A Comparative Analysis of SAFAL and NAS: Understanding their Roles in Indian Educational Assessment

Anchal Aggarwal

State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Delhi
Corresponding author: scertanchalss30@gmail.com
Available at https://omniscientmjprujournal.com

Abstract

Evaluation is a central component in the development and practice of education policy, as well as the improvement of the student learning outcome. In India two large frameworks called SAFAL (Structured Assessment to Analyse Learning) and NAS (National Achievement Survey) which helps to assess competencies of students and learning outcomes at the system level. As part of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), the CBSE initiated the SAFAL that targets competency-based evaluation in Grades 3, 5, and 8 at the school level. NAS which is now operational as PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan is an extensive survey executed by NCERT by means of measuring the overall performance of the education structure both nationally and state wise. The following paper provides the comparative analysis of SAFAL and NAS in terms of its goals, approaches, area of focus, and achievements. The analysis identifies the correlation of the frameworks with the vision of NEP 2020 due to the betterment of the learning outcomes and shares the implantation concerns. The results show that although SAFAL is used to facilitate continuous evaluation and differentiated learning enhancements, NAS is used to provide important evidence needed in the formulation of a policy and the transformation of a school. The conclusion of the paper can be summarized as the suggestion to balance both of the said frameworks to augment student learning and educational planning in India.

KEYWORDS: SAFAL, NAS, Competency-Based Assessment, NEP 2020, Educational Evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an institution of the process of education, and as a system, it is defined as a method used to tracking, quantifying and improving student knowledge levels and the overall work of the educational system as a unit. According to modern day education, assessment is not just a kind of tool to grade or certify but rather a method based on evidence to enhance pedagogy, adjusting the curricula to needed abilities, and decision making in terms of policies.

An effective evaluation frame enables stakeholders such as teachers, policy makers and curriculum developers to detect areas of learning areas, monitor what is being achieved over time and how the interventions can address the gaps depending on the need at hand.

Large scale and school-level testing has gained momentum especially in the aftermath of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which proposes the replacement of the rote learning with competency based holistic and constant evaluation. Two noticeable efforts that fuse these values are SAFAL (Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning) and NAS (National Achievement Survey). Although both are intended to measure learning outcomes, they have vast difference in their scope, method, and use of data.

SAFAL, a quasi-shorter version of NEP 2020's vision, is a competency-based assessment tool set in Grade 3, and Grade 5 and Grade 8 of schools associated with CBSE. In contrast to high stakes tests, SAFAL focuses on conceptual advances, application of knowledge, and problem-solving skills rather than on rote memory. This prescriptive nature is like DNA that provides constant feedback that educators can use to optimize their teaching campaigns and pivot on learning deficits as they occur. Safal also pursues the objectives of the NIPUN Bharat mission that aims to access ensuring the skills of basic literacy and numeracy by Grade 3 by focusing on Foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN).

Conversely, NAS, administered and assessed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has historically been a large-scale, sample-based, summative assessment in Grade 3, 5, 8 and 10. It does assess learning outcomes nationally, at the state level, in the district, and at the school-system level. NAS also offers macro-level data of quality, equity and effectiveness of education to policy formulators hence directing changes in curriculum, capacity-building in the educational teaching staff and allocation of resources. In comparison with the SAFAL, which provides school-specific diagnostic information, NAS comes up with systemic findings that assist in formulating systemic educational approaches.

Remarkably, as per the recommendation of NEP 2020 of developing a National Assessment Centre, the NAS has now been renamed and made refurbished as PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge towards Holistic Development) Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS). This revised framework, also carried out in 2024, had objectives of enhancing coherence, transparency and competency alignment to big-scale assessments in India. The findings published in 2025 delivered a system-wide picture of learning trends among students

and demonstrated geographical differences and strengths and weaknesses of the systems. Such a transformation constitutes a move to position PARAKH not just as an examination exercise, but as a hub of measurement around which evidence-based educational policy making in the nation should take place.

Although SAFAL and PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan augment the general goals of NEP 2020, both differ in terms of their design philosophies, implementation process and their impacts. A micro-level of school-based management SAFAL that enhances individual student learning and a macro-level of monitoring Rashtriya Sarvekshan of PARAKH are the guides that can clarify national and state-level policy changes informed by national questions. This is because their complementary importance allows us to develop an equal and integrated assessment ecosystem that is an initiator of education change.

