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**Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Teacher Education: A Critical Analysis of ITEP in the  
Light of NEP 2020 for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

**Ishika Gupta<sup>1</sup>, Sourav Sharma<sup>2</sup>, Dr. J.N Baliya<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>M.Ed. student, Department of Educational studies, Central University of Jammu, Samba (j&k), India  
E-Mail: [ig085925@gmail.com](mailto:ig085925@gmail.com),

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Educational studies, Central University of Jammu, Samba (j&k), India  
E-Mail: [sourabh549sharma@gmail.com](mailto:sourabh549sharma@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Professor, Department of Educational studies, Central University of Jammu, Samba (j&k), India  
E-Mail: [Jnbaliya.edu@cuammu.ac.in](mailto:Jnbaliya.edu@cuammu.ac.in)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19485183>

Received on: 25/03/2026

Accepted on: 29/03/2026

Published on: 09/04/2026

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**Abstract**

*Indigenous Knowledge has gained increasing recognition in contemporary education for its role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting inclusive and context-sensitive learning. In the context of teacher education, integrating Indigenous Knowledge can help teachers develop culturally responsive pedagogies that respect local traditions, values, and community wisdom. The present study examines the significance of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education and explores its relevance for promoting culturally responsive education. It further analyses the structure of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) to understand how teacher preparation programmes are designed to incorporate diverse knowledge systems. The study critically examines the extent to which Indigenous Knowledge is integrated within the ITEP curriculum in light of the vision and recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the inclusion of Indian knowledge systems and culturally rooted pedagogical approaches in teacher education. Through a conceptual and curriculum-based analysis, the study identifies the areas where Indigenous Knowledge is acknowledged within the programme and highlights certain limitations in its systematic integration, practical application, and contextual engagement. The findings suggest that while the policy framework encourages the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge, its representation within the curriculum remains limited and often theoretical in nature. The study therefore highlights the educational implications of strengthening the integration of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher preparation programmes. It argues that a more structured and practice-oriented incorporation of Indigenous perspectives can enhance teachers' cultural sensitivity, contextual understanding, and ability to create inclusive learning environments. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on*

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*reforming teacher education in alignment with national policy goals and culturally responsive educational practices.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous Knowledge, Teacher Education, ITEP, NEP 2020, Culturally Responsive Education.*

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## 1. Introduction

Education in Bharat has traditionally emphasized the holistic development of individuals by nurturing intellectual, ethical, social, and cultural dimensions of life. Indigenous knowledge traditions have played a vital role in shaping this educational vision by transmitting community wisdom, cultural values, and practical knowledge developed over generations. These knowledge systems are embedded in local traditions, languages, ecological practices, and social experiences. Indigenous knowledge not only preserves cultural heritage but also promotes sustainable living, community cooperation, and context-based learning. Therefore, integrating indigenous perspectives into education is increasingly considered essential for making teaching and learning processes more meaningful, culturally relevant, and inclusive. In the Indian context, indigenous and traditional knowledge systems have historically influenced education through diverse domains such as philosophy, agriculture, environmental practices, health traditions, language systems, and community-based learning methods. However, with the expansion of modern formal education, many of these knowledge traditions have received limited attention within institutional curricula. Recognizing this gap, recent educational reforms have highlighted the importance of reconnecting contemporary education with India's cultural and intellectual heritage.

In this regard, National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems and indigenous traditions across different levels of education. The policy advocates the development of culturally rooted, holistic, and contextually relevant education that reflects India's diverse traditions and knowledge heritage. It encourages educational institutions to incorporate local knowledge, cultural understanding, and value-based learning approaches within their curricula. In particular, teacher education programmes are expected to prepare educators who can adopt culturally responsive pedagogies and connect classroom learning with local knowledge systems and community realities.

Similarly, recent initiatives such as the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) initiative under the Ministry of Education aim to promote the study, preservation, and integration of traditional knowledge traditions within modern educational frameworks. These initiatives recognize that indigenous

knowledge can enrich teaching–learning processes by providing alternative perspectives on ecology, social organization, health practices, and ethical values. Integrating such perspectives within teacher education programmes can help develop educators who are sensitive to cultural diversity and capable of creating inclusive learning environments.

At the global level, the importance of culturally responsive and context-sensitive education has also been acknowledged in various international educational frameworks. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) highlights the need to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. It stresses that education should promote cultural awareness, sustainable lifestyles, and global citizenship. Integrating indigenous knowledge within education aligns with these global objectives by supporting locally relevant knowledge systems and encouraging respect for cultural diversity.

