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RESEARCH ARTICLE

UNVEILING THE SYNERGY BETWEEN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INDIAN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOL EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM NEP 2020 & NCF-SE 2023

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Abstract

This study endeavours to explore the vital role of community involvement in integrating Indian traditional knowledge in school education. Through this study, an attempt has been made to analyse the policy documents of NEP 2020 & NCF-SE 2023 to elucidate the role of community participation in enriching the learning experiences and acquaint learners with the traditional knowledge practices of diverse Indian communities. Moreover, the study also provide strategies for effective incorporation of indian traditional knowledge through community participation in various aspects of school education.

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Introduction:-

The term, Traditional Knowledge (TK), in its simplest form can be understood as the living repository of knowledge, skills and practices that has been developed, protected and passed down from through generations, inseparable from the traditional lifestyle that shapes a community's cultural and spiritual identity (WIPO, 2020). UNESCO (2009) defines it as the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It is a broad term that encompasses tradition based artistic, literary and scientific activities and include but not limited to agricultural knowledge, medicinal knowledge, scientific and technical knowledge, ecological knowledge and get showcased in myriad forms of cultural expression such as traditional painting, handicraft, music, dance, drama, folklore etc. Active engagement of the community in the educational process is widely recognised as a crucial element for the attainment of quality education. Without the integration of community the goals of education can never be achieve it its truest sense and it necessitates the combined efforts of educators, parents, and the community members to foster inclusive, equitable and sustainable outcomes. (Singh, Tyagi & Singh, 2022) Operating not in isolation but as interconnected entities, successful schools forge bonds with parents and communities, fortifying relationships aimed at nurturing children's development.

Studies conducted over the years have revealed that the involvement of communities in education is crucial in promoting quality and effectiveness of education. Community engagement in education has a positive impact on access to education, retention rate of the students and attendance of students (Ahmed & Said, 2013). Community participation helps in the development of a sense of ownership among community and parents which in turn motivates the community to work towards the development of school. When parents and community members are actively involved in education, they provide additional resources, support and accountability to educational institutions, leading to better academic performance (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Parents and community also plays a crucial role in students

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readiness for school and keep an eye on their health and nutrition, which in turn effects the quality of education (Houtenville & Conway, 2008). Understanding the importance of community participation in education, various committees and policies over the years have recommended the integrated to communities for transecting quality education. The Mudaliar Commission (1952-53) recommended the creation and registration of managing boards in all the schools for proper management, utilisation of resources and maintenance of quality and standard of schools. On the same line Kothari Commission (1964-66) focused on decentralisation of education and reflected on the importance of bridging the connection between local community and school to improve the quality of education. Moreover, National Policy on Education, 1986 and Programme of Action (POA), 1992 focused on creating local bodies and village education committees which will participate in the planning and management and improvement of school system for better accountability and quality education.

The NEP 2020 & NCF-SE 2023 vehemently endorses community engagement throughout all stages of education, not merely for the allocation of resources but also for active engagement in student's learning and thereby inculcating Indian traditional knowledge practices in the classroom processes. Through this study an attempt has been made to explore and analyse the recommendations made by NEP 2020 and NCF-SE 2023 on the community engagement and how traditional knowledges can be brought to the teaching learning practices to enrich the process. Besides, the study also provides strategies for effective incorporation of Indian traditional knowledge through community participation in various aspects of school education.

Objectives of the Study:-

1. To study the recommendations of NEP 2020 on Indian traditional knowledge and community participation in school education.
2. To study the recommendations of NCF-SE 2023 on Indian traditional knowledge and community participation in school education.
3. To provide strategies for effective incorporation of Indian traditional knowledge through community participation in various aspects of school education.

Methodology of the Study:-

The data was collected using qualitative research method of document analysis from secondary sources such as policy documents, research papers and government reports.

Review of Literature:-

Over the years, the Indian government has undertaken various initiatives and policies to integrate India's rich traditional knowledge with the institutionalised knowledge systems. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) Report to the Nation (2009) emphasised on the importance of safeguarding traditional knowledge, especially in fields like health and agriculture, for the betterment of communities. In the context of Indian society, it is imperative to acknowledge that community engagement in education is deeply ingrained, as evidenced by the historical emergence of pathshalas and Madrasas as community-centric educational institutions. Over the passage of time, society has consistently passed down its rich trove of indigenous knowledge and skills through the conduit of these revered institutions. Engaging community in education enhances the efficient utilisation of educational resources and accelerates the creation of high quality curriculum and learning materials tailored to address specific challenges that hinder the learning process (Burde, 2004; Singleton, 2005). Engagement of local communities in education has demonstrated better impact on student's academic achievement and beneficial for infrastructural development of the school (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). To attain these, it is crucial to collaborate with these communities and empower them to optimise their resource utilisation, which will lead to enhanced resource accessibility, improved quality and long-term sustainability (Singleton, 2005). Studies have also found positive correlation between community and parental engagement in education and the academic success of the students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). When we incorporate the insights, interests, and expertise of communities into educational process, it leads to increased student enrolment, retention and academic performance (Katz, 2000). Furthermore, community engagement in outdoor creative activities like excursions, field trips, and sports events play a pivotal role in enhancing student motivation and achievement (Smith, 2006; Mozumder & Halim, 2006). When communities are actively engaged in shaping educational policies and implementing them, it results in a more satisfying fulfilment of students' educational needs and the successful and comprehensive implementation of educational initiatives. Thus, engagement of community in education is a mutually empowering process, enhancing the capabilities and capacities of both individuals and organisations (Burde, 2004).

