



Parakh: Elevating Assessment Standards for A Modern Education System

Priyanka Sharma, Shakti Gautam, and Prof. Lajwanti

- 1) Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra
- 2) Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra
- 3) Professor, Department of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra

Pages No: 219-226

Abstract:

The goal of the creative assessment reform project PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) is to improve the caliber and impartiality of student evaluations in India. The goal of the creative assessment reform project PARAKH is to enhance the caliber and impartiality of student evaluations in India and to replace exam-centric education and rote learning with a more thorough, skill-based, and holistic assessment framework. PARAKH aims to offer a balanced assessment that gauges students' cognitive and non-cognitive skills by encouraging critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving ability. This reform makes assessment procedures more egalitarian and representative of a contemporary educational system by promoting inclusion and standardization among educational boards. Creating a more meaningful, learner-centered educational experience, its goal is to prepare students for the problems that they will encounter in the real world.

Ensuring a child's physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development through a holistic learning framework is a pragmatic method and known as holistic development. Along with the fundamentals of reading and writing students of this and upcoming generation also need to acquire a variety of skills and a talents to get ready for the ever-changing actual world. They need to be proficient in inference skills, critical thinking skills etc. The knowledge and skill foundation that our students now require have changed, necessitating new learning objectives that alter the way that assessment and instruction are related. This style of teaching not only focuses on learning but also on implementation of learning process. Now a days, assessment is a crucial component of the teaching and learning process. During every assessment, students demonstrate their learning, get feedback on their errors, and have the chance to do better. Assessments are also used to pinpoint each student's areas of strength and weakness so that teachers may offer social assistance, educational programming, or specialized academic help.

Keywords: *PARAKH, assessment reform, skill-based evaluation, standardized assessment, learner-centered education, critical thinking, inclusivity in education, student evaluation reform.*

INTRODUCTION

The Union Government intends to launch a system for assessing students. The major goal of this initiative is to keep uniformity in state and central boards. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) have recently established a new "assessment regulator" at the initiative of the union government. "PARAKH" is the name of the recently established assessment regulator. The major goal of this effort is to develop an innovative and engaging educational ecosystem in India. This programme aims to curb all the worst educational practices, as expected by the NCERT and SCERT such as learning done by rote methods, aversion to arithmetic, etc. PARAKH will monitor, examine, and assess every officially recognized educational board in India. It supports excellent practices in educational settings and ensures that academic standards are constant. The demand for a more comprehensive and fair evaluation system has grown in light of the changing nature of the educational landscape. To meet these needs, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India introduced a groundbreaking program called PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development). The old examination system, which mostly relies on rote learning and high-stakes testing, has frequently overlooked students' varied skill sets and abilities, resulting in a limited assessment of their potential. It (PARAKH) promotes an all-encompassing framework that evaluates cognitive and non-cognitive abilities while fostering creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. With an emphasis on moving beyond simple memorization to actual knowledge application, this new evaluation methodology encourages students to grow more completely. The objective of PARAKH is a move away from exam-focused assessments toward a more comprehensive and inclusive framework that recognizes the importance of both academic knowledge and core life skills. This new approach emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence alongside traditional subject matter understanding. PARAKH guarantees that student evaluations are more representative of individual skills and in line with contemporary educational aims by providing standardized yet adaptable assessment techniques. This reform aims to prepare students for a future that will require flexibility, problem-solving skills, and overall personal development in addition to enhancing academic success. Through PARAKH, India wants to shift towards a more learner-centric, balanced, and internationally competitive education system. With regard to evaluation, PARAKH seeks to develop a more equitable and comprehensive framework that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also critical life skills like communication, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. This reform is a significant step in the direction of changing India's educational system so that students graduate with the information and skills they need to prosper in a world that is changing quickly. Therefore, PARAKH heralds the start of a new age in Indian education system that is centered on producing students who are capable, creative, and future-ready.

FUNCTIONS OF PARAKH

1. Setting norms, recommendations and standards for student evaluation and assessment for recognized school boards in India.
2. Conducting regular assessments of learning outcomes, such as the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Surveys (SAS).
3. With the goal of supporting all forms of learning assessment, both nationally and internationally, PARAKH will eventually evolve into the nation's single-window source for information and expertise pertaining to assessments.

