

## Relevance of the ancient Indian curriculum and pedagogic approaches in the present context with reference to NEP 2020

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### Abstract

The current study's goal is to examine, using relevant literature critically, the curricula and pedagogical practices used in ancient India and, as a result, determine their applicability in the current NEP 2020 framework. Research questions about curriculum analysis, pedagogical approaches, their applicability in NEP 2020, and the difficulties that may arise from putting them into practice were formulated based on the objectives. The study is analytical in nature and is review-based. The thorough literature analysis shows that the curriculum is made up of scriptures that teach about human values and a noble existence. *Tarka Shastra*, Upanishads, Vedangas, Darshans, *Puranas*, and four Vedas make up this system. The outcome also shows that *Chintan* and the oral teaching approach were widely employed. Additional methods of learning included debates, lectures, storytelling, and discussions. Life-related knowledge was given. The investigation revealed that their implementation in the current NEP 2020 will be significant and productive. Life-related learning can be obtained through activities and experiential learning. Experiments will help us understand things better. Schools are able to use oral teaching methods. Sanskrit knowledge is to be taught in schools. Additionally relevant is critical thinking. Regarding the implementation, there are a number of obstacles that must be overcome, including a shortage of funding, government backing, a shortage of qualified teachers, and many more. Therefore, by overcoming them and putting the same into practice, we can provide our children with education that is effective, relevant, engaging, and student-centric.

### Keywords

Ancient education, experiential learning, NEP 2020, student centric.

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a social institution that helps in inculcating knowledge, skills, values, and experience among humans. In fact, it is something that makes humans "human" in the true sense. It's a common misperception that education only consists of reading and writing. However, it is a broad idea in reality. It is intended to promote a person's overall development rather than only teaching them to read and write. As intended, education "brings up" the individual by fostering the growth of all

facets of the human condition. It is not only about imparting knowledge but also developing behavior, skills, and attitudes so that they can be turned up as a responsible person in their life. It is about developing individuals physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and morally. In other words, it is something that brings out the best of the human body, mind, and spirit. Hence, it is training or instruction that develops an individual to the fullest by bringing out the innate qualities and enhancing them. Education is just a



customary form; it is about passing knowledge to future generations. Over the years, there has been a change in the objectives of education. In addition to this, there are various other aspects or factors that affect education. These factors shape what, how, where, and by whom education is delivered. All these are influenced by the aims to impart education, situations, culture, and much more. Thus, for many years, education has been an integral part of our lives.

However, historical analysis indicates that the goals, delivery methods, and places of receiving education have all changed over time. There was a period when teachers used both formal and informal methods to teach their students about human values, customs, traditions, rituals, and religion in homes, temples, etc. education that makes them become intelligent, liberal men. Religious education and knowledge expansion gained prominence during the Middle Ages, when instruction was first given orally and then in writing [1]. Modern education was brought about by the British era, along with the English language and ideals of equality, secularism, environmental preservation, and universal education [2]. However, the present modern education provides learners to access current information and makes a knowledgeable based society. It is interdisciplinary and more application-oriented, utilizing technologically integrated approaches for teaching [3]. Over the decades, a shift has been observed in the transmission of education. The current education system requires the integration of ancient education to help learners gain knowledge about India's rich culture and heritage, foster teamwork and collaboration, and embrace practices such as yoga and Ayurveda, ultimately aiming to transform our nation into a global power [4].

Two educational systems existed in the ancient era—the Vedic education and Buddhist education. The two main educational streams that came after were the *Aparavidya* system of the Hindus, which taught material knowledge, and the *Paravidya* system, which taught spiritual knowledge [5]. *Chitti-Vritti-Nirodha*, or the management of mental activities related to the real world, was the ultimate goal of education when it first appeared in antiquity. The goal of education was to promote comprehensive and all-around growth [3]. During the Vedic and Buddhist eras, education was transmitted via the Sanskrit and Pali languages, respectively. In order to transform people from the inside out, knowledge regarding the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Dharam sutras was given. Additionally, it seeks to help pupils grow ethically by instilling respect for all living things, along with qualities such as independence, discipline, humility, purity, honesty, and truth [6]. The type of education provided enables young people to achieve their religious obligations and function well in social and economic spheres. This helps in carving their character and personalities by giving birth to noble ideas [5]. Additionally, it offers vocational training in order to support a living. Because of this, education in the past was strongly tied to real-world experiences. Buddhism taught a pragmatic system of education [7], [8]. As a result, the goal of education in antiquity was liberty [5]. Ashrams, often called Gurukuls, are places where education is given [9]. The teacher-student relationship was very strong. There was no state government involvement in the creation of curricula, fees, or the quantity of teaching hours. Women's education was given the same importance as men's education [6]. Figure 1 illustrates the ancient education system.

