

REPORT

National Conference on Curricular and Assessment Equivalence of Board and Improving Learning Outcomes

Wednesday, 2nd July, 2025

Venue:
Chanakya Hall,
2nd Floor, Sushma Swaraj Bhawan,
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

Conference Report on Curricular and Assessment Equivalence of Boards and Improving Learning Outcomes

Date: July 2nd, 2025; Venue: Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, New Delhi

The following report presents a comprehensive summary of the proceedings of the National Conference on Curricular and Assessment Equivalence of Boards and Improving Learning Outcomes, held on July 2, 2025. The event brought together more than 250 senior officials from the Ministry of Education, State and Union Territory Education Departments, State Boards of Education, SCERTs, and autonomous institutions including CBSE, KVS, and NVS.



Convened by the Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Education, the conference provided an important platform to explore the challenges and possibilities of achieving comparability in curricula and assessments across school boards, while also addressing the urgent task of improving learning outcomes nationwide.

👏 The conference commenced with a welcome address by **Shri Anandrao V. Patil, Additional Secretary, DoSEL, Ministry of Education.** Setting the tone for the day's deliberations, he



described the gathering as a critical opportunity to reflect on and further the aims of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Emphasizing NEP's vision for a more inclusive, flexible, and outcome-oriented school education system, he acknowledged the presence of key stakeholders from across the country as a testament to the collective commitment to reform.

Framing the day's agenda, Shri Patil identified two core policy imperatives at the heart of the conference: first, the need to enhance the quality of learning in classrooms; and second, the importance of ensuring that all education boards in India operate with comparable academic standards. He underscored that while diversity in the education system is a strength, systemic inequities in curricula and assessments must be addressed through a shared framework of standards and expectations.

He noted that, under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, the National Assessment Centre, PARAKH at NCERT has taken the lead in this reform effort by developing competency-based assessment frameworks and mechanisms for promoting equivalence across school boards. Highlighting the scope and significance of PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024, he described it as the first national assessment initiative undertaken in alignment with the NEP 2020. He emphasized that the findings offer valuable insights into learning outcomes at the Foundational, Preparatory and Middle Stages, and must be used by the

States and UTs to design targeted interventions that improve the quality of education at all levels.

He stressed that ensuring students acquire key competencies appropriate to their stage of schooling is central to improving classroom learning. To that end, the evidence generated by the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan provides a critical opportunity for reflection and action. Acknowledging the collaborative nature of this nationwide assessment, he expressed gratitude to all States and UTs for their active participation, and extended special appreciation to CBSE for going above and beyond in supporting the process.

Concluding his remarks, Shri Patil drew attention to one of the most important structural reforms envisioned under NEP 2020, the creation of the State School Standards Authority (SSSA) in every State and Union Territory. He emphasized that SSSAs are intended to function as independent regulatory bodies responsible for quality assurance through transparent self-disclosure and adherence to a common minimal framework. Their role, he noted, will be pivotal in promoting equitable access, strengthening institutional accountability and enabling continuous improvement in school performance across the country.

🎥 A short video was presented, offering participants an overview of PARAKH's mandate, milestones, and ongoing initiatives. The video contextualized PARAKH's work as a vital link between data, policy, and pedagogy, and laid the foundation for the sessions that followed.

👤 As the conference transitioned from the welcome remarks into its core agenda, **Prof. Dinesh Prasad Saklani, Director (NCERT)**, provided an important context-setting address that grounded the day's discussions in the



broader goals of systemic reform. He described the National Conference as being held at a pivotal time when States, education boards, and institutions across the country are collectively striving to align their practices with the transformative goals of the National Education Policy 2020.

Prof. Saklani emphasized that improving learning outcomes and ensuring curricular and assessment comparability across India's diverse school boards are not simply parallel objectives, but deeply interconnected tasks that lie at the heart of building an equitable and excellent school education system. These goals, he noted, demand sustained collaboration, deep reflection, and continuous support across all levels of the education ecosystem.

Referring to Paragraph 4.41 of NEP 2020, he explained the rationale for establishing PARAKH, the National Assessment Centre, as a dedicated unit within NCERT. He described PARAKH as a vital institutional mechanism for reimagining student assessments in India and for enabling a shift from rote-based testing to more meaningful, competency-oriented evaluation. Through its work, PARAKH is helping generate rich data on student performance, which in turn is supporting data-driven academic planning across the country.