NEP 2020 proposed PARAKH for achieving the following goals of assessment:

1. Encouraging educators and guardians to assist each student's holistic growth in both academic and non-academic domains by acknowledging, identifying, and nurturing each student's unique potential
2. Flexibility: It is crucial for giving students the freedom to choose the courses and programs that best suit their interests and skills.
3. Priority is given to conceptual comprehension over memorization and exam-oriented study. Put more emphasis on ongoing formative evaluations for learning as opposed to final exams (summative evaluation).
4. Ongoing evaluation of advancements based on ongoing research and frequent evaluation by specialists in education.
5. Creating assessment uniformity among state and central boards, which presently adhere to various evaluation criteria that result in significant score differences.
6. Technical standards for administration, analysis, and reporting at all educational levels will be established and put into effect through standardization.
7. Skill development will encourage and assist school boards in changing their evaluation and assessment pattern to match the 21st-century skill standards.

CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH

Some research studies which are related to PARAKH-

Bennett, R.E., (2011) this study addressed that in order to help students learn more deeply, this essay addresses formative assessment as a crucial element. Bennett contends that tests ought to be used as means of encouraging learning and involvement as well as gauging students' understanding. The study emphasizes how formative practices can help students develop a development attitude and how important feedback is in the evaluation process. This is in line with the objectives of PARAKH, which prioritizes skill development and ongoing assessment over high-stakes testing.

Sharma, R., (2021) this study explored the necessity for Indian schools to implement assessment methods that support critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, in line with PARAKH's objectives for evaluations that are more comprehensive.

Singh, R., & Sharma, M., (2019) this study looked at the detrimental psychological consequences that high-stakes exams have on Indian pupils. It presents data in favor of changes like PARAKH, which seek to lessen test-related anxiety by means of ongoing and thorough assessment.

Batra, S., (2018) this study emphasized on how differences in assessment methods lead to uneven chances and the discrepancies in India's educational assessments among various boards. The study is pertinent to the national assessment standardization initiative of PARAKH.

Kumar, A., & Gupta, R., (2017) this study looked at how student learning outcomes in Indian schools are affected by continuous assessment techniques. The results indicate that educational institutions utilizing ongoing evaluation techniques document increased degrees of student participation and comprehension. The authors stress the necessity of schools switching from summative to continuous methods that enable ongoing feedback and development. This advances the goals of PARAKH, which include fostering an integrated and more holistic framework for assessment that improves learning for all students.

OECD., (2018) this paper emphasized on the importance of cultivating 21st-century skills and competences. It backs the move that PARAKH hopes to make toward holistic evaluation methods that prioritize creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Agarwal, S., & Singh, R., (2019) studied the academic performance of pupils using holistic evaluation procedures and those using traditional assessment methods is compared. According to the findings, children who receive holistic evaluation perform better on activities requiring critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The authors support the implementation of

comprehensive frameworks like PARAKH, which support the global trend of giving skills and competences equally with academic knowledge so that students can prepare themselves for difficulties.

Joshi, G. (2021)., this study examined the goals of PARAKH and how its execution might guarantee fair and inclusive evaluations among India's various school boards. It talks about the possible advantages and difficulties of this reform.

Briggs, D. C., & Weeks, J. P., (2018) summarized how assessment procedures affect the learning results of students. The authors draw attention to the trend toward formative, comprehensive evaluations that put skill development ahead of conventional testing techniques. In line with PARAKH's objectives to change student evaluation in India and enable a more inclusive educational environment, the review emphasizes the necessity of educational changes that support equitable assessment procedures.

Joshi, P., (2013) reported that evaluation procedures that are implemented in schools precisely not align with the perspectives outlined in the framework such as continuous and comprehensive evaluation is a stressful process for them; no formative feedback given to students; no discussion of remedial instruction in parents-teachers meetings (PTM) or in the diary; and there is no daily record maintenance or feedback.

Zubairi, M., & Batra, P., (2020) examined the difficulties in guaranteeing fairness in exams used for education among different Indian boards. Disparities in assessment procedures, according to Zubairi and Batra, have the potential to keep pupils' inequity alive. They emphasize how crucial standardized tests are to creating equitable chances for learning and leveling the playing field. The authors stress that in order to address these disparities and create a more inclusive learning environment, programs like PARAKH are essential.

Kaur, R., (2013) found that exams are not as useful as they should be in the modern world. Therefore, in order to increase education's quality, they must be changed immediately.

Fuentealba C., (2011) stated that evaluation is a teaching instrument that can improve educational quality. Student assessments ought to be carried out in a way that aligns with the goals of the curriculum and education. When assessment is design it always aligns with instructional practices and educational objectives, student learning and should improve the quality of education.

These studies offer a strong basis for comprehending the role and significance of PARAKH in the larger context of educational assessment changes. Every source discusses various facets of evaluation procedures and how they affect the growth and learning of students.