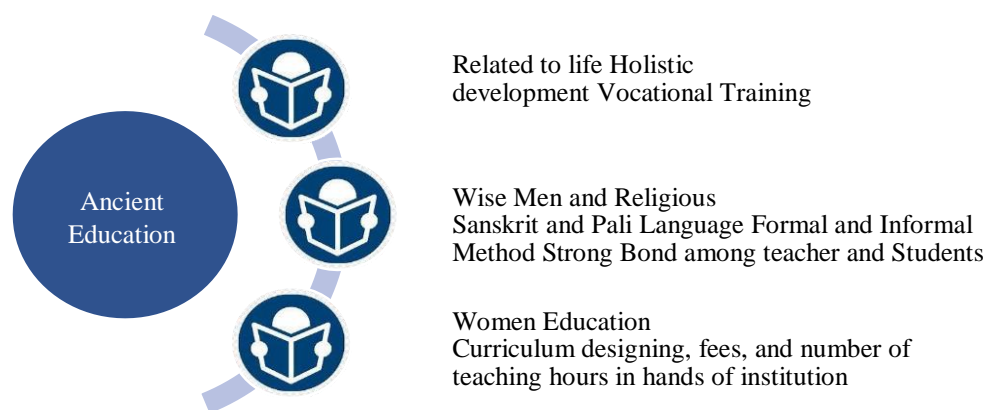


Figure 1. Features of ancient education

## RESEARCH METHOD

The present study is both review-based and analytical in nature. The review examines ancient Indian education, particularly its curriculum and pedagogic approaches, and the analysis evaluates the relevance of these ancient curricula and methods in the current context of NEP 2020. The study also looks for the challenges that can be faced during the implementation of such curriculum and pedagogies in the present context. For the sake of review, different keywords such as- “ancient Indian education”, “Vedic education”, “curriculum of ancient education”, “pedagogic approaches of ancient education”, and “NEP- 2020” were used and consequently, related pieces of literature were collected from different database like- Research Gate, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, SCOPUS, ProQuest, etc. Efforts were made to consider the recently published research papers (2015 papers) in indexed journals. After the collection of related studies, the research protocol like research objectives, questions, search plans, criteria, etc was defined for the present study. This study of critical analysis follows: observation, analysis, inference, communication, and problem-solving.

The objectives of the present study were to search and critically analyze ancient education including its curriculum and pedagogic approaches; to derive the relevance of the same in meeting the objectives of NEP 2020. Based on the objectives and limitations of the present study, I developed the following important research questions for critical analysis: (RQ1) how was the curriculum in the ancient period?; (RQ2) what pedagogic approaches were adopted during the ancient period?; (RQ3) how relevant is the ancient curriculum and pedagogic approach in the present context of NEP 2020?; (RQ4) what are the challenges that can be faced in implementing ancient curriculum and pedagogic approaches?

Here the first research question examines the curriculum that existed in ancient Indian education with supporting evidence. The second question deals with the critical analysis of the pedagogic approaches adopted during the ancient period in education. After the critical analysis of both the curriculum and pedagogic approaches, The third question observes the present context of NEP 2020 and its objectives and then examines how relevant the curriculum and methods used in ancient times, are relevant in fulfilling the needs,

and objectives of the present time. The last question of this study the challenges that can be faced while adopting those approaches or implementing the ancient curriculum and pedagogic approaches.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Each research question is addressed based on the sequence of the following subsections.