One of the central activities led by PARAKH, he elaborated, has been the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024, a large-scale national assessment

formerly known as the National Achievement Survey. This landmark survey provides critical insights into how children are learning across different regions and stages, highlighting both strengths and areas where more targeted academic support is needed. The findings, Prof. Saklani stressed, are not just diagnostic but also enabling, they give States and Districts the tools to make informed decisions and improve outcomes in a contextualised manner.

Prof. Saklani also emphasized PARAKH's pivotal role in developing a national framework for equivalence of school boards, which is designed to ensure fairness and transparency in how student learning is recognized across different educational systems. He made it clear that equivalence is not about homogenizing education or reducing diversity, but about upholding equal opportunity and recognition for students no matter which board they belong to. This framework, he said, will help address long-standing inequities and facilitate smoother mobility between boards, thereby broadening access to academic and career opportunities.

In addition to this, he drew attention to NCERT's newly developed textbooks, which are aligned with the recently revised National Curriculum Framework. He encouraged States and UTs to consider adopting or adapting these books, particularly in Social Studies and Languages, to ensure both national alignment and regional relevance. Such curricular harmonization, he argued, would help create greater coherence in student learning across the country.

He reaffirmed NCERT's commitment to providing technical support and guidance and expressed confidence that with collective effort, the school education system in India can be transformed into one that is strong, inclusive, and future-ready.

👤 Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, DoSEL, Ministry of Education launched the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan Dissemination Portal. In his keynote address, he laid out a compelling rationale for convening the conference and

framed the urgent need to reimagine how assessment and equivalence are approached across India's diverse school systems. He began by drawing attention to the sheer diversity of India's school ecosystem, with 66 different school boards, each assessing students based on their own curriculum and assessment modalities. While this diversity reflects the federal structure of education in India, it also creates challenges of comparability, especially when it comes to fair access to higher education and employment opportunities.



He emphasized that this diversity necessitates a shared platform for promoting curricular and assessment equivalence, not by enforcing uniformity, but by ensuring parity in cognitive demand, learning expectations, and recognition of academic achievements. This shared platform, he emphasized, must bring boards together to think jointly about standards, assessments, and overall educational administration as none of these systems can function effectively in isolation.

Shri Sanjay Kumar underlined that the focus on learning outcomes, as advocated by NEP 2020, is not incidental, it is grounded in the principle that quality teaching must be matched by quality assessment. He emphasized that the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 is a critical instrument in this effort, offering data-driven insights into the actual learning taking place in classrooms across the country. The findings of the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan, he

noted, provide a mirror to the system, identifying both areas of strength and zones requiring intervention.

He reiterated the importance of establishing State School Standards Authorities (SSSAs) in every State and UT. While the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has already been designated as the Standard Setting Authority for Schools affiliated with CBSE and those under the administrative control of Central Government, many States/UTs are still in the process of establishing their own authorities. These institutions, he explained, are essential for ensuring minimum standards, transparency, and quality assurance across all schools.

Shri Sanjay Kumar then addressed a deeply concerning statistic: in 2023, nearly 55 lakh students across the country had failed in class 10th and 12th examinations. Though this number declined to 50 lakh in 2024, the figure remains unacceptably high. He stressed the need to look beyond traditional approaches and extend targeted support to these students. One potential avenue is the open schooling system, but he pointed out that the pass percentage in open schools remains significantly lower than in formal boards, often around 55% compared to over 80% in state boards. This discrepancy affects student choices and undermines the potential of open schooling as an equitable second chance.

He urged the community of educators and policymakers not to allow students to fall through the cracks of the system after spending 10 or 12 years in school, just because they failed to clear a single examination. Instead, he called for a more empathetic and supportive approach, where handholding and remediation are prioritized to ensure that every child reaches the finish line.

Reflecting on the isolationist tendencies of some school boards, he encouraged greater collaboration and dialogue among all key stakeholders, including School Boards, Education Secretaries, SPDs, SCERTs, and DIETs. Regular

engagement, he noted, can lead to deeper mutual understanding and coordinated reforms.