Findings of the Study:**Objective 1: To study the recommendations of NEP 2020 on Indian Traditional Knowledge and Community participation in School Education.**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a reformation of the curriculum and pedagogical practices to align them with the rich cultural heritage and knowledge of Bharat (India). In delving into the conceptualisation of knowledge within the framework of NEP 2020, the policy advocates for the incorporation of a profound understanding of India's diverse social, cultural, and technological fabric among the younger generation. The aim is to install a sense of awareness about their past, fostering national pride, self-confidence, self-knowledge, cooperation, and integration of knowledge. NEP 2020 envisions a holistic exploration of knowledge, drawing from ancient Indian wisdom and assessing its influence on contemporary India. This includes examining how ancient practices have shaped our lives, recognising instances of success, and addressing challenges in integrating traditional knowledge into the modern Indian society. The curriculum, designed with meticulous care, seamlessly integrates these ideas throughout the educational journey, covering various facets such as classical languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Three language formula and the mother tongue, tribal and traditional knowledge practices, and traditional learning methods. Subjects like mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, medicine, water conservation, ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, and traditional farming are employed as vehicles for transmitting this knowledge. Additionally, a dedicated course on the Indian knowledge System is offered as an elective paper in secondary schools, providing learners with authentic and systematic guidance on diverse knowledge practices prevalent in India. To further enhance the learning experience, NEP 2020 promotes the organisation of competitions at the school level, utilising indigenous games as a medium. The incorporation of video documentaries showcasing inspirational personalities in the fields of science art and culture will enhance the learning experience, and provide the learners with real-life examples of impactful contributions. The Policy also encourages students to participate in cultural exchange programs, facilitating visits to different states to witness and learn from the rich cultural beauty and diversity firsthand. As part of the 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' initiative, NEP 2020 proposes to identify 100 tourist destinations where educational institutions will send students to learn the history, scientific contributions, indigenous literature, culture and knowledge of these destinations.

The policy underscores the significance of community engagement in integrating traditional Indian knowledge into educational practices. Addressing issues like the increasing school dropout rates, the policy emphasises the role of counsellors and social workers to raise awareness and foster community involvement, ensuring universal access to education for all school-age children. NEP proposes a grassroots approach to understand the specific dropout challenges and ensure community collaboration to tackle these issues. Furthermore, NEP introduces the concept of school complexes, where teachers, parents and other stakeholders in school education can share insights to enhance the teaching-learning process. Besides, these school complexes are encouraged to invite and hire local experts as 'master instructor' in traditional crafts, arts, vocational skills, and agriculture, promoting and preserving local knowledge. These local artists will not only help in the preservation of these rare local knowledges but also promote appreciation for local traditional art forms among the learners. Towards achieving this goal, the States and Union Territories will be asked to adopt innovative techniques for effective school governance, resource sharing and communitybuilding. The creation of school complexes aims to cultivate a dynamic teacher community, allowing every educator to contribute innovative ideas and share best practices collaboratively. The policy advocates for special, shorter teacher education programmes at Block Institute of Teacher Education (BITE), District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), and school complexes for the hired 'master instructors'. NEP 2020 envisions schools as points of celebration and honour for the entire community, aiming to restore their dignity. The policy encourages the celebration of important events with communities, displaying and honouring notable alumni from the community. It also suggested using the under-utilised capacity of school infrastructure for social, intellectual and volunteer activities, designing these spaces as 'Samajik Chetna Kendra'. This multifaceted approach seeks to enrich schools by actively engaging and involving the broader community in the education process.

Objective 2: To study the recommendations of NCF-SE 2023 on Indian Traditional Knowledge and Community participation in School Education.