### Critical analysis of curriculum existed during the ancient period

A curriculum is vital to any kind of educational system. It is determined by the scheme of life, which is subject to change. The curriculum of education in ancient India was created over several periods and is dynamic rather than static, see Figure 2. Its main objective was to create a curriculum that would allow pupils to grow both intellectually and physically [2]. Knowledge and the culture of that era have an impact on it. The four Vedas, Upanishads, Vedangas, Darshans, *Puranas*, and *Tarka Shastra* make up the ancient curriculum [10]. Such scriptures must be studied in order to gain an insight of Indian civilisation, philosophy of life, and ancient culture. It even civilization aids in comprehending the primary purpose of human existence. Ideas of a simple and noble existence are fostered by the Rigveda [11]. The teachers, also called Gurus, imparted information on six Vedangas, including Shiksha, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Kalpa, and Jyotisha.

Furthermore, Goudgeri [6] reports that Nyaya, Baiseshika, Yoga, Sankhya, Vedanta, Mimasa, Grammar, Algebra, and Geometry were taught. The majority of the curriculum was spiritual in nature. Mostly mantras from the Vedas were taught. During the post-vedic era, many kinds of literature pertaining to many Vedas were written. Moreover, courses covering topics related to the globe were taught, including astronomy, dance, music, history, grammar, mathematics, and vidya. This is so that the students might be taught about the Absolute (*Brahmavarchasa*) through the inculcation of such things. The curriculum of the Buddhist era includes the *Pitakas*, *Abhidharma*, and *sutras*. In actuality, Vedas were taught during the Buddhist era as well [10]. This indicates that while Buddhist education was prioritised, Hindu learning was also included in schooling throughout that time [2]. The *Abhidharma*, the

*sutras*, and the *pitakas* make up the Buddhist curriculum. Gurus used discussions and oral instruction to spread their teachings. Every year, exams were held [6]. A child's schooling began with the "*Upanayana*" ceremony. The age is set forth and may differ depending on the caste. Eighth, eleventh, and twelfth years are the ages of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, respectively. The students, sometimes referred to as *shishyas*, receive education that is relevant to their daily lives rather than just academic information [12]. In order to receive an education, students used to live away from their homes in places like *gurukuls*, *ashrams*, teachers'

homes, and temples. This helped them form social bonds. Previously, all of the students studied together. The provision of water, the gathering of wood for fuel, and other household tasks enable them to perform both domestic tasks and social service. It's merely a means of educating people in this sense [12]. The life of students turned to laboratories for the sake of experiments and consequently gaining education. No fees were charged from the students. In fact, they used to beg alms for themselves as well as for the preceptors such that noble humanitarian values can be inherited.