Shri Sanjay Kumar also critiqued the tendency of assessments to encourage rote memorization. If students are repeatedly tested on recall-based items, it is unsurprising that they develop surface-level learning habits. Instead, he advocated for assessments that foster analytical, creative, and critical thinking skills, aligning more closely with the vision of competency-based education outlined in the NEP.

Turning to insights from PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024, he drew attention to a counterintuitive finding: in early grades, rural schools often outperform urban schools, but this trend reverses in higher grades. Similarly, Government Schools, particularly in the FLN domain, have shown stronger outcomes than private schools. These findings, he said, challenge conventional assumptions and call for deeper introspection into what is working, and for whom.

Concluding his remarks, Shri Sanjay Kumar reiterated that no institution can drive transformation alone. Collaboration, clarity of purpose, and courageous reforms are essential. As the nation moves forward in its journey toward equity and excellence in school education, the task ahead is not merely technical, it is moral, collective, and urgent.

👤 **Prof. Indrani Bhaduri, CEO and Head of PARAKH,** presented an in-depth analysis of findings from the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024. Drawing from data across Grades 3, 6,



and 9, she identified significant patterns: while rural students showed stronger performance in early grades, urban students performed better in later grades. Gender differences also emerged, girls consistently outperformed boys in languages, while boys had a slight edge in mathematics at the middle stage. Central Government schools were found to outperform State Government schools by Grade 9, although the reverse was true in the foundational years.

She noted that the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 must be treated not as a one-time exercise but as a strategic platform to deepen and anchor ongoing reforms, much like how successful education systems globally ask difficult questions to sustain their progress. The need to reduce the language gap between teachers and students, promote activity-based multilingual learning, and strengthen school-community linkages emerged as key themes. She emphasized that parents and community members must see value in schools to ensure higher attendance and involvement.

The data also highlighted a marked regression in performance by Grade 9, especially in mathematics, prompting a call to re-evaluate classroom strategies. Rather than focusing on algorithms and memorization, she advocated for building conceptual clarity and mathematical reasoning. She also stressed that learning levels steadily decline as students' progress from Grade 3 to Grade 9—

calling for serious introspection and targeted remedial strategies from the preparatory stage onward.

Importantly, PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan's competency-based assessment flagged subject-specific gaps in Languages, Mathematics, EVS, Social Science, and Science. Prof. Bhaduri urged states to use this data to recalibrate pedagogy and follow up with appropriate formative assessments to ensure effectiveness.

PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan included not just achievement tests but also student, teacher and school questionnaires, offering richer insights into the school environment. Regression analysis highlighted the importance of infrastructural and emotional variables, access to playgrounds, meals, time with family, and adolescent-friendly facilities such as separate toilets. She advocated for schools to be safe, inclusive, and emotionally supportive environments where every child feels welcome.

To support localized planning, a four-tier district classification was introduced: UDIT (best performing), UDAY and UNNAT (mid-range), and UDBHAV (low performing), enabling sharper, evidence-based targeting. She urged States to go beyond State-level averages and engage with district-level insights, particularly since more than 400 Indian districts have populations larger than many countries. Districts that showed exemplary performance in specific subjects or among sub-groups (girls, tribal students, rural areas) should be studied closely for promising practices.

She called for the full-scale implementation of Holistic Progress Cards from this academic year and reiterated that many learning inequities could only be addressed by reactivating institutional support structures such as CRCs and BRCs. While teachers often attend training, its actual translation into classrooms remains weak. She asked States to examine why post-training implementation is poor and to renew focus on school-level follow-up.

She also flagged funding imbalances in the Samagra Shiksha budget, noting that teacher education, inclusion, sports, and monitoring often receive far less than quality interventions and access initiatives. States were encouraged to explore their own State-level reports which disaggregate data by gender, location, school type, and social group and use them as planning tools.