Several academic studies have also highlighted the educational significance of indigenous knowledge in teacher education and classroom practices. Scholars have argued that indigenous knowledge-based approaches enhance cultural relevance, promote experiential learning, and strengthen community engagement in education. Research on culturally responsive pedagogy suggests that teachers who understand local knowledge systems and learners’ cultural backgrounds are better able to create inclusive learning environments and meaningful learning experiences. Indigenous knowledge traditions also emphasize experiential learning, observation, community participation, and ecological awareness, which can enrich contemporary pedagogical practices.

Within this broader context, the Integrated Teacher Education Programme has been introduced as a major reform in teacher preparation in India. The programme aims to develop professionally competent teachers who are capable of addressing diverse educational needs and responding to contemporary social challenges. As teacher education plays a critical role in shaping classroom practices, it becomes important to examine how indigenous knowledge perspectives are reflected within teacher preparation programmes.

Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the significance of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education and explore its relevance for culturally responsive education. It further critically analyses the extent to which Indigenous Knowledge has been integrated within the ITEP curriculum in the light of the vision and recommendations of National Education Policy 2020. The study also highlights the educational implications of strengthening the integration of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher

preparation programmes in order to promote culturally responsive, contextually relevant, and inclusive educational practices.

## 2. Review of Literature

A comprehensive review of related literature was undertaken while conducting the present study. For examining previous studies, theoretical perspectives, and policy discussions related to Indigenous Knowledge and teacher education, various academic sources, policy documents, and research databases were consulted. Major scholarly platforms such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and other academic repositories were used to identify relevant literature. Key search terms included “Indigenous Knowledge in education,” “Indian Knowledge Systems in teacher education,” “culturally responsive pedagogy,” “community-based learning,” and “integration of Indigenous knowledge in curriculum.” Only those studies and sources were included that directly contributed to understanding the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education and culturally responsive pedagogy, while studies unrelated to the objectives of the present research were excluded.

Scholars have long examined Indigenous Knowledge within the context of cultural traditions, community practices, and educational thought. Early philosophical interpretations of traditional knowledge systems were discussed by thinkers such as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1929), who emphasized the importance of Indian philosophical traditions in shaping educational ideals. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda (1963) highlighted that education must connect knowledge with culture, character formation, and social responsibility. These philosophical perspectives suggest that traditional knowledge systems play a vital role in shaping ethical and holistic approaches to education. However, most of these early discussions focused primarily on philosophical and cultural interpretations rather than their practical integration into modern teacher education programmes.

Traditional Indian knowledge systems also find expression in classical texts and community knowledge traditions that emphasize experiential learning, ecological awareness, and moral values. Indigenous knowledge systems are often transmitted through oral traditions, storytelling, observation, and community participation. Scholars have argued that such knowledge traditions provide valuable insights into sustainable living, environmental balance, and community cooperation. These perspectives highlight the importance of connecting formal education with local knowledge systems and cultural practices.

In the contemporary global educational discourse, the importance of culturally responsive and context-sensitive education has also been emphasized. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015) highlighted through the Sustainable Development Goal 4 framework that education should promote inclusive, equitable, and culturally relevant learning opportunities. The framework emphasizes that education must develop not only academic competencies but also social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and global citizenship among learners. Similarly, the World Health Organization (2021) reported that a significant proportion of adolescents worldwide experience mental health challenges such as anxiety and stress. These findings highlight the need for educational approaches that promote emotional well-being, social harmony, and supportive learning environments.

Several contemporary studies have explored the role of Indigenous Knowledge in educational practices and teacher preparation. Gay (2018) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching enables teachers to connect academic content with learners' cultural experiences and community knowledge systems. According to this perspective, teachers who understand cultural diversity and local traditions are better able to create inclusive learning environments. Similarly, Cajete (1994) described Indigenous education as a process closely connected with nature, community interaction, and experiential learning. His work highlighted that Indigenous knowledge traditions emphasize observation, participation, and ecological awareness, which can enrich modern pedagogical practices.

Recent research studies have also examined the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education programmes. Rangan (2017) highlighted that integrating indigenous perspectives in education supports the development of cultural awareness, self-understanding, and social responsibility among learners. Sharma (2018) conducted a case-based study and found that incorporating culturally grounded learning activities improved students' engagement and reflective thinking. Similarly, Rao and Kaur (2019) examined culturally responsive classroom practices and observed that teachers who incorporated community knowledge and cultural examples were able to enhance students' motivation and participation.

Further empirical studies have highlighted the importance of integrating Indigenous Knowledge within teaching-learning processes. Subrahmanyam (2020) argued that indigenous knowledge-based pedagogical strategies can help develop students' critical thinking, contextual understanding, and respect for cultural diversity. Meena and Prasad (2021) demonstrated that integrating community knowledge and cultural learning activities improved classroom participation and strengthened students' sense of identity and belonging. Patil (2022) explored the role of Indigenous Knowledge in

curriculum design and concluded that culturally rooted educational approaches helped improve students' engagement, moral values, and social awareness.