The NCF-SE 2023 is a significant milestone in acknowledging and leveraging India's profound reservoir of ancient knowledge. In alignment with the NEP 2020, this framework is deeply rooted in India's cultural context and traditional wisdom. It reverberates with the ethos of the Guru-Shishya tradition, where the relationship between teachers and students is central to effective learning and through the medium of dialogue and debate one tries to reach to the truth. NEP 2020's emphasis on promoting traditional knowledge and skills is seamlessly integrated into the NCF-SE 2023. The framework advocates for the use of local resources, embracing mother tongues and classical languages like Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit that will not only foster a connection with our linguistic roots but also ensures a holistic

approach to education that values indigenous knowledge. Recognising the invaluable contributions of scholars like Charak, Aryabhata, Panini, Pingala, Brahmagupta etc. the NCF-SE underscores the imperative to reclaim and preserve India's intellectual heritage. The Guru-Shishya tradition highlighted in the framework, emphasises collaborative learning, with senior students playing an important role in the growth of their peers and junior students, fostering a sense of community and shared knowledge. Holistic education is a cornerstone of NCF-SE 2023, aiming to install values like humility, discipline, and respect for all. The NCF-SE acknowledges the influence of eminent Indian thinkers like Savitribai Phule, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi. It aligns with their vision of developing a 'National System of Education' that balances India's intellectual, cultural and artistic heritage with modern scientific advancements. Character building remains a chief aim of the Indian vision of education, with NCF-SE emphasising the development of values and suppositions from early childhood. These values range from traditional principles like Seva and Ahimsa to constitutional values like commitment to equality and justice. The framework also emphasises developing dispositions such as positive work ethics, honesty, integrity, and responsibility. The framework's focus on using local learning resources is not just a pedagogical strategy, it is a commitment to develop cost-effective and eco-friendly resources for the students so that they can engage with the resources and learn in a better way. From physical items like toys, books, and vocational education equipments to non-physical elements like traditional stories and festivals, local resources are seen as more effective when they resonate with learners. In essence, the NCF-SE emerges as a dynamic framework that not only preserves India's cultural and epistemological legacy but also propels the nation towards a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity in education. It serves as a blueprint for fostering well-rounded individuals equipped with the wisdom of the past and the skills for the future.

Objective 3: To Provide strategies for effective incorporation of Indian traditional knowledge through community participation in various aspects of school education.

Sensitisation Workshop for Community Experts:

Classroom welcome students from varied economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, some of whom may be slow learners or face learning disabilities. Additionally, there are students with special needs requiring tailored support. Community experts might lack awareness in handling diverse student needs. Therefore, conducting sensitisation workshops before their involvement ensures inclusive teaching, fostering effective learning for all.

Suitable Parameters for Incorporation of Indian texts in learning:

While incorporating content from various Indian classical texts into learning materials, there should be suitable parameters for inclusion as these texts are vast and some of the knowledge may not be suitable for children. This will ensure the inclusion of age-appropriate information in textbooks across different levels of school education, fostering interconnectedness between the materials studied at each level.

Incorporation of Indigenous Games:

Collaboration with sports and cultural bodies to identify and standardise indigenous games is needed. Besides, a curriculum should be prepared that integrates these games into physical education, trying them to broader cultural contexts. Also, organisation of regional and national competitions should be done on a regular basis to promote these games, that will create a sense of pride and recognition for traditional sports.

Video Documentaries and Inspirational Personalities:

Partnership with filmmakers, historians and cultural experts should be developed to prepare high-quality video content. There should be a diverse representation of inspirational personalities, including lesser known figures from various regions. These video lessons should be integrated into lesson plans, to provide context and relevance to academic subjects.

Organisation of Educational Tours under 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat':

Collaboration between Ministry of Tourism and Educational Institutions should be done to design educational tours with clear learning objectives. There should be pre and post-tour activities that connect the tour experiences to the academic curriculum. Local guides and experts need to be there to provide authentic insights during tours.

Community Collaboration for Dropout Prevention:

Community outreach programmes should be conducted to understand the specific challenges leading to school dropouts. There is also need to develop targeted awareness campaigns involving local leaders, influencers and social workers. Suitable mentorship programme should be there to pair successful alumni with current students to provide guidance and motivation.

Celebration of Community Events:

There is a need to develop comprehensive calendar of community events that align with the academic calendar. Local artists, historians and cultural experts should be involved in the planning of these events. Also, a tradition of recognising and celebrating the achievements of notable alumni should be established to foster a sense of community pride.

Local Resource Development:

Engagement of local artists, craftsman and writers should be there in the development of learning materials. There should be a platform where educators and local artists can collaborate and share their ideas regarding resource development. Besides, proper guidelines for eco-friendly resources should be implemented to encourage the use of sustainable materials in the development of teaching learning aids.

Emphasis on Language Education:

Such language learning programmes should be there that go beyond linguistic skills and integrate language education with cultural studies, history and literature. There is a need to collaborate with language experts to design language proficiency benchmarks that reflect both local and international standards.

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