This paper sets about to make a comparatively critical analysis of SAFAL and PRARKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (or previously NAS) and the factors of goals, coverage, approach, focus areas, and its compatibility with NEP 2020. It also discusses the strengths, the constraints and the difficulty of implementing each and also offers judgments on how both tools can be integrated together. We hope that by examining the manner in which these frameworks can act in synergy, this study can assist educators, administrators and policymakers in the effort to improve the output of learning and to promote learning reform in India based on evidence-based actions.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The related literature review is done in a way that it has a rooted view of the context, development and implication of SAFAL and PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan in India pertaining to the educational assessment environment. The themes involve reforms to assessment under NEP 2020, competency-based evaluation and its importance, large scale assessments in India, school based formative assessment and its challenges and opportunities of implementation.

2.1 Assessment Reforms under NEP 2020

This paradigm shift in the education system of India has been proposed by the National Education Policy 2020 that calls on shifting the education system of India towards the idea of abandoning the rote memorization and shifting towards competency-based, holistic, and continuous assessment (National Education Policy 2020, 2020). This form of teaching and assessment uses low stakes, formative assessment rather than high-stakes exam- focused learning as a strategy to increase both conceptual understanding and learning of knowledge application.

The formation of the National Assessment Centre - PARAKH under NEP 2020 can be seen as a standardization and a bench setter to establish quality and compatibility of assessment across the country. Rao and Gupta (2023) observe that such reforms frame assessments as a part of the learning process but not at the end of a process to evaluate the learners.

2.2 Competency-Based Evaluation and Its Significance

Competency-based assessments evaluate the competence of a learner in the ability to apply his/her knowledge, think critically, and solve real life situations. NCERT (2022) states that this transition is crucial to cultivating 21 st century skills and in fulfilling the targets of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) within the NIPUN Bharat Mission. CBSE (2021) has borrowed this philosophy by measuring the learning outputs of its students in Grades 3, 5, and 8 in conceptual understanding, application abilities, and problem-solving skills providing diagnostic information on which to shape teaching methods.

2.3 Large-Scale Assessments in India

The National Achievement Survey (NAS) which is conducted by NCERT has traditionally offered macro-level data in terms of learning outcomes among students at subject and region level (Ministry of Education, 2021). NAS was restructured and renamed as PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan in 2024 and the results announced in 2025. This new design (revised framework) gained intensity in the competency alignment, sampling procedures and reporting processes that would effectively serve as national benchmarking tool. Such information is essential in guiding education course of action, professional development actions, and provision of education resources across the board (NCERT, 2022).

2.4 School-Based Formative Assessments

It has been concluded that formative assessment that is part of everyday classroom activities leads to great results when used adequately. SAFAL is a diagnostic mechanism functioning at the school level that assists teachers in recognizing gaps in learning and devising specific interventions (CBSE, 2021). The popular work by Black and Wiliam (1998, as published by NCERT publications) supports the idea that formative assessment questions have the capability of offering constructive and timely feedback that can have significant impacts on student achievements.

2.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Implementation

Although there is potential, SAFAL and PARAKH also experience the lack of teacher preparation, inconsistency in assessment meaning, and the infrastructural limitation, particularly in the rural and under-resourced schools (NCERT, 2022; Rao & Gupta, 2023). Some stakeholders also have the tendency to consider competency-based results in the traditional marks-based format, which can hamper its objective. Still, there are chances in the usage of digital tools, the strengthening of teacher potential through specific training, and the synchronization of institutional efforts by CBSE, NCERT, SCERTs, and DIETs to be sure of its uniform and social inclusion (CBSE, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is qualitative, descriptive, and analytical that attempts the comparison of the aims, framework, execution, and result of the Structured Assessment for Analysing Learning (SAFAL) and NATS now transformed into PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan. The study will use secondary sources of data, wherein various official policy documents have been used, and these are the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the SAFAL Assessment Framework which was issued by CBSE and the NAS 2021 National Report which was published by NCERT. Other sources are press releases, updates and reports of the 2024 edition of PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan and its findings announced in 2025, as well as peer-reviewed journals articles and policy briefs on large-scale and school-based evaluation in India.

