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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF IKS AND NCF-SE-2023

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF SE 2023) as a transformative approach to holistic development. Grounded in indigenous philosophical constructs such as the Pancha Kosha model and pedagogical frameworks like Panchapadiya, the study adopts a conceptual and comparative methodology to analyze the convergence between traditional knowledge systems and contemporary curriculum design. The study identifies key similarities, including the shared focus on holistic development, value based education, and experiential learning, alongside differences in epistemological foundations and implementation strategies. The findings suggest that this integration not only enhances cultural rootedness but also addresses contemporary educational challenges such as sustainability, mental health, and social cohesion. The study highlights important implications for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers, emphasising the need for capacity building, contextualised curriculum development, and institutional support. Overall, the integration of IKS and NCF-SE-2023 provides a robust framework for developing learners who are intellectually competent, emotionally balanced, ethically grounded, and socially responsible, thereby aligning education with both national priorities and global educational goals.

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Introduction:-

Defining Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Education systems across the world are increasingly shifting from content-centric approaches toward holistic frameworks that emphasise the development of the whole learner. This transformation is driven by the recognition that education must address not only cognitive development but also emotional, ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions (Sankar, 2025). In this context, IKS offer a rich philosophical and pedagogical foundation for conceptualising holistic development.

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IKS represents bodies of knowledge developed through centuries of lived experiences, cultural practices, and ecological interactions within local communities (Battiste, 2002; Semali&Kincheloe, 1999). These systems encompass diverse traditions, including Vedic philosophy, tribal knowledge, folk practices, and regional cultural systems, all of which contribute to a comprehensive understanding of human development and sustainability (Rao, 2018). Unlike fragmented modern educational models, IKS emphasises interconnectedness, balance, and harmony between individuals, society, and nature.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE-2023), developed by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, reflects a significant shift in educational philosophy by integrating IKS into mainstream schooling (Ministry of Education, 2023). It proposes a 360-degree learning approach that aligns with global frameworks, such as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), while remaining rooted in IKS. Despite the growing emphasis on integrating IKS into contemporary education, existing research often treats traditional knowledge systems and modern curriculum frameworks as separate domains. There is limited scholarly work that systematically examines the integration of IKS and NCF-SE-2023 through a unified lens of holistic development. This study addresses this gap by providing a comparative and analytical exploration of these frameworks. Further focusing on their conceptual foundations, pedagogical approaches, and implications for education.

Conceptual Foundations of Indian Knowledge Systems

IKS is grounded in a holistic worldview. IKS perceives knowledge as interconnected and experiential rather than compartmentalized. Knowledge in IKS is not merely transmitted through formal instruction but is embedded in daily practices, rituals, arts, and community interactions (Semali&Kincheloe, 1999). This epistemological orientation emphasises the integration of cognitive, emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of learning. One of the key features of IKS is its emphasis on sustainability and ecological consciousness. Traditional practices related to agriculture, medicine, architecture, and resource management reflect a deep understanding of environmental balance and interdependence (Rao, 2018). This aligns with contemporary discourses on sustainable development and environmental education. Another defining characteristic of IKS is its value-oriented approach. Education is viewed as a means of cultivating ethical behaviour, social responsibility, and self-awareness. Concepts such as dharma (duty), karma (action), and ahimsa (non-violence) play a central role in shaping individual and societal conduct (Sarkar, 2024). Furthermore, IKS emphasises experiential learning and reflective practices. Learning occurs through observation, participation, and reflection, rather than rote memorisation. This aligns with modern constructivist theories of learning, which emphasise active engagement and meaning-making (Tyagi, 2025).

Proposed Conceptual Model of Holistic Development

This study proposes an integrated conceptual model that synthesises the philosophical foundations of IKS with the pedagogical framework of NCF-SE-2023. The model is grounded in the Pancha Kosha framework, which conceptualises human development as a multidimensional process encompassing physical, vital, mental, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions (Ambika et al., 2024; Sankar, 2025). The Pancha Kosha serves as the foundational layer of the model, representing the holistic nature of human development. Each layer corresponds to a specific dimension of learning and development, emphasising the need for balanced growth across all aspects of human personality. This aligns with contemporary educational perspectives that advocate for whole-child development and socio-emotional learning. The interaction between these two frameworks results in a set of holistic developmental outcomes, including cognitive competence, emotional stability, ethical orientation, social responsibility, and sustainability awareness. These outcomes reflect the integrated nature of learning, where knowledge acquisition is complemented by value formation and practical application.

