutions to modern crises such as climate change and environmental degradation.

The following points sum up the core aspects of this initiative:

Strategic Objectives and Implementation

• Educational Reform: In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandates the inclusion of IKS at all levels of learning, from primary schools to higher education. This is facilitated by the National Credit Framework, which allows students to earn formal academic credit for courses in ancient sciences, arts, and philosophy.

• Institutional Support: The government has established a dedicated IKS division within the Ministry of Education to support transdisciplinary research and innovation. Large-scale efforts are underway to train over 1.5 million teachers to deliver this curriculum by 2025.

• Redress and Equity: In contexts such as South Africa, IKS policies are crucial for redressing historical inequities

caused by colonial or apartheid eras, where traditional practices were often marginalised or suppressed.

Vision Statement To foster a nation where Indigenous Knowledge Systems are fully integrated into the national fabric of life, education, and innovation, creating a society that values and thrives on the synergy between diverse knowledge systems for the equitable benefit of all citizens.

1.3 Core Policy Drivers

The imperative for this strategic plan is driven by three interconnected national priorities. Each driver represents a fundamental pillar supporting the integration of IKS into the mainstream of national life.

• Cultural Affirmation and Redress This policy is a direct response to the historical marginalization and suppression of indigenous knowledge during the colonial and apartheid eras. As a core measure of redress, it aligns with our constitutional values of human dignity and equality. By affirming the value of IKS, we strengthen our national identity, promote a positive African identity, and build resilience against the homogenizing effects of globalization.

• Socio-Economic Development IKS represents a significant, yet largely untapped, economic resource that is pivotal for poverty eradication. This plan seeks to unlock its potential to drive inclusive growth through employment and wealth creation, particularly in rural areas where most knowledge holders reside. By supporting the development of Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) based on IKS in sectors like traditional medicine, sustainable agriculture, and crafts, we can generate wealth and create sustainable livelihoods.

• Innovation and Knowledge Synergy Interfacing IKS with other knowledge systems, particularly modern science and technology, creates fertile ground for innovation within the National System of Innovation. Traditional knowledge can significantly accelerate research and development, as demonstrated in bio-prospecting, where it can increase the efficiency of screening plants for medicinal properties by over 400 percent. This synergy offers a unique competitive advantage and can lead to new products, services, and solutions to contemporary challenges.

This strategic vision provides the 'why'; the following sections will detail the 'how' by outlining the specific governance structures required to bring this vision to life.

A robust, coordinated, and multi-stakeholder governance structure is the cornerstone of this strategic plan's success. Effective implementation requires clear mandates, collaborative mechanisms, and dedicated institutions capable of navigating the complexities of IKS. This section details the institutional architecture designed to guide, regulate, and champion the integration of IKS across all sectors of government and society.To ensure that policy remains responsive and grounded in the needs of the community, a multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee on IKS will be established to report to the Minister of Science and Technology. It will be composed of leaders and experts from government, science councils, tertiary institutions, NGOs, and, critically, individual IKS holders and practitioners. Its primary mandate is to provide high-level, independent policy advice to the government and to ensure that the diverse interests of all stakeholders are represented in the decision-making process.

The establishment of these governing bodies provides the necessary structure, which must now be supported by the development of the human capital required to sustain it.

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