Concluding her address, she highlighted that competency-based approaches are central to a future-ready, inclusive education system and vital to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat. They help identify learning gaps and guide targeted teaching. She stressed the need to integrate skills into mainstream education as a core academic component, and cited the success of NIPUN Bharat in building strong foundations for deeper learning. **Actionable Point from session on PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024: States/UTs should use findings from the assessment cum survey to create targeted remedial strategies, especially for Grade 9 where learning decline is most visible. Moreover, efforts should be made to reduce disparities in learning outcomes by focusing on urban-rural divides, gender gaps, and underperforming districts using district-level PRS data)**

👏 A dedicated session was organised where six States and UTs shared their field-level innovations and systemic strategies that had yielded measurable gains in student performance.

Shri Rajesh Sharma, SPD (Samagra Shiksha), Himachal Pradesh began the session by highlighting the State's approach towards improving learning outcomes through structured assessments, targeted remediation, and digital innovation. The State aligned its internal State Learning Achievement Survey (SLAS) with NAS frameworks to assess competencies in Grades 2, 4, 7, and 9, and conducted three rounds of mock assessments for Grades 3, 6, and 9. Tools like Abhyaas Himachal, an AI-enabled chatbot, supported students with practice questions and learning videos. A competency-based teaching calendar,

printed question banks, and daily zero periods for remedial learning further strengthened classroom instruction.

The State also introduced systemic reforms such as increasing teaching days from 178 to 220, notifying six years as the minimum age for Class 1, and co-locating pre-primary sections with Anganwadi centres. Initiatives like NIPUN Melas to involve parents, structured teacher mentoring, and school clustering for resource optimisation showcased a holistic effort to ensure foundational learning.

Ms. Anindita Mitra, Secretary, Higher Education and School Education Department, Punjab highlighted the State's multi-faceted education initiatives aimed at early learning, holistic development, and career readiness. The State has made significant investments in foundational years, with 12,500 pre-primary schools established since 2017 and the creation of toy rooms to foster joyful learning. Key interventions included the introduction of three-language learning from the start, the launch of 'Schools of Happiness' and 'Mission Samarth' for inclusive education, and innovative secondary-level programs like 'Schools of Eminence' and the 'Business Blasters' initiative to nurture entrepreneurship. Punjab also emphasized strong parent involvement, structured mentorship, and market-oriented vocational courses in sectors such as digital design, Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI), and healthcare. Through these interventions, coupled with dedicated coaching and a focus on well-being under initiatives like Fit India, the State is working towards providing a holistic and equitable learning environment for all students.

Dr. Supriya A.R., SPD (Samagra Shiksha), Kerala shared that even the State's lowest-performing districts were above the national average across Grades 3, 6, and 9, with Wayanad being a key exception in Grade 6 Language. Notable gains were observed in narrowing gender and rural-urban disparities, and in

the performance of students from marginalized social strata. Key enablers included annual five-day teacher vacation training, training of head teachers, active community participation through PTAs and local self-governments, and targeted interventions such as peer mentoring and counselling for low-performing learners. Kerala also emphasized its structured academic planning at the individual and school levels, timely support through DIETs and BRCs, and initiatives under the Samagra Gunamenma Scheme (Comprehensive Quality Enhancement Programme) to embed inclusive, competency-based, and technology-friendly pedagogies. Looking ahead, the State plans to strengthen classroom-level implementation of formative assessments, teacher support systems, and inclusive education strategies, especially for tribal and aspirational block children.

Smt. Kanchan Verma, SPD (Samagra Shiksha), Uttar Pradesh showcased the State's system-driven approach to foundational learning through its implementation of the NIPUN Bharat Mission. The State has integrated Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) into its academic strategy with structured interventions such as revised NIPUN Lakshyas, extensive teacher training through cascade models, and robust use of technology. Balvatikas were scaled up Statewide with infrastructural and pedagogical support, including deployment of ECCE educators and community engagement activities. Real-time monitoring is carried out through the NIPUN Bharat Monitoring Centre (NBMC) and Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK), while continuous capacity building and classroom support are enabled through Academic Resource Persons (ARPs), DIET mentors, and digital platforms like DIKSHA. Uttar Pradesh also introduced competency-based teaching-learning practices across all grades, launched the NIPUN Plus App for real-time assessments, and developed a TLM Bank accessible through the Prerna Portal. With set targets to make all districts, blocks, and schools NIPUN-compliant by 2026, the state has established a model of integrated, scalable reform aligned with NEP 2020.