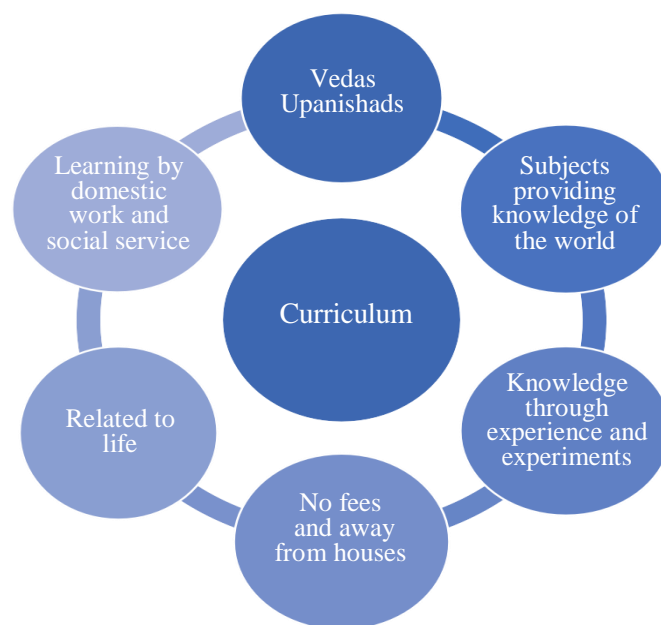


Figure 2. Curriculum of ancient Indian education

### Critical analysis of pedagogic approaches adopted during the ancient period

The foundation of instruction and a tool for accomplishing goals are pedagogic techniques. It is something that supports the learners in their development by bringing out their full potential. This aids in building a solid learning foundation. Similar to the curriculum, the teaching strategies and methods used in traditional Indian education contribute to its distinctiveness. Gurukuls have embraced traditional teaching and learning methodologies [13]. Ancient Indian Scriptures or Upanishads provide a brief about the teaching methods and approaches such as cooking, archery, fencing, politics, theology, astronomy, and therapeutics. Upanishads turned as a source in providing detail of the pedagogic approaches used in that time [13]. Student-centric approaches were used by the use gurus to teach *shishyas*, that

too according to the skills and knowledge [2]. Essentially, the oral technique and *chintan* were the two teaching modalities used during the Vedic era [14], see Figure 3. In the first- oral method, students memorize mantras and *richayes* (Vedic hymns and verses of Rigveda) so as to retain them in their original form. Vedic hymns were memorized in their precise traditional intonations and accent, but at the same time it is also seen that that meanings are also understand [15]. The other approach was *chintan*, also referred to as the thinking method, which promotes mental growth and knowledge gain. Knowledge acquisition is a three-step process. *Sravana*, *Manana*, and *Niddhyasana* are these. *Sravana* is hearing the teachers' version of events. *Sruti*, or sacred knowledge, is learn by listening. The second step, called *Manana*, is reflecting on the significance of the teachings that the gurus

have verbally imparted. *Niddhyasana*, in which the student understands the truth and lives accordingly, comes next [11]. Instruction was given verbally and through discussions. The lack of literature for the students led to the habit of memorisation. Therefore, recitation and repetition serve as the primary teaching strategies and were indeed common practices in antiquity [15]. The students understand the concepts deeply and even

explore new methods for it. Listening, Contemplation, and concentrated contemplation turned out as a few methods explored to learn the concepts. The storytelling method was also used in teaching students in ancient times. Seminars and debates also receive pieces of knowledge from time to time. The main aim was to provide practical knowledge for the students [10].



Figure 3. Pedagogic approaches in ancient Indian education

### Relevance of ancient curriculum and pedagogic approach in the present context of NEP 2020

The NEP 2020, the first education policy of the twenty-first century, is designed with the requirements and circumstances of the present in mind. It has also established a few goals that must be met. The main goals of NEP 2020 are to provide education that supports the full realization of human potential, the creation of an equal society, and the advancement of the country. In terms of social justice, economic development, equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation, the strategy also ensures that all people have access to high-quality education. Additionally, the strategy aims to fulfill Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for guaranteeing accessible and equitable quality education and giving everyone access to opportunities for a lifetime until 2030 [16]. NEP 2020 has changed the educational system to accomplish these goals. This change includes curriculum, teacher preparation, assessment, and

the incorporation of technology into the classroom [17]. Similar to ancient education, NEP 2020 emphasizes educating children according to their needs and interests. It stresses the use of a student-centric approach, much like it was done in the past. A comparison between NEP 2020 and ancient education reveals that the latter aimed to promote the holistic development of its students. Since the goal of education in the past was to foster the holistic development of *shishyas*, adopting the curricula and methods of that era is still relevant today in light of changing demands. Thus, it moves away from rote learning and fosters a real understanding in learners. Adopting such activities can lead to improvement. It also prioritizes the holistic and character development of pupils, in addition to their cognitive growth. Experimentation and a deeper comprehension of the ideas as they were used in the past can yield valuable results in the present. Similar to ancient education, modern education aims to acquire a deeper grasp of the concepts through collaborative and exploratory learning, inquiry and discussion-based learning,