Data were collected through systematic review of governmental actions in the case of government portals, academic database, and valid scholarly research findings to ascertain extreme relevance and legitimacy. The thematic analysis approach was considered to analyse the information obtained with the main deals on the parameters that included purpose, scope, methodology, focus of assessment, type of assessment and data utilization. Through this comparative framework, similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of SAFAL and PARAKH could be identified, and how they match the objective of NEP 2020 could be found out. Other issues studied involved the challenges of implementation, trends emerging, and inherent areas where the two frameworks can be used to supplement one another in improving the quality of education. The constrained range of this study is the publicly available data and since the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan is an initiative recently implemented, conclusions

about the long-term effects are taken according to the first cycle, that of 2024, and the outcome

of the initiative released in 2025.

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAFAL AND NAS

The extensive comparison of SAFAL and NAS in consideration of the main parameters which

include the purpose, implementation, scope, methodology, focus, the type of assessment

performed and the way of data used makes sense in terms of the specific functions they play

within the Indian education system.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAFAL AND NAS

Aspect	SAFAL	NAS
Purpose	Diagnostic	Evaluative
Implementation	School-based	National
Scope	Internal	Systemic
Methodology	Competency	Survey
Focus	FLN	Subjects
Assessment Type	Formative	Summative
Use of Data	Instructional	Policy

Figure 1

4.1. Purpose

In the context of the National Education Policy 2020, the CBSE has launched SAFAL a

competency-based assessment which evaluated conceptual understanding, skill competencies

and critical thinking in the 3rd, 5th and 8th Grades. It is mainly to track school-level learner

improvement and to give the teacher advice on how to perfect teaching methods.

Comparatively, National Achievement Survey (NAS) by NCERT is a large-scale national survey

that is supposed to evaluate the effectiveness of the entire education system in Grades 3rd, 5th,

8th, and 10th. Held every third year at both state and national levels organised by NCERT in

conjunction with state education departments, NAS is summative in approach moving toward the

sample and it yields macro-level information to the curricular-reform policy and teacher professional-development decisions.

4.2. Implementation procedures

SAFAL is used at school level. Because of the formative orientation of assessment, it is conducted once a year at institutions affiliated to CBSE and such institutions exercise discretion when they decided how the test should be scheduled and administered so that it correlates with their curriculum goals.

In the case of NAS in comparison, its system of functioning is on 4 levels, national, state, district, and school thereby covering the state board, CBSE and other educational systems throughout the states and Union Territories. Also, its summative structure requires the use of a representative sample, which is achieved by random stratified sampling procedure and periodically administered.

4.3. The Spectrum of the assessments

SAFAL focuses on CBSE schools and can be utilized as an internal assessment device where teachers and students can spot deficiencies in learning and perfect their classroom activity.

Compared to that, NAS is more inclusive instead. It is aimed at estimating work of the whole educational system and not just the work of a particular institution.

4.4. Methodology

SAFAL, which is a competency-based assessment platform, evaluates students based on learning outcomes, critical thinking skills and application-based skills rather than rote forms of pedagogy. Its questions in tests are developed to coincide with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and NEP 2020 guidelines.

In NAS, the large-scale survey-based methodology on the other hand uses scientific sampling stage where students and schools which are considered samples are selected. It later measures the learners based on pre-determined indicators and reports at the national, state and district level track trends over time.

4.5. Focus of Assessment

In regard to the area of assessment focus, SAFAL focuses on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) hence contributing to the goal outlined in NEP 2020 by enhancing learning outcomes in early grades. This will help learners develop conceptual and solving skills as it has been done with continuous student assessment.

In place of this, NAS is administered in core classes- Mathematics, Science, Social Science and Language across the grade's levels. The primary purpose is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the educational system as such, instead of tracking the performance of a person.

4.6. Assessment Type

SAFAL is regarded as being a low-stakes an early formative selection: it is not supposed to be graded or ranked and rather has diagnostic and intervening aspects. NAS, in turn, is a high-stakes, summative assessment procedure founded on a survey that provides statistical information concerning the student learning on a large scale. The individual scores are not reported, but the combination of data is used in policy and resource allocation.

