Preparing Future Teachers for Learning Outcome–Based Assessment under Parakh Reforms

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Abstract: *Assessment reform is a fundamental component of the educational transformation outlined in the National Education Policy 2020. A pivotal institutional support for this reform is the National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, which endeavours to promote learning outcome-oriented, competency-based, and equitable assessment methodologies throughout India's school system. While PARAKH provides a national framework for maintaining assessment consistency and standards, its effectiveness is heavily reliant on teachers implementing assessment practices within classrooms. This study examines the preparedness of pre-service teachers to adopt learning outcome–based assessment aligned with PARAKH, concentrating on English-medium B.ed. trainees in Ahmedabad. Employing a descriptive survey methodology, data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with B.ed. students and teacher educators. The results indicate that, although awareness of NEP 2020 and PARAKH is relatively high, significant deficiencies persist in practical assessment skills, particularly in translating learning outcomes into assessment tasks and utilising assessment for formative purposes. The findings underscore the importance of integrating systematic curriculum development and practical assessment training into teacher education programmes. Ultimately, enhancing assessment literacy among prospective teachers is essential for the realisation of learner-centred, equitable, and quality-driven assessment reform within Indian schools.*

Keywords: PARAKH, learning outcome–based assessment, teacher education, NEP 2020, assessment literacy, B.Ed. trainees

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment has traditionally played a central role in the Indian education system, influencing classroom practices, student behaviour, and institutional priorities. For many years, student evaluation was mainly exam-focused, highlighting memorisation, content recall, and high-stakes test performance. These methods have led to a limited view of learning and to restricted opportunities for formative feedback, creativity, and critical thinking. Consequently, assessment often served as a tool for selection and certification rather than supporting learning.

The National Education Policy 2020 marks a significant shift from this long- standing approach. NEP 2020 envisions education as a process promoting holistic development, equity, and lifelong learning. It advocates transforming assessment from rote evaluation to one based on learning outcomes and competencies. The policy emphasises formative assessments, diagnostic feedback, and aligning curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It aims to reduce examination pressure while enhancing the quality and meaningfulness of student evaluation.

To implement these goals, the creation of the National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), is a key reform. PARAKH is tasked with setting assessment standards, improving large- scale assessment quality, aligning board exams with learning outcomes, and supporting state- level assessment reforms. By prioritising competencies and learning outcomes, PARAKH aims to ensure assessments reflect what students understand, can apply, and demonstrate in real- world contexts.

PARAKH also promotes evidence-based decision-making by encouraging the use of assessment data for diagnostic and formative purposes rather than just ranking students. This approach seeks to address longstanding issues such as exam stress, regional disparities, and disconnects between curriculum goals and assessment methods. However, the success of PARAKH depends largely on how teachers understand and implement assessment at the classroom level.

Teachers are the main drivers of assessment reform, as they design tasks, interpret responses, and provide feedback that influences learning. NEP 2020 explicitly highlights the importance of reforming teacher education to support meaningful changes in education. Therefore, pre- service teacher programmes, especially the Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.), are vital in preparing future teachers to engage with learning outcome–based assessment.

Despite clear policies, doubts remain about whether teacher education programmes adequately equip future teachers with contemporary assessment skills. This study explores this issue by examining how well English-medium B. Ed. trainees in Ahmedabad are prepared for learning outcome–based assessment under the PARAKH reforms. By focusing on pre- service teachers, the research aims to understand how national assessment reforms are being adopted at the foundational stage of teacher development.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Research on assessment practices in India consistently points to the dominance of summative evaluation and its impact on classroom teaching methods. Studies indicate that examination-oriented systems tend to promote teacher-centred instruction and often overlook formative assessment. International literature on assessment literacy stresses that teachers need both conceptual knowledge and practical skills to create assessments that are valid, reliable, and meaningful.

Recent policy-focused research on NEP 2020 highlights its forward-looking approach to assessment reform, especially its focus on competency-based evaluation and formative assessment strategies. Analyses of PARAKH show its potential to improve coherence and quality assurance within India's fragmented assessment system. Nevertheless, there is a notable lack of empirical research on teacher education and pre-service teacher preparedness for PARAKH-aligned assessment, indicating an important gap in the current research.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by a conceptual framework that establishes a dynamic relationship between national assessment reform, teacher education processes, and classroom-level assessment practices. At the macro level, PARAKH reforms represent the policy intent of the National Education Policy 2020, articulating clear expectations for a shift towards learning outcome–based, competency-oriented, and formative assessment. These reforms aim to bring coherence, quality, and equity to India's assessment system by aligning curricular goals, evaluation standards, and learner achievement across diverse educational contexts.

At the meso level, teacher education institutions function as critical mediating spaces where national assessment policies are interpreted, contextualised, and translated into professional preparation practices. Through curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and practicum experiences, these institutions shape how future teachers engage with learning outcome–based assessment. The extent to which assessment literacy is embedded within teacher education programmes influences whether PARAKH reforms are treated as abstract policy directives or as meaningful pedagogical tools. Institutional support, faculty preparedness, and opportunities for experiential learning play a decisive role in this mediation process.