ANALYSIS OF PARAKH

National Assessment Center PARAKH can be analyzed on the basis of the following points-

1. A national single point of contact for all knowledge and assistance pertaining to assessments-

According to the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, every student progress card that the school sends home with parents will be completely rebuilt. The progress card should include all aspects of the learner's growth, including their uniqueness in the cognitive, emotive, and psychomotor domains. In addition to the teacher's evaluation, the student's progress or report card will comprise quizzes, role-playing, group work, portfolios, self and peer assessments, and the child's success in project- and inquiry-based learning.

2. Modifying assessment to promote student growth-

Modern educational system will increasingly use formative, competency-based, regular evaluations that are aimed at fostering learning and student development, rather than just summative exams that primarily evaluate rote memorization skills. Additionally, it also measures analytical, critical-thinking, higher-order thinking, and conceptual clarity. Particularly in secondary schools, exam preparations and coaching are consuming significant

amounts of time that should be spent on learning. This is a result of the coaching culture that surrounds them and the continuous design of secondary school exams, such as board and admission exams. Furthermore, by requiring students to memorize a limited amount of material in a particular stream, these tests rob them from the flexibility and choice that will be crucial in the educational system. Regarding each of the aforementioned directives NEP 2020 advocated the establishment of a new National Assessment Center called PARAKH.

3. Towards Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education-

An all-encompassing, multidisciplinary education would aim to integrate each person's moral, intellectual, artistic, social, physical, and emotional growth. A well-rounded person with critical 21st century skills will be developed by such education in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and other fields. NEP proposed to construct a National Assessment Center named PARAKH to assist and help school boards to adjust their assessment procedures for the better reflection on the skills demands of the twenty-first century.

4. Monitoring Learning Outcomes – A learning outcome is a precise description of the skills and knowledge a student should possess after finishing their studies, together with an estimate of how well they should do to meet those objectives. It was suggested by NEP to establish a National Assessment Center, PARAKH directing the State Achievement Survey (SAS) and conducting the National Achievement Survey to track educational goals.

IMPLICATION OF PARAKH FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:

India's educational system could become much more equitable and of higher quality if PARAKH is put into practice. PARAKH can result in more meaningful learning experiences and better prepare students for the difficulties of the current world by emphasizing holistic development, lowering test stress, and encouraging inclusive assessment procedures. As education develops further, PARAKH is a progressive approach that addresses the flaws in the running evaluation system and establishes the foundation for a fairer and more efficient educational structure.

1. Practical knowledge: The new initiative will lay emphasis on imparting practical knowledge than theoretical knowledge. Under the initiative, the traditional way of learning and studying will also be changed. Under the scheme, the students will be provided technical education, skills-oriented education, and practical knowledge.

2. Holistic Assessment: In order to examine both cognitive (such as knowledge and critical thinking) and non-cognitive (such as emotional intelligence, creativity, and problem-solving) talents, PARAKH advocates for a thorough evaluation approach.

3. Put an end to rote learning: This initiative will promote health education and make solutions for students to learn in new and creative ways instead of mugging up everything only for exams. If any student is caught as rote learning, the issue with the student will be solved.

4. Move Away from Rote Learning: By putting less emphasis on memory, the framework aims to promote conceptual understanding and the practical application of knowledge.

5. Less burden on students: The idea is to hold the board exams twice a year, giving students a second opportunity to improve/enhance their results. It is also stated that the dual exam policy will lighten the burden on the students. Hence, PARAKH as an initiative needs to be lauded due to its forward-looking and child-centered and uniform approach.

6. Standardization Across Boards: Through bringing uniformity to assessment standards across India's educational boards, PARAKH seeks to provide fair evaluation and lessen inequalities in grading schemes.

7. Industry-related education: Industry-related education is an approach to teaching students' subjects regarding industries, such as mathematics, physics, science and other technological education. These disciplines will be helpful not just in the classroom but also in future educational settings, such as colleges or employment chances.

8. Balanced Focus on Academic and Life Skills: In addition to evaluating academic performance, PARAKH evaluates essential life skills that are required for success in the twenty-first century on both a personal and professional level.

9. Alignment with NEP 2020 Goals: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to change the Indian educational system to make it more learner-centric and skill-based, includes the initiative as a crucial component.

10. Data-Driven Feedback: With data analysis, the framework will offer deeper insights that will support educators and educational institutions in making well-informed decisions on student progress and instructional tactics.

11. Parental Involvement: PARAKH stresses the participation of parents in the evaluation process, fostering open discussion regarding student progress and learning goals. This collaboration facilitates the development of a nurturing family environment that supports education.