Shri Jatin Goyal, SPD (Samagra Shiksha), Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu shared focused efforts to improve foundational learning, particularly through their initiative "Ramta Ramta Sikho Abhiyaan" (RRSA), which extended FLN interventions up to Grade 8. The programme included regular mentoring by trained practitioners, provision of multilingual TLM, and use of the VSK platform for classroom observation and feedback. As a result, the UT reported notable improvements in reading and numeracy skills between 2022 and 2025.

Shri Rahul Rekhawar, Director (SCERT), Maharashtra shared the State's twin focus on large-scale assessments and targeted FLN interventions through the Performance Assessment Test (PAT) and NIPUN Maharashtra Abhiyaan. PAT-3, conducted across 77 lakh students, revealed encouraging results in early grades but a steady decline in performance by Grade 9, especially in Mathematics and Marathi. Disparities were observed across management types, with Private Aided and Zilla Parishad schools performing better.

The NIPUN Maharashtra Abhiyaan, launched in March 2025, targeted foundational competencies in Reading, Writing, Numeracy, and Numerical Operations for Grades 2 to 5. It involved continuous assessments, chatbot-based data reporting, and teacher training through SCERT modules and webinars. About 35% of students reached the highest learning levels, and the State is now preparing to roll out an AI-enabled app to support reading skill assessment and involve parents and officers in regular monitoring.

Collectively, these presentations illustrated how States/UTs are leveraging policy frameworks, technological tools, and localised strategies to foster better learning outcomes. Each case added valuable insight into how the larger goal of comparability and quality in school education can be operationalised in varied and complex educational contexts.

Shri Rahul Singh,
Chairperson, CBSE,

reflected on the evolving understanding of quality in school education and the critical role played by institutions in establishing consistent



standards. The presentation opened by acknowledging a fundamental shift over the past decades, from ensuring access to education to now prioritizing the quality of education. With students increasingly acting as informed participants and not just recipients of services, the conversation around school quality has become more complex and immediate.

The global context was brought into the discussion through a reference to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, in which India has committed to improving educational quality under Goal 4. In line with this, the National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the need to build a robust system of assessment and accreditation at the school level. He highlighted that this move is not meant to impose additional regulatory burdens but to support schools in identifying and acting on their own priorities, thereby improving the quality of educational outcomes.

A key recommendation under NEP 2020 is the establishment of State School Standards Authorities (SSSAs). These bodies are expected to monitor all schools based on a defined set of basic standards. These standards include aspects such as adequate infrastructure, student safety and security, appropriate teacher deployment, transparent financial practices, and sound governance. The goal is to ensure that every school, regardless of its affiliation, maintains a consistent baseline for educational quality.

As per the notification issued in early 2022, CBSE has been designated to function as the School Standards Authority for all central schools including Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs), and those managed by various Central Ministries. He noted that CBSE has already begun developing clear parameters against which these schools can be assessed. These parameters are not limited to physical infrastructure but also include governance structures and processes that contribute to academic effectiveness.

The presentation highlighted the importance of institutional self-evaluation and encouraged schools to treat this as an opportunity for reflection and improvement. Emphasis was also placed on creating systems that are transparent and responsive. Through regular monitoring, self-disclosure, and data sharing, schools can build trust among parents, educators, and the larger community.

Chairperson, CBSE, pointed out that as per recommendations of NCF-SE, it has introduced around 50 percent Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions which are more competency based, in Board Exams for classes X and XII. Moreover, CBSE is in the process of creating a Centre of Assessment wherein test items against all the competencies defined under NCF will be available for Classes I-VIII. The test items alongwith a tool for generating question paper will be ready within a year and will benefit not just teachers of CBSE affiliated schools but other School Boards as well. A similar exercise will be done for students of Higher Secondary Classes to assist them in their preparation of competitive exams. From next academic year, Science and Mathematics textbooks will be available at two levels viz. Standard and Advanced for Classes IX to XII.

Shri Singh reiterated CBSE's commitment to building a national ecosystem that supports quality assurance across all types of schools. By acting as a model School Standards Authority, CBSE hopes to support other State Boards and

educational institutions in developing similar frameworks, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and high-quality education system nationwide.