and critical thinking. The NEP 2020 discusses story-based pedagogy, which will be significant and helpful in school curricula, just like it did in ancient education (Figure 4). Recitation and summarisation can also be implemented in educational settings. The emphasis is also laid on enhancing vocational skills. In ancient times, education was oral, with no written texts or books. The present system also emphasizes reducing the burden of books. All educational instruction was delivered in Sanskrit during the ancient era. NEP 2020 has worked hard to preserve these classical languages' significance, applicability, and beauty. Called today the Sanskrit Knowledge System, it possesses a treasure trove of mathematics, drama, metallurgy, poetry, medicine, politics, etc. Sanskrit is being taught in schools and in higher education, and it is being taught experientially, as in the past, which makes it simple to understand. According to the analysis, pronunciation received significant attention at that time, which was essential to accomplishing the goals of the Sanskrit Knowledge System and advancing our culture and traditions. Similar to the education given in the past, today's education strives to create productive people by fostering creativity, subject knowledge, and the development of vocational skills. As in the past, grammatical and mathematical knowledge are also included. The

Indian Knowledge System will be taught in secondary school curricula to provide knowledge about ancient India. The current policy, like that of antiquity, discusses the scientific integration of aspects of the Indian Knowledge System, such as tribal knowledge and traditional learning methods in the fields of astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, linguistics, literature, sports, games, medicine, mathematics, governance, and polity conservation (NEP). It is made very apparent that curricula and pedagogical methods that are firmly anchored in the local and Indian ethos must be adopted from the start. This is the way to connect with and preserve our Indian culture, tradition, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, knowledge of both ancient and contemporary times, societal needs, and traditional learning. Adopting such a curriculum not only provides knowledge but also helps preserve our culture and heritage, passing it on to future generations. This approach will enable us to provide equitable education, similar to what *shishyas* received while residing in ashrams. Students will gain awareness of their past, culture, and traditions. They will receive an education that is relatable, interesting, relevant, and effective. Similarly, arts, sports, games, stories, and examples rooted in Indian and local ethos should be incorporated.

