



PARAKH Assessment: A platform for transforming assessment pattern in India for student development

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Abstract

During the Vedic, Buddhist, and Medieval periods, assessment was informal, based on oral recitation and teacher observations within Gurukuls, Sanghas, and Madrasas. No external agency was involved in the evaluation process. Formal examinations began under British rule, with the first matriculation exam introduced in 1857 for university admissions. After independence, three important Education Commissions namely, the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948–49), the Mudaliar Commission (1952–53) and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) suggested revamping of students' assessment through examinations. They advocated for reforms to enhance the quality of education in India. The National Policy on Education (1968) emphasized a paradigm shift in evaluation—from merely certifying learning to actively improving it. Later, the National Policy on Education (1986) highlighted the need to reduce subjectivity and rote memorization in assessments, advocating the implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and the replacement of marks with a grading system. Building upon these foundational reforms, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 placed a strong emphasis on transforming the assessment system to better support and optimize student learning and overall development. In alignment with this vision, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), in collaboration with the central government, proposed the establishment of a centralized regulatory body to oversee board examinations across the country. This proposed body—PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)—is envisioned to standardize assessment practices and ensure consistency in board exams conducted nationwide. This paper explores the objectives and role of PARAKH in reshaping the assessment landscape in India. It further discusses the anticipated impact of this initiative and offers recommendations for ensuring uniform and effective assessment practices across educational boards.



Key Words: Assessment, PARAKH, Holistic Development, National Assessment centre, Holistic Report Card, Programme for international student assessment.

Introduction

The reason of proposing PARAKH was due to a wide range of disparities in scores across board in country. Furthermore, students of different boards then face challenges while pursuing higher education at the college level. To combat this issue, NCERT has decided to bring a certain level of uniformity to all of the boards across India. This will be done via a new regulatory body called PARAKH.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformation in assessment practices to enhance student learning and development. It emphasizes that assessments should:

- Be conducted regularly and designed to be formative and competency-based.
- Serve as a tool to support and promote students' overall growth.
- Prioritize 'assessment for learning' rather than merely 'assessment of learning'.
- Evaluate higher-order skills such as critical thinking, analytical ability, and conceptual understanding.
- Act as a feedback mechanism for the continuous improvement of teaching-learning processes across the education system.

NEP 2020 mentions assessments as one of its core principles, stating that there is a need to "Emphasize ongoing formative assessment that supports learning, rather than relying on summative assessments which often fuel the current coaching-driven culture.". Essentially, for a healthy foundational learning base where students achieve appropriate developmental goals, the education system needs to adopt a more formative assessment approach, as opposed to the current summative format.

What is PARAKH?

"PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) has been established as the National Assessment Centre (NAC) to serve as a regulatory body for improving the quality, equity, and consistency of educational assessments across India. Its primary objective is to drive meaningful reforms that promote holistic student development and reinforce the overall education system."



PARAKH has been established under the aegis of NCERT as a dedicated institution to unify and harmonize assessment practices across school boards in all States and Union Territories. It serves as a collaborative platform, bringing together diverse stakeholders to shape a comprehensive and learner-centric approach to school assessments. As part of its mandate, PARAKH has organized national workshops focused on assessment methodologies, examination systems, and board equivalence to foster consistency and coherence across the country. The organization is committed to building a fair, inclusive, and transparent evaluation ecosystem that ensures every student is assessed equitably.

Going forward, PARAKH will formulate benchmarks, frameworks, and guiding principles for student assessments, applicable to all recognized school boards in India. This initiative is designed to support a paradigm shift from traditional testing towards competency-based assessments that nurture 21st-century skills and prepare students for a ready world.

Objectives of PARAKH

PARAKH will focus on fair and equitable assessment, policy making and changing evaluation criteria.

Table 1
Objectives of PARAKH

	Standard setting for assessment of all recognized school boards.
	Undertake National Achievement Survey (NAS)
	Undertake State Achievement Survey (SAS)
	Guide Board of Assessments (BOAs)



Monitor learning outcomes across the country



Assessment tools will be thoughtfully aligned with subject-specific learning outcomes, skills, and dispositions, ensuring a seamless and coherent progression from the foundational stage to higher education.