Actionable Point from session on Role of School Standard Setting Authority:

CBSE, in its capacity as school standards authority for all central schools, is willing to share its competency-based question bank and mechanism to develop similar question banks with interested States/UTs. Moreover, it is willing to share its experiences as School Standards Authority and its rubrics as well as IT platform with willing States/UTs. Interested States/UTs and School Boards are requested to engage with CBSE with regards to this.

👤 The session by **Shri Venkatramana R. Hegde, DDG (Statistics)** provided a data-rich overview of board examination results across States and Boards for the year 2024, highlighting both



progress made and areas requiring urgent attention. The presentation began by illustrating the structural diversity of India's 66 school boards, emphasizing the need for greater coherence in curriculum and examination practices. With 97% of student enrollment concentrated in 33 boards, he called for better coordination across these major School Boards.

Encouraging trends in student participation and performance were noted, especially among Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls. Between 2013 and 2024, ST girl participation in Class 10 exams increased by over 80%, and the number passing with first division more than doubled. Similar gains were seen at the Class 12 level, where ST girls passing with first class rose by 252%. The presentation also noted a rising preference for science subjects among girls, crossing arts for the first time, which was attributed to improved facilities like labs, smart classrooms, and better teacher deployment.

However, concerns remained around transitions to Higher Secondary education. In 2024, nearly 27 lakh Class 10 students either did not appear or failed, while a similar number struggled at the Class 12 level. The role of open schooling was discussed as a potential solution, though the pass rates for open school systems remain comparatively low. Additionally, significant variation in pass percentages was observed across States, and the shift in medium of instruction from regional languages to English at the Higher Secondary Stage was flagged as a challenge, particularly for students from Government Schools.

The session concluded with a call for better alignment between curriculum, assessment practices, and exam administration timelines across boards. It underscored the importance of expanding open schooling options in high-failure regions and planning for increased STEM capacity to meet the growing interest in science education. The insights offered a strong rationale for the broader discussions on curricular and assessment equivalence taking place during the conference.

☺ This was followed by a presentation by **Ms. Prachi Pandey, Joint Secretary, SE&L, Ministry of Education**, who spoke on recognising School Boards as awarding bodies for vocational education. She noted that



the Ministry has made notable strides in this direction over the past year and a half, although there remains a lack of complete understanding of the process among several boards. Her presentation aimed to provide greater clarity and to highlight the opportunities available under the new model.

Ms. Pandey situated her remarks within the broader framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which assigns special significance to vocational education not just as a tool for employability, but as an integral part of a child's academic journey. She emphasised that skilling must become aspirational, and that the rigid divisions between academic streams, such as science, arts, and commerce, should gradually dissolve. Several States, she pointed out, have already taken encouraging steps by embedding vocational themes into existing academic subjects. One such example is the integration of financial literacy into economics, thereby allowing students to develop vocational awareness without needing to opt for standalone courses.

The NEP also promotes greater flexibility through multiple entry and multiple exit options. Ms. Pandey underscored the need for a supportive ecosystem that recognises prior learning and enables smooth transitions across different levels of qualifications. She introduced the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) as a critical tool in this process. The ABC stores and manages both academic and skill-based credits, assigning value to a learner's proficiency and time

investment rather than merely their marks. This system, she observed, also holds potential for global portability of qualifications.

She elaborated on the National Credit Framework (NCrF), developed jointly by UGC, AICTE, NCVET, NCERT, CBSE, and NIOS. The framework brings together academic, vocational, and experiential learning, acknowledging that learning is not confined to classrooms alone. Students earn credits for diverse experiences, whether in laboratories, on sports fields, or through theatre performances, with each effort evaluated on proficiency and time invested.

The NCrF aims to eliminate the traditional distinction between general and vocational education. Whether a student is studying physics or participating in a skill competition, both kinds of learning are valued under the same continuum of formal recognition.

Ms. Pandey also introduced participants to the functioning of the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), which serves as the national regulator for vocational education. NCVET not only recognises awarding bodies but also ensures compliance with national guidelines, grievance redressal mechanisms, and quality assurance systems. She explained that two models of awarding bodies exist under NCVET: the standard-type, which conducts training and relies on third-party assessments; and the dual-type, which independently handles both training and assessment while issuing certifications. School boards have the potential to become dual-type awarding bodies under this system.