4.7. Use of Data

The SAFAL-derived data have been used by teachers, school administrators and education planners to perfect pedagogical approaches, augment curriculum delivery and offer focussed learning assistance. The general aim of doing this is to improve the performance of individual learners and the performance of the entire school.

In the case of NAS, government agencies, policy analysts, and researchers are the most likely consumers of the collected data as they are to analyse education trends in national and state populations, detect inequality in learning outcomes, and allocate funds appropriately. In such a manner, the tool can help in the community of policy building, process and capacity building of educators and in determining curriculum change.

5. ALIGNMENT OF SAFAL AND NAS WITH NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents the vision of a student-centered competency-based and holistic education system that does not revolve in memorizing and high stakes examination. SAFAL and NAS are associated with NEP 2020, in various ways and, bypass itself, being part of its aims of enhancing the learning outcomes, the reform of assessment and reforms to policymaking that is based on evidence.

Alignment of SAFAL and NAS with NEP 2020

ASPECT	SAFAL	NAS
Assessment Type	Formative, low-stakes, competency-based	Summative, sample-based, system-level
Focus Area	Individual student learning & FLN (Grades 3, 5, 8)	Macro-level learning outcomes & FLN
NEP Alignment	Continuous, holistic assessment; student-centric	System-wide progress; policy feedback
Use of Data	Real-time school-level insights for pedagogy improvement	State/National data for policy planning
Skill Focus	Conceptual clarity, critical thinking, creativity	Subject-wise achievement & competency mapping
FLN	Supports NIPUN Bharat; promotes FLN, reduces exam stress	Tracks NEP reforms; supports equity and learning improvement
Outcome Utility	Guides teachers for personalized interventions	Helps policymakers evaluate and reform the education system

Figure 2

5.1. Shift to Competency-Based Assessment

SAFAL and the NAS are two other tools that are not interchangeable but complementary to follow the progress in competency-based education through the National Education policy 2020. SAFAL is conducted in schools by measuring the ability of learners to apply, reason and solution real world problems; moreover, it is also concerned with creating foundation literacy and numeracy (FLN) which are concrete conceptual stems at first level of education. NAS, in its turn, also represents a snapshot of such competencies used on a national level, by comparing results of the learning based on a representative sample of students that can provide policymakers with a rough understanding of the success of the process in which the system is being transformed to be based on competency-focused practice.

5.2. Emphasis on Formative and Continuous Assessment

The two tools are formative-assessment oriented. Supporting low-stakes schools run by classroom teachers, the monitored performance of the individual learner would be followed

through and specific interventions provided, which fits the recommendations of NEP 2020 that high-stakes board examinations be replaced by more regular and holistic assessments. NAS is meant to be administered periodically but much like the other is more overtly summative, although because it tracks national and state level trends provides decision makers with evidence as to whether the incremental reforms to education are having appreciable results.

5.3. Data-Driven Decision-Making for Education Policy

Regarding data usage, SAFAL provides fine-grained, school-specific data to both teachers and administrators that will enable them to distinguish and modify their instructional activities based on live student performance. NAS, in turn, gathers macro-level evidence about literacy and numeracy and, therefore, influences the strategic choices when it comes to curriculum design, professional development of teachers, and resources allocations.

5.4. Focus on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

Namely, SAFAL monitors FLN at Grades 3, 5, and 8 and hence can help to pursue the NIPUN Bharat Mission, an essential part of NEP 2020. By establishing the mastery over fundamental language and arithmetical abilities, SAFAL helps the learners to receive the precondition to later intellectual growth throughout their lives. Although working at a larger scale, NAS provides a comparative data at the state, district and social levels of data, which help to evaluate whether goals set nationally in literacy and numeracy are achieved.

5.5. Holistic Development and Multidisciplinary Learning

SAFAL is a tool that promotes comprehensive assessment by evaluating the work of students in areas beyond the area of purely textual knowledge, which is the problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity, therefore reaching the goal of the National Education Policy 2020 of raising all-rounder learners.

NAS, however, despite being subject-centred in the majority of aspects, provides data that is relevant in developing holistic-education policy as such that schools will implement the directive in the NEP 2020 of giving multidisciplinary instruction and curtailing curricular overloading.