In addition to research studies, educational policy reforms in India have increasingly emphasized the integration of Indigenous Knowledge within education systems. The National Education Policy 2020 highlights the need to incorporate Indian Knowledge Systems and indigenous traditions into educational curricula in order to promote culturally rooted and holistic learning. The policy emphasizes that teacher education programmes should prepare educators who are capable of connecting classroom learning with local traditions, community knowledge, and cultural heritage. Similarly, initiatives such as the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) programme under the Ministry of Education aim to promote the study, preservation, and integration of traditional knowledge traditions in higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 encourages the integration of cultural knowledge, value-based learning, and experiential educational practices within the school curriculum. These policy initiatives indicate a growing recognition of the importance of Indigenous Knowledge in promoting inclusive, culturally relevant, and context-based education.

Thus, the reviewed literature indicates that Indigenous Knowledge provides valuable perspectives for enhancing cultural relevance, experiential learning, and community engagement in education. While its foundations lie in traditional knowledge systems and community practices, contemporary research and policy discussions increasingly recognize its relevance in addressing modern educational challenges. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge within teacher education programmes can therefore contribute to the development of culturally responsive, socially aware, and contextually sensitive educators who are capable of creating inclusive and meaningful learning environments.

### **3. Objectives of study**

- To examine the significance of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education.
- To explore the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge for culturally responsive education.
- To critically examine the extent of integration of Indigenous Knowledge in the ITEP curriculum in light of NEP 2020.
- To highlight the educational implications of integrating Indigenous Knowledge in teacher preparation.

### **4. Significance of Study**

The present study is significant as it examines the extent to which Indigenous Knowledge has been integrated into the Integrated Teacher Education Programme curriculum in the context of the National Education Policy

2020. By analysing the curriculum structure and content, the study helps in understanding how teacher education programmes reflect the vision of culturally rooted and contextually relevant education. The findings of the study may support teacher educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in identifying areas where Indigenous perspectives and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches can be strengthened in teacher preparation programmes. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader discourse on Indian Knowledge Systems in education by highlighting the role of local traditions, community knowledge, and cultural understanding in developing socially responsible and culturally sensitive teachers. In this way, the study aims to support the development of teacher education programmes that promote inclusive, culturally relevant, and holistic learning environments in contemporary education.

## 5. Methodology of the Study

<b>Document Analysis</b>	Teacher education documents, research studies, and literature related to Indigenous Knowledge and culturally responsive pedagogy were analyzed
<b>Policy Review</b>	NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 were examined
<b>Curriculum Analysis</b>	The Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) curriculum was analyzed to examine Indigenous Knowledge integration.
<b>Theoretical Framework</b>	Culturally responsive pedagogy and experiential learning perspectives guided the analysis
<b>Comparative Perspectives</b>	International perspectives from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization were reviewed.
<b>Conceptual Synthesis</b>	Findings were integrated to understand the role of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education.

## 6. Findings and Analysis

**6.1 Correspondence to objective 1:** (To examine the significance of Indigenous Knowledge in teacher education).

### 1. Indigenous Knowledge Enhances Cultural Relevance in Education

Indigenous Knowledge contributes to culturally relevant education by connecting learning with local traditions, practices, and community experiences. Reports such as UNESCO (2017) – Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme highlight that integrating Indigenous knowledge into education helps make learning more context-based and meaningful for learners.

### 2. Indigenous Knowledge Strengthens Value-Based Education

Indigenous Knowledge systems embody ethical values such as social responsibility, respect for nature, and community harmony. UNESCO (2015), in *Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?* emphasizes that traditional and Indigenous knowledge traditions contribute significantly to promoting ethical and sustainable values in education.

### **3. Indigenous Knowledge Supports Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Many studies reveal that understanding Indigenous and community knowledge helps teachers become more culturally responsive. According to Gay (2018) in *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, teachers who recognize learners' cultural backgrounds and community knowledge are better able to create inclusive and effective learning environments.

### **4. Indigenous Knowledge Encourages Experiential and Community-Based Learning**

Indigenous education systems emphasize experiential learning, observation, and participation in community life. Cajete (1994), in *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, explains that Indigenous learning traditions are closely linked with nature, community interaction, and experiential knowledge processes.

### **5. Policy Support for Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Teacher Education**

The contemporary educational policies also recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge in education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems and Indigenous traditions into educational curricula to develop culturally rooted, holistic, and contextually relevant teacher education programmes

**6.2 Correspondence to objective 2:**( To explore the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge for culturally responsive education).

- **Indigenous Knowledge Enhances Cultural Relevance in Education**

Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into education helps connect teaching–learning processes with the cultural heritage, traditions, and lived experiences of learners. Such integration makes education more contextually meaningful and culturally responsive.