At the micro level, classroom assessment practices are directly shaped by pre-service teachers' assessment literacy, beliefs, and professional judgement. Their ability to frame learning outcomes, design aligned assessment tasks, interpret evidence of learning, and provide constructive feedback determines how effectively national reforms are enacted in everyday teaching–learning situations. The framework thus emphasises that sustainable assessment reform requires coherence and alignment across policy, institutional practice, and classroom implementation. Without such alignment, assessment reforms risk remaining fragmented or symbolic rather than contributing to meaningful improvements in student learning and educational quality.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate how well English-medium B.ed. trainees in Ahmedabad are aware of PARAKH reforms.
2. To analyse pre-service teachers' understanding of learning outcome–based assessment.
3. To assess B.ed. trainees' readiness to design and apply learning outcome–based assessment methods.
4. To identify challenges faced in incorporating PARAKH-aligned assessments into teacher education programmes.
5. To investigate how teacher education contributes to fulfilling the assessment goals of NEP 2020.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of awareness of PARAKH among English-medium B.ed. trainees in Ahmedabad?
2. How do pre-service teachers conceptualise learning outcome–based assessment in the context of NEP 2020?
3. To what extent are B.ed. trainees prepared to implement PARAKH-oriented assessment practices?
4. What challenges influence the integration of learning outcome–based assessment in teacher education?

VI. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design to examine perceptions, awareness, and preparedness for assessment reform. The participants were pre-service teachers enrolled in English-medium B.ed. programmes at selected teacher education institutions in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. By focusing on English-medium institutions, the study ensured consistency in curriculum and instruction. Teacher educators from these institutions also participated to provide institutional perspectives.

Purposive sampling was used to select institutions involved in the NEP 2020 reforms. Data collection included structured questionnaires that assessed awareness of PARAKH, understanding of learning outcome–based assessments, and perceived readiness. Semi-structured interviews with teacher educators provided qualitative insights into curriculum implementation and practicum practices. All tools were validated by experts.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

The present study's data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' preparedness for learning outcome–based assessment under PARAKH reforms. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. These measures helped evaluate awareness of PARAKH, understanding of learning outcome–based assessment, and perceived readiness to implement assessment reforms among English-medium B.ed. trainees in Ahmedabad.

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with teacher educators were analysed through thematic analysis. Responses were transcribed, coded, and categorised to identify key themes related to curriculum design, practicum experiences, institutional challenges, and perceptions of assessment reform. Combining quantitative and qualitative findings allowed for triangulation, strengthening the study's credibility.

VIII. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research tools, experts in teacher education and educational assessment reviewed the questionnaire and interview schedule. Content validity was achieved by aligning the items with the study's objectives, NEP 2020 assessment provisions, and the PARAKH framework. A pilot study helped refine the items and improve internal consistency. Consistent administration of the tools increased reliability, while combining quantitative and qualitative data through triangulation enhanced the overall validity and trustworthiness of the results.

XI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study presents a complex landscape of assessment reform in teacher education. Although policies such as NEP 2020 and PARAKH are widely known, their implementation in practice is often limited. Trainees understand reform terminology but lack the practical skills required, highlighting a gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom

application. Many struggle to adopt learning-outcome–based assessments and continue to rely on traditional methods, underscoring deep-seated pedagogical habits.

Confidence in formative assessment remains low, due to limited exposure to relevant tools, which makes assessment feel more like judgement than a learning process. Organisational issues such as curriculum restrictions, exam cultures, and practicum models further obstruct reform efforts.

Overall, there is a disconnect between policy aims and on-the-ground teaching practices, underscoring the need for more practical, transformative assessment training to develop assessment literacy as a core competency.

X. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings indicate a strong need to prioritise assessment literacy as a core and integral component of teacher education programmes to ensure that future teachers can meaningfully implement PARAKH-aligned assessment reforms in classroom practice.

The study highlights the importance of systematically aligning practicum experiences with learning outcome–based assessment practices so that pre-service teachers can effectively bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical classroom application.

Strengthening assessment training within teacher education is essential for promoting inclusive, learner-centred classrooms, as it enables teachers to use assessment as a tool for supporting diverse learning needs in accordance with the aims of NEP 2020.

Teacher education institutions play a pivotal and mediating role in translating PARAKH assessment reforms from national policy frameworks into sustained and contextually meaningful classroom-level practices.

XI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to English-medium B.Ed. institutions in Ahmedabad, which restricts generalisability. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. The study also did not observe actual classroom assessment practices. Future research may adopt mixed-method and longitudinal approaches.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

- Teacher education curricula should explicitly integrate PARAKH-aligned assessment modules.
- Practicum components should provide structured opportunities for formative assessment practice.
- Continuous professional development should be organised for teacher educators on assessment reform.
- Collaboration between universities, assessment bodies, and schools should be strengthened.
- Monitoring mechanisms should be developed to sustain assessment reform initiatives.

XIII. CONCLUSION

Assessment reform under PARAKH offers a significant chance to synchronise evaluation methods with the goals of NEP 2020. The study shows that while more pre-service teachers are aware of assessment reforms, their practical readiness is still insufficient. To close this gap, teacher education needs a systemic shift toward experiential learning, reflective practice, and assessments focused on learner outcomes. Equipping teachers with assessment literacy is vital not only for the successful implementation of PARAKH but also for achieving NEP 2020's ideals of quality, equity, and holistic growth. Improved teacher training can therefore act as a key driver for sustainable educational reform in India.

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