5.6. Reforming Examination and Assessment Systems

SAFAL supports the suggestion made by NEP 2020 to reduce reliance on final examinations and to introduce continuous, competency-based assessment with the focus on skill development. The program aims at reducing the examination stress and idea-based learning also.

NAS ensures effective monitoring of the implementation of the assessment-reform process, which ensures that schools are moving out of the rote-based assessment process towards the competency-based learning in line with NEP 2020.

6. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF SAFAL AND NAS

While SAFAL and NAS play crucial roles in India's education system, they also face several challenges and limitations that impact their effectiveness. These challenges arise from implementation issues, data interpretation, assessment design, and systemic constraints.

6.1. Implementation Challenges

Regarding relative academic rigour, it is necessary to point out that despite the fact that SAFAL is currently slated to be applied in all CBSE schools, the nonhomogeneous nature of its implementation makes the programme vulnerable to different interpretations, thus introducing fluctuation in the assessment quality. Comparatively, the NAS uses a mass sampling based approach to derive national benchmarking data but the arising indicators do not necessarily give precise data about the level of learning of the entire body of students. In addition, the logistical issue of organizing surveys in different geographic areas, as well as the problem of managing consistency in surveys, are the major implementation obstacles.

6.2. Teacher Training and Awareness

In terms of pedagogical implication, SAFAL and NAS are ambiguous with regards to the quality of the teacher preparation and awareness. SAFAL presupposes that educators have skills of creating and adapting competency-based assessment; however, the lack of professional development may motivate teachers to switch back to rote-learning patterns, which is contrary to the objectives of the programme. On the other hand, since the administration of the NAS, a test-like assessment, is held externally, it is common that the validity of survey results is not understood by teachers and hence may hinder its use in iterating classroom practice.

6.3. Overemphasis on Data Without Actionable Insights

Excessive can also be found involving the two programmes through the aspect of using data to improve. Despite the indicators of performance at school level provided by SAFAL, the lack of systematic measures to transform knowledge gained into data-informed decision-making can work impedimentally in terms of significant improvement of instructional strategies. In the same manner, albeit NAS delivers the macro-level knowledge, the subsequent level of detail does not enable the school administrators to apply it directly in the classroom curriculum. The delays that

are observed in the action of the policy, compared to the time that it took to collect the data can also be a problem in translating the results of the surveys into action.

6.4. Assessment Design and Learning Context

Last but not least, the two frameworks are characterized by unique issues regarding the correspondence to the pedagogy in a classroom setting. SAFAL shows more emphasis on competency-based assessment but in the event that the mode of instruction at schools does not match this type, then the learners might demonstrate difficulty in its proficiency. NAS conversely is founded by a representative sample that could neglect the heterogeneous level of learning that could exist between socio-economic strata, linguistic communities and schooling system and hence its representativeness.

6.5. Limited Scope for Individualized Learning

Traditional models of school accountability, SAFAL and NAS, are used in particular ways in the field of education. SAFAL, whose intended use was to keep track of the performance of individual students, is not able to provide a personalized guidance to learners nor is it able to give recommendations to learners, thus reducing the effectiveness with which learning institutions are able to use assessment measures to provide specific instructional strategies to the student. On the other hand, the results of NAS are aggregate scales of assessment that assist in policymaking on a national or state level, but its outcomes can hardly be translated into practical knowledge, which can be applied to a classroom setting in targeted pupils.

6.6. Resistance to Change in Assessment Culture

Moreover, the two systems are faced by an existing cultural resistance to change. The move to a competency-based assessment as suggested by SAFAL has been quite controversial, with educators, parents, and administrators alike viewing SAFAL outcomes, in a more marks-based perspective, causing the fear of not performing well in marks. Similarly, the consequences generated by NAS require long-term policy capture of many years, but administrative inaction and deficiency of information among educators often hinder the application of reforms capable of exploiting its analytical capabilities.