PARAKH will also develop inclusive guidelines aimed at ensuring equitable access and assessment opportunities for students with learning disabilities, fostering a system that is both fair and supportive of diverse learning needs.



PARAKH will guide all Boards of Examinations towards more competency based assessments.

The focus of the NEP 2020 is to formulate a system of ongoing assessments right from the foundational level, to track and individualise each student's learning. The potential impact such a system could have on the Indian educational system:

- **Focuses on The Right Learning Outcomes:** - A formative style of assessment analyses critical thinking skills and overall skill development, rather than simply checking memory stores of students at the end of the year by conducting summative assessment.
- **Stress-Free Learning:** - This new culture of evaluating the learning will help make the assessment process non-threatening for the students, reducing their exam fear to a great extent. It will also help students to cope up with exam stress and fear.
- **Continuously Measuring Classroom Performance:** - A formative assessment style is typically periodic in nature, and involves an ongoing effort by educators. This showcases each student's growth pattern throughout the year, while allowing the teacher to address individual children's challenges in real-time, rather than wait for the year-end results.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 calls for a shift from traditional summative assessments to regular, formative, and competency-based evaluations that foster deeper learning,



critical thinking, and conceptual understanding. Assessments in Grades 3, 5, and 8 will monitor progress, while board exams in Grades 10 and 12 will be reimagined to emphasize holistic development. To support this transformation, PARAKH—the National Assessment Centre—will be established as a standard-setting body to ensure quality and consistency in assessments nationwide.

Functions of PARAKH:

- PARAKH will function as an integral part of NCERT, entrusted with conducting national-level assessments such as the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Surveys to track student learning outcomes.
- It will play an important role in monitoring and evaluating the achievement of learning outcomes across the country, ensuring educational goals are met effectively.
- Over time, PARAKH aims to evolve into a centralized, single-window platform for all matters related to assessment, offering comprehensive data, resources, and expertise at both national and international levels.
- A key objective of PARAKH is to bring parity among various recognized boards in India by standardizing academic expectations and ensuring uniformity in student performance levels.
- The centre will collaborate actively with state education departments, school boards, and global assessment bodies, strengthening the overall assessment ecosystem in the country.
- PARAKH will be tasked with overseeing and managing large-scale national assessments, including future iterations of NAS, to inform education policy and practice.
- Additionally, PARAKH will coordinate and facilitate India's participation in international benchmarking studies such as PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS, enhancing the global comparability of Indian students' performance.

Significance of PARAKH

Bridging Gaps in Admissions

PARAKH aims to eliminate disparities among school boards, ensuring that students from state boards are not at a disadvantage compared to their CBSE counterparts during college admissions.



Innovative and Standardized Evaluation

It will be responsible for developing and implementing technical standards for designing, conducting, analyzing, and reporting assessments at all levels of school education, promoting fair and reliable evaluation.

Inclusive and Holistic Education Approach

PARAKH promotes an inclusive, participatory, and holistic assessment framework, grounded in field experiences, research evidence, stakeholder inputs, and global best practices.

Scientific and Learner-Centric Shift

It represents a progressive move towards a scientific and child-centric education system, aligning assessments with children's cognitive, social, and physical development stages to better support individual learning needs.

Advantages of PARAKH

Uniform Assessment Standards Across Boards

PARAKH will ensure consistency in evaluation methods across all state and central education boards, reducing discrepancies in student scores due to varying assessment criteria.

Supports NEP 2020 Vision

By shifting the focus away from rote memorization to competency-based learning, PARAKH aligns directly with the goals of the NEP 2020, fostering deeper understanding and skill development.

Ensures Equal Opportunity in College Admissions

The initiative will address inequities in college admissions, particularly for students from state boards who often face disadvantages compared to CBSE students.

Strengthens the Assessment Framework

PARAKH will introduce scientific and standardized methods for designing, conducting, analyzing, and reporting assessments, ensuring they are valid, reliable, and reflective of student learning at all school levels.