Figure 1: Integrated IKS–NCF-SE-2023 Model of Holistic Development based on Pancha Kosha and Panchapadiya Frameworks.



The proposed model offers a novel contribution by integrating philosophical and pedagogical dimensions into a unified framework. It moves beyond theoretical discussions by providing an operational structure that can be implemented in classroom settings. This integration enhances the applicability of holistic development and supports the development of sustainable and value-based learning environments.

Holistic Development: The Pancha Kosha Model

The concept of holistic development in IKS is most prominently articulated through the Pancha Kosha model, which conceptualises human existence as comprising five interconnected layers (Ambika et al., 2024; Sankar, 2025). These layers represent different dimensions of human development, each requiring balanced nourishment for overall well-being.

1. **Annamaya Kosha (Physical Layer):** The physical dimension focuses on bodily health, nutrition, and physical activity. It recognises the body as the foundation for all higher forms of learning and development.
2. **Pranamaya Kosha (Vital Layer):** This layer relates to life energy and physiological processes. Practices such as yoga and pranayama are emphasised to maintain energy balance and enhance concentration.
3. **Manomaya Kosha (Mental Layer):** The mental dimension addresses emotional and psychological well-being. It involves developing resilience, emotional regulation, and ethical awareness.
4. **Vijnanamaya Kosha (Intellectual Layer):** This layer focuses on cognitive development, including critical thinking, reasoning, and knowledge acquisition.
5. **Anandamaya Kosha (Bliss Layer):** The innermost layer represents spiritual fulfilment and inner harmony. It emphasises the importance of meaningful learning experiences and self-realisation.

The Pancha Kosha model aligns with contemporary frameworks such as social-emotional learning and whole-child education, highlighting its relevance in modern educational contexts (Sankar, 2025).

NCF-SE-2023 and the 360-Degree Approach

Table 1: Key Components of NCF-SE-2023 and the 360-Degree Approach to Education

Dimension	Key Focus	Description	Educational Implication
Holistic Development	Multidimensional learning	Emphasises integration of physical, cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions of learning (Ministry of Education, 2023)	Promotes balanced development of learners beyond academic achievement
Competency-Based Education	Skill-oriented learning	Focuses on the development of competencies rather than rote memorisation	Enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and real-life application
Experiential Learning	Learning by doing	Encourages activity-based, inquiry-driven, and reflective learning	Improves engagement, retention, and practical

		approaches	understanding
Interdisciplinary Approach	Integrated knowledge	Connects multiple subjects and domains for a comprehensive understanding	Facilitates holistic and contextual learning
Contextual Learning	Local and cultural relevance	Incorporates local contexts, indigenous knowledge, and cultural practices	Makes learning meaningful and relatable to students
Value-Based Education	Ethical and social development	Embeds values such as empathy, responsibility, and cooperation	Develops socially responsible and ethically grounded learners
Teacher Role Transformation	Facilitator of learning	Teachers act as guides, mentors, and facilitators rather than knowledge transmitters	Supports student-centred and inquiry-based learning
Capacity Building	Teacher education and training	Focuses on professional development and continuous learning for teachers	Ensures effective implementation of holistic education principles

Panchapadiya Framework: Pedagogical Integration

NCF-SE-2023 introduces the Panchapadiya framework, a five-step pedagogical model derived from traditional Indian teaching methods (Ministry of Education, 2023).

1. **Aditi (Introduction):** Engaging learners by connecting new concepts with prior knowledge.
2. **Bodh (Understanding):** Facilitating conceptual clarity through exploration and inquiry.
3. **Abhyas (Practice):** Reinforcing learning through structured activities.
4. **Prayog (Application):** Applying knowledge to real-life contexts.
5. **Prasar (Expansion):** Extending learning through collaboration and reflection.