6.7. Technological and Infrastructure Constraints

Infrastructural and technological constraints are being faced within the two models. Seven percent of they are not sufficiently dependent on either type of location in order to provide digital assessment facilities, sufficiently trained teachers, and materials to manage routine digital

assessment instruments' utilization and hence providing SAFAL even depicts a complex set of issues. NAS similarly needs an effective coordination mechanism between NCERT and concerned states of education and school levels and the asymmetry of the various levels of digital infrastructure, professional development, logistic capacities paralyze data collection, data processing, and sharing.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the recommendations that are required to facilitate the effectiveness of SAFAL and NAS in the realization of the goals of NEP 2020 are as follows. Such recommendations aim at teacher preparation reserialisation, the implementation schemes, improvement of data utilization, betterment of the infrastructure level, and policy aspect overall transformation thus entrenching to more healthy and meaningful evaluation system.

Among the key ideas proposed concerns the training and capacity building of the teachers. Considerable workshops, systematically arranged professional development seminars will be required to the effect that teachers would become familiar with the standards of the competency-based assessment and their proper use. Moreover, the introduction of digital instructional modules can give the teachers assessment techniques, and the competence of data-based decision making. Developing teacher-sensitive recommendations of how to interpret NAS outcomes effectively will enable teachers to be more willing to convert the insight so gained during the assessment into classroom behaviours that will later be reflected into observable improvements in learning outcomes.

The element of enhancing implementation plans of both SAFAL and NAS is the second factor that gives rise to a critical recommendation. Consistency in assessment procedures by possessing a prototype layout of SAFAL in CBSE schools and being subjected to efficient monitoring and supervising frameworks need to be in place. With NAS, on must further extend the logistic coordination to eliminate the problem of sampling bias and be in a position to collect such a large amount of information. Improved integration among state governments, CBSE and NCERT will also contribute towards harmonizing school-based testing with one done by NAS, which improves the consistency of the process of evaluation.

Better use of data should be employed to maximize the effect of these instruments. Introduction of real-time dashboards will give schools an opportunity to study SAFAL results and introduce tailored learning interventions. Moreover, the recommendations made by Nathan ought to be

immediately adopted at the level of policy making to inform curriculum decision making and professional development of teachers. Distribution of action such as district-wise and school-specific reports with actionable recommendations will help educators in translating the data into the good teaching strategy which finally reflects the student learning outcomes.

In an effort to make assessment practices compatible with the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), teachers have to focus more on critical thinking, problem-solving, and application-based learning as opposed to rote learning. In such a context, the continuous-assessment models would have a positive impact on the Speedy Assessment of Basic Skills in Learning (SAFAL) program in terms of promoting its generalised scoring instead of focusing on using the high stakes examinations which are periodically taken. The National Achievement Survey (NAS), in its turn, should be expanded beyond basic literacy and numeracy, and admit multidisciplinary one, socio-emotional skills and competencies of the twentieth century, to render the assessment mechanism more multifunctional in its purpose to measure general student performance.

The implementation of technology will also be one of the fundamental interventions to change both SAFAL and NAS to become less sensitive and more scalable. On AI-based assessment tools, this kind of real-time feedback would be done automatically and help teachers along with students more quickly recognize discrepancies in performance. The implementation of digital assessment platforms in rural areas and schools that underperform would therefore play a major role in closing the digital divide so that all high-quality assessments would be available to all students. Simultaneously, machine-learning models and big-data analytics may be applied to monitor the performance patterns across the curriculum so that specific interventions could be implemented where they are necessary.

In addition, more emphasis on school level and policy level interventions is necessary to lead to the actual taking of results of assessment into education. SAFAL data, in turn, should be used by schools to develop remedial programme, peer-learning programme and differentiated programme as per the needs of individual students. Policy level on the policy level, it will be enough to create a feedback loop that will enable the responsive strategy to be deployed quickly between the results of the NAS and the decisions on education reform. Improving performance among parents and other members of the community is also crucial to the process of assessment in that an inclusive participation of the latter will encourage the process of studying together with the students with considerable intensity levels of competency-based education.

Indian education system plays vital roles in large-scale assessment programs, like SAFAL and NAS, but this depends on the proper provision of infrastructure and access. This need is especially acute in terms of the rural and resource-limited schools. Consequently, they should receive long term and equitable funding sources as well as have sufficient provision of technological resources to make the implementation of SAFAL at these institutions worthwhile in a responsible manner.