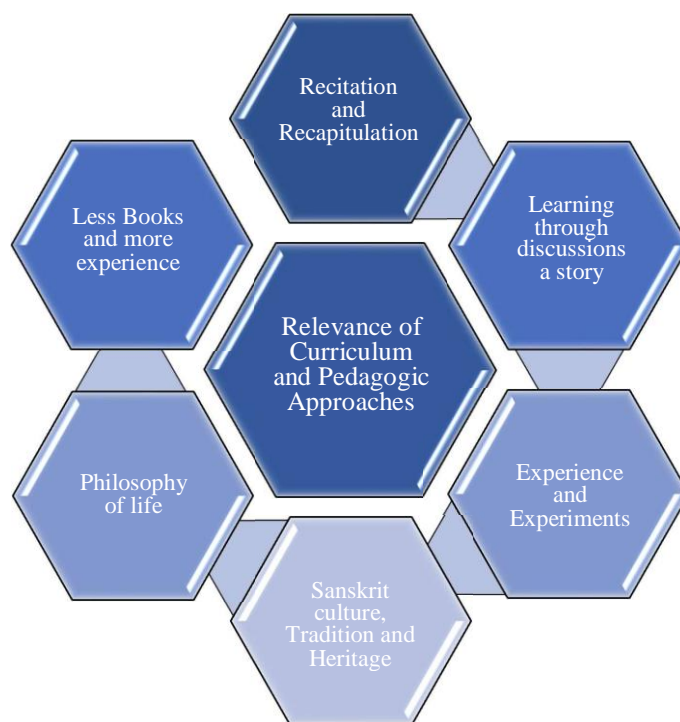


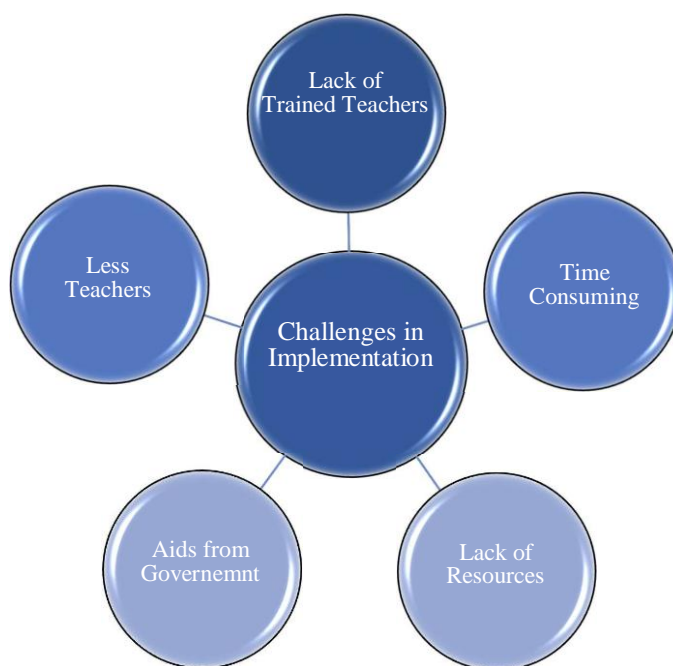
Figure 4. Relevance of ancient curriculum and pedagogic approach in the present context of NEP 2020



### Challenges that can be faced in implementing ancient curriculum and pedagogic approaches

Adopting curriculum and pedagogic approaches from ancient India will have positive results, but there will be obstacles along the way. This is evident after a critical analysis of the curriculum and pedagogic approaches, followed by an examination of how relevant the curriculum and pedagogic approaches are in the current context of NEP 2020. First of all, as illustrated in Figure 5, there are still insufficient teachers to meet the needs of the kids. Moreover, to shift learning from rote memorization to experiential learning and foster holistic development, trained teachers are required, as well as sufficient time for gaining real experience and a deeper understanding of concepts. Thus, in the present educational scenario, it becomes difficult to grasp the whole picture by gaining real experiences, as it would be time-consuming and require considerable

effort and energy. It would not be possible to cover the whole syllabus through this approach. The present NEP 2020 aims to achieve equitable education, similar to the education system in ashrams, where all *shishyas* received education together. This requires resources and trained teachers. However, there is still a shortage of trained teachers capable of providing experiential learning and ensuring the holistic development of students. Another challenge is the lack of resources, which are essential for inclusive, equitable, and quality education. Quality education can only be attained through adequate resources and well-trained teachers. Knowledge of the Sanskrit language, ancient Indian education, and traditional learning also requires qualified teachers to impart this knowledge effectively. The implementation of these requires aid from the government.



Figures 5. Challenges in implementation of curriculum and pedagogic approaches

### CONCLUSION

The current study looks at how and to what extent the curriculum and pedagogical approaches can be used in the current environment of NEP 2020, having first attempted to critically examine the curriculum and pedagogical practices of ancient India. A critical review of the curriculum used in ancient Indian education at the period indicated that Vedic hymns, recitation, comprehension, and

teaching of Vedas, Upanishads, and Rigvedas were all taught. The goal of the curriculum was to foster the kids' mental, spiritual, and physical growth. Scriptures are also taught in the curriculum to help students live moral and charitable lives. There was a focus on quality education. In a similar vein, a critical assessment of relevant material regarding the pedagogical practices used in antiquity reveals that students

were mostly taught orally and through *chintan* in ashrams and temples, far from their homes. Activities, experiences, experiments, discussions, debates, and seminars are all used to facilitate learning.

Additional examination of how NEP 2020 is structured and being used now showed that the curriculum and pedagogical methods used in the past can be applied to the current NEP 2020 setting in a number of ways. In schools, techniques like recitation and Recapitulation can be employed. Through the use of many curricula and methodologies, the NEP 2020 goal can be accomplished. Activities and experiences can be used to achieve holistic development. Talks and seminars can improve social connections in addition to information. Experiments and critical thinking help to expand conceptual

comprehension. However, implementing these curricula and teaching strategies in the current NEP 2020 era would not be easy. The analysis leads to the conclusion that government assistance, money, and a sufficient number of qualified teachers are needed to execute these curricula and methodologies. Activities, experiments, and other things need time. Consequently, it can be said that education in India may be implemented in the context of NEP 2020 and that its goals can be achieved by using valuable curricula and pedagogical practices at that time. The children will benefit from this in terms of cognitive development as well as education and enrichment about traditional teaching methods, ancient education, culture, tradition, and heritage.

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