Comparative Analysis of IKS and NCF-SE-2023

A comparative analysis of IKS and NCF-SE-2023 reveals both conceptual convergence and structural divergence in their approach to holistic development. While both frameworks emphasise multidimensional development, experiential learning, and ethical orientation, they differ in epistemological grounding, pedagogical formalisation, and implementation scale.

Comparative Framework

Table 2 presents a structured comparison of IKS and NCF-SE-2023 across key educational dimensions.

Table 2: Comparative Dimensions of IKS and NCF-SE-2023

Dimension	Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)	NCF-SE-2023	Integrated Insight
Philosophical Foundation	Rooted in metaphysical and experiential traditions (Pancha Kosha)	Based on developmental psychology and policy frameworks	Integration of philosophical depth with a structured curriculum
Nature of Knowledge	Holistic, intuitive, experiential	Structured, competency-based, measurable	Blending experiential learning with assessment-driven models
Pedagogical Approach	Guru-Shishya tradition; observation, reflection, lived experience	Panchapadiya framework: inquiry, practice, application	Experiential pedagogy within a structured sequence
Development Focus	Physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual growth	360-degree development (cognitive, emotional, social, ethical)	Unified holistic learner model
Cultural Integration	Embedded in local traditions, languages, and ecological practices	Explicit curricular inclusion of IKS and cultural ethos	Contextualised and institutionalised cultural learning
Implementation	Decentralised, community-based, flexible	Centralised, policy-driven, scalable	Scalability of indigenous principles

Assessment	Implicit, reflective	qualitative,	Formal, competency-based, outcome-oriented	Need for hybrid assessment models
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Analytical Discussion

The comparison highlights that both IKS and NCF-SE-2023 share a commitment to holistic, experiential education. Both frameworks reject rote memorisation and instead emphasise learning as an active, meaningful, and value-driven process (Kumari et al., 2024).

However, the frameworks differ significantly in their conceptual orientation and operational mechanisms. IKS is inherently philosophical and experiential, relying on intuitive knowledge transmission and personalised learning environments. In contrast, NCF-SE-2023 translates these philosophical ideas into structured curricular frameworks, making them accessible and implementable at scale (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Critical Evaluation

Despite their strengths, both frameworks exhibit certain limitations that must be addressed for effective integration.

Limitations of IKS:-

- **Lack of formal structure:** IKS lacks standardised frameworks for curriculum design and assessment, which limits its scalability in formal education systems.
- **Context-specific nature:** Its reliance on local traditions and practices makes it difficult to generalise across diverse educational contexts.
- **Limited empirical validation:** Many IKS principles are philosophically rich but lack systematic empirical research to support large-scale implementation.

Limitations of NCF-SE-2023

- **Implementation challenges:** Translating holistic principles into classroom practice requires extensive teacher training and institutional support.
- **Risk of superficial integration:** There is a possibility that IKS elements may be included symbolically rather than meaningfully.
- **Standardisation constraints:** Large-scale implementation may limit flexibility and contextual adaptation.

Linkage with the Proposed Conceptual Model

The above comparative analysis directly informs the Integrated IKS–NCF-SE-2023 Conceptual Model proposed in this study. While IKS provides the philosophical foundation through the Pancha Kosha framework, NCF-SE-2023 offers the pedagogical structure through the Panchapadiya framework. The integration of these two dimensions enables the operationalisation of holistic development within contemporary schooling systems.

Specifically, the model addresses the limitations identified in both frameworks by:

- Providing a structured pathway for implementing IKS principles through Panchapadiya stages
- Enabling scalability of holistic development within institutional contexts
- Bridging philosophy and practice, ensuring that traditional knowledge is translated into measurable learning outcomes

Thus, the proposed model represents a synthesis of indigenous wisdom and modern educational design, offering a comprehensive approach to holistic development that is both culturally rooted and globally relevant.