The area of upgrading digital infrastructure, mostly through supply of functional computers, quality internet connection and special assessment software, is a pivotal prerequisite of technology-based testing. Where this infrastructure cannot be reached, contingent strategies, especially, the use of competency-based pen-and-paper testing supplemented with an explicit evaluation rubric, should be systematically used.

This will help in aligning SAFAL to the large-scale evaluation tools because of the establishment of a single national assessment framework. Formative school-based assessment combined with macro-scale summative surveys has a coherent representation of what the student has learned both on an individual level and the system itself. Achieving this goal requires greater collaboration between CBSE, SCERTs, DIETs and NCERT to standardise assessment formulation and administration to a variety of education boards and institutions.

All these proposals make it possible to conclude that both SAFAL and NAS are indeed a tool that can be re-tuned in order to be more useful in improving instruction not only on local but on the level of forming policy and acting in pedagogical practice. The intentional incorporation of teacher professionals, incremental technology integration, procedural transformation guided by evidence and the aligning with NEP 2020 will imply that the said structures will contribute value to the new education panorama of India.

8. CONCLUSION

As the comparative case study SAFAL and NAS reshaped into PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan, it is clear that, besides a shared goal of enhancing learning outcomes in India, both assessments frameworks work on radically different planes and address complementary issues. As a school-based, competence-driven, formative measure, SAFAL enables teachers to distinguish personal learning shortcomings, encourage conceptual wisdom, and help build talents among pre-schooled and middle years students. Its priorities in relation to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

(FLN) are quite similar to nep 2020 vision and contribute to constant improvement of the situation at the classroom level.

Conversely, NAS converted into PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan in 2024 is more of a macro-level, sampling based large scale survey to produce strong, comparative student learning data at the national, state, and district level. The 2025 output of PARAKH gave policymakers of the necessary insights on the localized disparity, subject-specific skills, and equity of education, enabling specific interventions to be made, and curriculum changes amounting to reform and teachers' professional development programmes. This rebranding and reorganization have taken NAS to a periodical survey rather than a centralized national benchmarking mechanism administered by PARAKH, to ensure uniformity in competency-based learning and standard-setting throughout the education boards.

As pointed out in the analysis, synergy is the key driver to the realization of NEP 2020 vision of a holistic, equitable, competency-based education system in terms of SAFAL and PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan. SAFAL will help our micro level instruction needs by offering diagnostic feedback that may directly impact practice at the classroom level, whereas PARAKH will help us deliver macro level policy intelligence able to drive systemic change and resource distribution. Nevertheless, the two frameworks rely on the readiness of teachers, the use of data on time, the sufficiency of infrastructures, and the eagerness of the stakeholders to adopt transition towards competency-based education as opposed to rote learning.

India should have a loop of annual and ongoing assessment so that the assessment procedures of schools operate more convincingly and purposefully on the national level. Granular data at SAFAL, and aggregated results at PARAKH should then be used to design specific intervention in schools, and policy priorities as well as capacity-building actions on a large scale. In addition, deployment of technological advancements, development of digital infrastructure and strengthening of cooperation between CBSE, NCERT, SCERTs, and DIETs will play an important role in unifying the quality and accessibility of assessment throughout the various regions.

Finally, the education in India cannot escape the future examination on the basis of selecting between SAFAL and PARAKH but rather by balancing those advantages. Such a dual approach integrating the formative and learner-centered focus of SAFAL with a system-wide oversight of the role of PARAKH will ensure that data-filled insights find effect at the large-scale education

system level. When applied successfully, this combined model is capable of turning assessments into both an evaluation exercise and a weapon of equity, excellence and lifelong learning in the Indian education environment.

REFERENCES

Central Board of Secondary Education. (2021). *Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning (SAFAL): Assessment Framework*. CBSE. https://cbse.gov.in

Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2021). *National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021: National Report*. NCERT. https://nas.gov.in

National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2022). *Assessment and Learning: Principles and Practices*. NCERT Publications.

National Education Policy 2020. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020: Transforming Education in India*. Ministry of Education, Government of India. https://www.education.gov.in/nep2020

Rao, N., & Gupta, A. (2023). *Comparative Analysis of Large-Scale and School-Based Assessments in India: A Policy Perspective*. Journal of Educational Research, 18(2), 45-60. https://doi.org/xxxx