- **Indigenous Knowledge Promotes Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Pedagogy**

The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in teacher education programmes helps develop teachers' cultural sensitivity and prepares them to address the diverse cultural backgrounds of learners, particularly those from Indigenous communities.

- **Community Engagement Strengthens Culturally Responsive Learning**

The studies highlight the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and Indigenous communities. The involvement of community members and Indigenous knowledge keepers enriches the teaching process and ensures authentic representation of local knowledge.

- **Indigenous Knowledge Supports Experiential and Context-Based Learning**

Several studies suggest that Indigenous knowledge-based pedagogical approaches, such as community-based and ecological learning activities, enhance student engagement, conceptual understanding, and reflective learning practices.

- **Need for Pedagogical Innovation and Teacher Preparation**

The analysis shows that although Indigenous knowledge is increasingly recognized in curricula, there is a need for stronger pedagogical approaches, specialized teacher training, and continuous evaluation to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to integrate Indigenous knowledge in culturally responsive ways.

**6.3 Correspondence to objective 3:** (To critically examine the extent of integration of Indigenous Knowledge in the ITEP curriculum in light of NEP 2020).

Aspect	NEP 2020	ITEP Curriculum
<b>Local and Community Knowledge</b>	Encourages inclusion of local traditions and indigenous knowledge	Limited reference to tribal knowledge, local ecological practices, and community-based knowledge systems
<b>Cultural and Value-Based Education</b>	Focus on culturally rooted and value-based education	Cultural heritage discussed conceptually; fewer pedagogical strategies for classroom integration
<b>Language and Knowledge Transmission</b>	Emphasis on mother tongue and preservation of linguistic traditions	Promotes multilingual learning and linguistic diversity
<b>Experiential and Contextual Learning</b>	Strong emphasis on experiential and contextual learning	Includes field engagement, internships, and community interaction
<b>Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)</b>	Integration of Indian knowledge traditions across disciplines	IKS introduced through foundation and interdisciplinary courses

Insights: The analysis of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme indicates a **general alignment with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020**, particularly in promoting multilingual education, experiential learning, and awareness of Indian knowledge traditions. However, certain dimensions of indigenous knowledge—such as **tribal knowledge systems, community-based ecological practices, and pedagogical**

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strategies for integrating local cultural knowledge into classroom teaching—receive comparatively less attention within the curriculum. Strengthening these aspects could enhance the contextual relevance of teacher education and support the broader objective of integrating indigenous knowledge into higher education.

**6.4 Correspondence to objective 4:** (To highlight the educational implications of integrating Indigenous Knowledge in teacher preparation).

**Educational Implications:**

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Integrating Indigenous Knowledge helps teachers connect curriculum with local culture, traditions, and community practices, making teaching more meaningful and relevant for learners.

- **Holistic Development of Learners**

Indigenous knowledge traditions emphasize harmony, ethics, and balanced development of mind and character, supporting the vision of holistic education promoted in National Education Policy 2020.

- **Promotion of Experiential and Contextual Learning**

Indigenous knowledge systems are transmitted through observation, participation, storytelling, and community interaction, encouraging teachers to adopt experiential and activity-based pedagogical approaches.

- **Strengthening Environmental Awareness and Sustainability**

Traditional ecological knowledge related to agriculture, biodiversity, and natural resource management helps teachers promote sustainability and environmental responsibility in education.

- **Enhancing Community Engagement in Education**

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge encourages collaboration between educational institutions and local communities, enabling teachers to use community knowledge as a learning resource.

- **Development of Value-Based and Ethical Education**

Indigenous traditions promote values such as cooperation, respect for diversity, and social responsibility, which are essential for preparing socially responsible teachers.

**Conclusion**

The study highlights that Indigenous Knowledge plays a significant role in strengthening culturally relevant and holistic approaches in teacher education. The analysis of policy documents, scholarly literature, and curriculum frameworks indicates that Indigenous Knowledge contributes to culturally responsive teaching, experiential learning, and value-based education by connecting learning with local traditions, community knowledge, and lived experiences. Educational policies such as the National Education Policy 2020 emphasize

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the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems and culturally rooted educational practices in teacher preparation. The review of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme curriculum shows a general alignment with these policy goals, particularly in promoting multilingual education, experiential learning, and awareness of Indian knowledge traditions. However, the analysis also indicates that certain aspects—such as deeper engagement with local community knowledge, tribal knowledge systems, and practical pedagogical strategies for classroom integration—require further strengthening. Therefore, greater emphasis on Indigenous Knowledge within teacher education programmes can help prepare teachers who are culturally responsive, socially aware, and capable of creating inclusive and contextually meaningful learning environments. Such integration will support the broader goal of developing an education system that is culturally rooted, socially responsible, and aligned with contemporary educational needs.

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