Discussion:-

The integration of IKS into the NCF-SE-2023 represents a significant paradigm shift in contemporary educational philosophy. This transformation moves beyond the dichotomy of traditional and modern knowledge systems by establishing a synergistic framework that combines indigenous epistemologies with structured, policy-driven educational practices (Ministry of Education, 2023; Tyagi, 2025). By bridging the gap between experiential, value-oriented traditions and contemporary pedagogical frameworks, this hybrid model offers a culturally grounded yet globally adaptable approach to education. IKS contributes philosophical depth through concepts such as the Pancha Kosha, which emphasises multidimensional human development, while NCF-SE-2023 provides a systematic structure through frameworks like Panchapadiya, enabling practical implementation in classrooms. This convergence ensures that learning is not limited to cognitive acquisition but extends to emotional, ethical, social, and spiritual development.

In the context of sustainability, the ecological wisdom embedded within IKS aligns with global sustainability goals, encouraging learners to develop environmentally responsible behaviours and practices (Rao, 2018). The inclusion of sustainability-oriented learning within NCF-SE-2023 ensures that such values are systematically embedded in the curriculum. In terms of mental health and well-being, IKS's holistic approach, which incorporates practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and emotional regulation, supports the development of psychological resilience and emotional balance among learners (Sankar, 2025). NCF-SE-2023 reinforces this by promoting socio-emotional learning and well-being as integral components of education. Additionally, the integration supports social cohesion and ethical development by emphasising values such as empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity. These values are essential for fostering inclusive and harmonious societies in an increasingly globalised world (Sarkar, 2024).

By prioritising holistic development, the integrated framework equips learners with the competencies required to navigate complex global realities. These include critical thinking, ethical reasoning, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, all essential for addressing contemporary challenges and contributing to sustainable development. The integration of IKS and NCF-SE 2023 represents a forward-looking educational model that not only preserves cultural heritage but also enhances the relevance and effectiveness of education in the 21st century. It provides a robust foundation for developing learners who are intellectually competent, emotionally resilient, ethically grounded, and socially responsible.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for multiple stakeholders within the education system, particularly in the context of IKS with the NCF-SE-2023.

- **Implications for Teachers:** The integration of IKS into NCF-SE-2023 requires teachers to move beyond traditional content-delivery methods and adopt experiential, reflective, and value-based pedagogies. Teacher education programmes should therefore focus on equipping educators with the skills required to integrate indigenous knowledge, cultural contexts, and ethical dimensions into teaching–learning processes (Sarkar, 2024). Additionally, teachers must be trained to facilitate inquiry-based learning, promote socio-emotional development, and create inclusive classroom environments that respect diversity and cultural heritage.
- **Implications for Curriculum Design:** Curriculum developers should ensure that learning experiences are contextualised, culturally relevant, and aligned with real-life applications. This includes embedding sustainability, ethical values, and community-based learning within subject areas. Furthermore, aligning the Pancha Kosha framework with competency-based education can support the development of comprehensive curricula that address multiple dimensions of learner development (Kumari et al., 2024).
- **Implications for Policy and Institutional Practice:** At the policy level, the successful implementation of NCF-SE-2023 requires systematic capacity building, resource allocation, and institutional support (Ministry of Education, 2023). Policymakers must ensure that adequate training programmes, teaching resources, and assessment frameworks are developed to support the integration of IKS into mainstream education. Institutions should also foster collaborative partnerships with local communities and knowledge holders to enhance the authenticity and relevance of learning experiences. Continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for assessing the effectiveness of implementation and ensuring alignment with holistic educational goals.

Future Research Directions

- Future research should focus on developing standardised measurement tools based on the Pancha Kosha framework to assess holistic development among learners.
- Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) can be employed to examine the relationships between different dimensions of holistic development and educational outcomes.
- Longitudinal studies are also recommended to investigate the long-term impact of holistic education on student outcomes, including academic achievement, emotional well-being, ethical orientation, and sustainability awareness.
- Moreover, future research can explore the integration of digital and AI-enabled learning environments with IKS-based pedagogies.

Conclusion:-

In an era characterised by rapid social, technological, and environmental changes, the need for holistic development has become increasingly critical. The integration of IKS and NCF-SE-2023 not only addresses this need but also provides a robust foundation for developing future-ready learners who are capable of navigating complex global challenges while maintaining a strong sense of identity and values.

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