Reforms in education system in India after PARAKH

PARAKH aims to simplify and transform the assessment process within the Indian education system, in alignment with the goals outlined in NEP 2020. As part of this transformation, the student progress card will be redesigned across all NCERT and SCERT-affiliated schools to reflect a holistic, 360-degree, and multidimensional overview of each learner's development.

The newly proposed report card will incorporate self-assessment, peer assessment, and records of student progress in areas such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, quizzes, role plays, group work, portfolios, and more, alongside the traditional teacher assessment.

While board examinations for Grades 10 and 12 will remain in place across states, they will be substantially revamped to curb the dominance of coaching culture and encourage authentic, deep learning. As proposed in NEP 2020, these exams will be made simpler and more focused on core concepts and competencies. Additionally, the best-of-two attempts model in board exams will be introduced for inclusion in progress reports. NCERT, SCERT, and PARAKH have been assigned the responsibility of developing appropriate guidelines to support this shift.

PARAKH's mandate extends beyond board results to encompass the full spectrum of school learning. It will oversee school-level assessments in Grades 3, 5, and 8 to monitor foundational skills and core competencies. By addressing disparities in assessment practices and content across state boards, PARAKH aims to standardize evaluation methods. This will help ensure equity, fairness, and consistency in student learning outcomes nationwide.

Holistic Progress Card (HPC): 360-Degree Assessment to Foster 'Learning to Learn

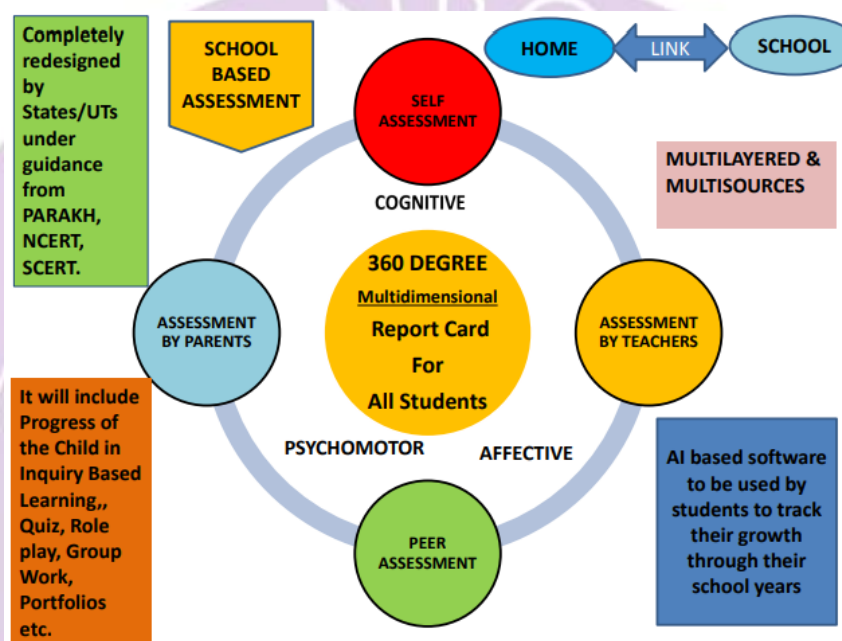
In line with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, each student's report card will adopt a well-rounded format, reflecting academic performance alongside personal, emotional, and social growth. This all-encompassing 360-degree Holistic Progress Card (HPC) will serve as a versatile, school-based evaluation tool, offering parents a clear and comprehensive view of their child's overall development.

Just like the concept of 360 degrees represents completeness, the HPC aims to provide an all-round picture of a learner's development over time. It will highlight the student's strengths, potential areas for improvement, challenges faced, and evolving skills or qualities.

By integrating child-centred assessment practices and aligning them with well-planned pedagogical strategies and expected learning outcomes, the HPC is intended to foster trust, encourage meaningful learning, and support the broader goal of helping students “learn how to learn.”