12. Integration of Formative Assessments: Throughout the learning process, formative assessments offer continuous feedback, and the framework promotes their use. In the process, it fosters a culture of lifelong learning by assisting students in identifying their areas of strength and growth.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PARAKH

Though there is great potential for PARAKH to change the Indian school assessment system, there may be a number of difficulties once it is put into practice. Consider these important challenges:

1. Resistance to Change:

i) **Conventional Mindsets:** Educators, administrators, and other stakeholders who are used to using traditional evaluation techniques could be reluctant to embrace innovative approaches. It can be challenging to shift ingrained attitudes toward evaluation, which could impede PARAKH's effective application.

ii) **Fear of the Unknown:** Educators may feel anxiety while switching from traditional high-stakes testing to ongoing assessment techniques because they worry that they won't be able to execute these new techniques adequately.

2. Cultural and Regional Variations:

i) **Diverse Educational Contexts:** India has a wide range of cultural and regional differences, which may affect how assessments are perceived and used. Assessment practice standardization may be hampered by regional dialects, educational ideologies, and customs.

ii) **Community Engagement:** Gaining community and parental support for PARAKH can be difficult, particularly if stakeholders have no knowledge about the program's goals and advantages.

3. Equity and Inclusivity Issues:

i) **Variations Between Schools:** Disparities in the standard of instruction and resources between urban and rural regions may lead to unfair PARAKH implementation. Schools with less financing may find it challenging to meet the requirements of the new evaluation framework.

ii) **Challenging Diverse Learners:** It can be difficult to guarantee that PARAKH meets the requirements of pupils with a range of learning styles, aptitudes, and experiences. It takes considerable planning and execution to modify assessments so they may be used by all students.

4. Measurement and Evaluation Challenges:

i) **Specifying Success Measures:** Determining precise measures to assess PARAKH's efficacy can be difficult. Careful thought must go into determining ways to assess abilities and overall development in addition to standard academic knowledge.

ii) Data management: Educators and institutions may find it too much to handle gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data from continuing assessments, especially if they lack the infrastructure or expertise to do so.

5. Policy and Governance Issues

i) Alignment with Current Frameworks and Policies: Ensuring that PARAKH conforms to current frameworks and policies for education might be difficult. Any discrepancies could cause misunderstanding and render the implementation unsuccessful.

ii) Sustainability: Consistent financing and policy support are essential to the long-term viability of PARAKH programs. The persistence of reform initiatives may be impacted by shifts in governmental goals or leadership.

6. Monitoring and Accountability:

i) Ensuring Compliance: It might be challenging to set up systems to monitor how PARAKH is being implemented and to hold educational institutions responsible for following its guidelines.

ii) Feedback Loops: Establishing efficient means of receiving input on assessment procedures from teachers, students, and parents is essential to ongoing development. Without such protocols, it might not be possible to modify the framework as needed.

Notwithstanding the fact that PARAKH has the potential to greatly improve educational evaluation in India, resolving these issues is essential to its successful execution. To overcome challenges and achieve PARAKH's objectives, cooperation between legislators, educators, administrators, and communities will be crucial. The framework can revolutionize the assessment environment with proper training, resources, and support, promoting holistic growth and raising learning results for every student.

CONCLUSION

India's approach to educational assessment has seen a substantial change with the implementation of PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development). Traditional assessment techniques have frequently placed a premium on rote memory and high-stakes testing, as the research has shown. This can be detrimental to kids' general growth and wellbeing. In addition to academic knowledge, PARAKH hopes to establish a more equal and inclusive educational environment by emphasizing holistic assessment procedures. These include critical thinking, creativity, and vital life skills. According to research, formative assessments, as opposed to high-stakes exams, which frequently cause stress and anxiety, can improve student engagement and promote a deeper comprehension of subjects. In order to make sure that every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their learning, PARAKH aims to lessen evaluation practice discrepancies by standardizing assessment frameworks throughout various educational boards. Moreover, the focus on acquiring 21st-century skills is consistent with international trends in education, where skill-based evaluations are becoming more and more significant. India's pursuit of PARAKH implementation holds promise for enhancing academic achievements and endowing students with the proficiencies required to effectively navigate the intricacies of contemporary society. In the end, PARAKH is a revolutionary project that seeks to improve evaluation criteria, encourage holistic growth, and equip students for upcoming obstacles so that learning stays significant and relevant in a constantly shifting environment. By promoting an atmosphere that values holistic development and equipping students to succeed in a world that is becoming more complicated and dynamic, PARAKH, if properly implemented, has the potential to completely transform the Indian educational system. In this regard, PARAKH is not simply a reform; it also represents a dedication to raising the standard and applicability of education for all students.

In the end, PARAKH hopes to cultivate a generation of students that are not just capable academically but also possess the abilities and resilience required to successfully negotiate the challenges of the contemporary world. This entails improving both learner proficiency and evaluation criteria.

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