Figure 1

360-degree multidimensional report card



The Holistic Progress Card (HPC) is designed to reflect the individual growth and unique potential of each child across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This 360-degree assessment system includes self-assessment, peer assessment, and evaluation of a child’s progress in project-based and inquiry-based learning, as well as performance in quizzes, role plays, group activities, and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) tasks, alongside teacher assessment.

The HPC serves as a vital bridge between school and home, encouraging regular Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) that actively engage families in their child’s holistic development.

Key Features of 360-Degree Assessment:

- It explores multiple dimensions of a child’s learning in varied contexts, environments, and social relationships.
- Active participation of children in learning activities is central to this assessment approach.



- It enables teachers to form a well-rounded understanding of each learner, aiding in effective planning and support across all three developmental goals.

Principles for Effective Holistic Reporting:

- Reports should be descriptive and analytical, not limited to numerical scores.
- Lengthy and overly detailed reports should be avoided to ensure they remain meaningful and usable.

Three Core Components of 360-Degree Assessment:

1. *Self-Assessment*

Students take an active role in evaluating their own learning journey. By regularly reflecting on their strengths, challenges, and progress, they cultivate a sense of responsibility, self-motivation, and metacognitive skills. This process empowers learners to set personal goals and become more independent and engaged in their growth.

2. *Peer Assessment*

Peer-to-peer feedback fosters a culture of collaboration and mutual respect. When learners evaluate each other's work, they not only reinforce their own understanding but also develop empathy, active listening, and constructive communication. This process nurtures both cognitive development and essential social-emotional skills.

3. *Teacher Assessment*

Educators guide the learning process through continuous observation, interaction, and feedback. By using probing questions, classroom discussions, and performance-based tasks, teachers gain insights into each student's progress. This approach allows them to tailor instruction to individual needs, ensuring that assessment is both meaningful and developmentally responsive.

Table 2

Transforming Board Exams, Offering Flexibility and Choice



Two chances to take Board exams



Subject could be offered at two levels i.e., standard and higher level



Reducing curriculum to core competencies



Choice of Subjects as per student interest

Suggestions for way ahead:

Assessment is integral part of education system, as it determines whether goals are achieved or not. Assessment helps to identify student strength and weakness and the gaps remains in student learning.

“Students can learn in spite of poor teaching but they cannot overcome poor assessment.”

Steps to Improve Assessment and Promote Fair, Equitable Learning in India

To address existing challenges in the Indian assessment system and ensure fair, inclusive, and meaningful learning experiences, the following measures can be undertaken:

1. Unification of School Boards Across Regions

A national-level framework is required to harmonize various school boards to reduce disparities and ensure consistency in educational standards across the country.

2. Establishing a Common Assessment Platform

A unified platform should be developed to ensure fairness, equity, and seamless student mobility across different boards and geographical regions.

3. Standardization of Curriculum and Evaluation

Aligning school curricula, grading systems, and evaluation methodologies across boards will enhance the credibility and mutual recognition of certificates and academic achievements.

4. Moving Beyond Rote Learning



The assessment system must shift from rote memorization to holistic evaluation methods that reflect a student's conceptual understanding, creativity, critical thinking, and overall potential.

5. Periodic Tracking of Student Progress

Regular assessments should be introduced throughout the schooling years to monitor learning outcomes, identify learning gaps early, and provide timely interventions.

6. Inclusive Guidelines for Children with Special Needs

NCERT and other relevant agencies must design inclusive assessment guidelines to support learners with special needs, ensuring that no child is left behind.

7. Encouraging Participation in Olympiads and Competitions

National and international-level Olympiads and academic competitions should be organized regularly to nurture talent, foster innovation, and build competitiveness among students.

Conclusion

In school education, students often face challenges and feel pressured to score high marks, largely due to expectations from adults around them. However, every child is unique, which highlights the need for a standardized assessment system across the country. PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge) has been established to encourage creative, meaningful learning instead of rote memorization. It will evaluate and support all recognized school boards in India to ensure quality and consistency. With appropriate assessment methods, India can move closer to meeting global education standards. While the journey is ongoing, the active involvement of all stakeholders—teachers, parents, school leaders, policymakers, and the wider community—will be essential in realizing these goals.

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