She further pointed out that various institutions including Government Departments, PSUs, Defence Organisations, and Sector Skill Councils are already operating as awarding bodies. Private sector enterprises, including many from the IT industry, have also adopted this role. By joining this ecosystem, school boards can contextualise vocational training according to regional industry demands. They can develop and certify job roles aligned with

the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), from traditional crafts to emerging technologies, thereby ensuring both relevance and employability.

She also mentioned that if a State like Kerala developed a new job role such as that of an Advanced Health Worker, it would need to undergo a lengthy process to receive NSQF recognition. However, by becoming a dual awarding body, a board can design and directly certify such job roles, making the system far more responsive and efficient.

Actionable Point from session on recognition of School Boards as awarding bodies for skill courses:

States/UTs should initiate the process of seeking recognition of School Boards as dual-type awarding bodies under NCVET to streamline skill certification and to provide increased choices/offerings to students in the domain of skill education

👩‍🎓 In the technical session on Equivalence of Boards, **Prof. Indrani Bhaduri** presented a comprehensive overview of the equivalence framework developed by PARAKH. Her session provided conceptual clarity on what equivalence entails, how it differs from uniformity, and why it is essential for creating a level playing field for students across India's diverse school boards.



Setting the tone for the discussion, she explained that equivalence is not about making everything identical, but about ensuring comparability in standards, assessments, and learning expectations. Drawing a distinction between sameness and fairness, she emphasized that India is not aiming to clone educational practices, but to foster a shared understanding of academic rigor.

She framed the conversation using three guiding questions: Why equivalence? What is equivalence? How do we achieve it? The answer to the first, she stressed, lies in the belief that every child deserves equal opportunity regardless of the board under which they study. The second clarifies that equivalence means comparability, not replication. And the third, the "how", formed the substance of her presentation.

Prof. Bhaduri shared that the journey of building an equivalence framework had been a collaborative and iterative process, with active participation from State Boards, SCERTs, and experts. She stressed that such systemic change could not be realized in silos; it required the full engagement of all stakeholders across National and State levels.

A cornerstone of this process has been PARAKH's detailed analysis of Board examination papers, both across different Boards and within the same Board over multiple years. The findings revealed considerable disparities—not just in content distribution, but also in cognitive demand, question formats, and difficulty levels. She questioned the validity of a system where two students writing board exams under the same board in consecutive years might not be tested on comparable parameters. These inconsistencies, she argued, pose a fundamental challenge to fairness and highlight the urgent need for standard-setting. In response, PARAKH has developed and shared a suggested assessment framework with all boards, covering Grades 9 through 12. This framework includes recommended ratios of formative and summative assessments: 70:30 for Grade 9, 50:50 for Grade 10, 40:60 for Grade 11, and 30:70 for Grade 12. These proportions have been carefully aligned with the National Credit Framework (NCrF) and have received consensus from participating Boards. Prof. Bhaduri elaborated that under the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, credit is now being extended to non-traditional academic experiences, such as online courses, project work, and student-led research initiatives. These components, she noted, are not only

integrated into the assessment structure but also reflected in the Holistic Progress Card (HPC), reinforcing the NEP's vision of valuing multiple dimensions of student growth.

She emphasized that Boards must reimagine their role beyond the conventional function of conducting examinations and announcing results. A forward-looking Board, she asserted, must invest in systemic capacity building, including the creation of question banks, digitization of assessment processes, training of paper setters, and development of blueprints that embed competency-based principles. She shared that States like Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh have already created competency-based question banks, which will soon be made available on the PARAKH website for the benefit of all Boards.

Another critical initiative is the move toward an Integrated Test Management System (ITMS), a digital ecosystem designed to support end-to-end management of examinations, from admit cards and question generation to evaluation and results. This initiative, she noted, will empower teachers to generate classroom assessments that are aligned with national blueprints and cognitive expectations.

Drawing from this groundwork, Prof. Bhaduri outlined five key domains where equivalence must be established: Administration, Curriculum, Assessment, Infrastructure, and Inclusiveness. For each of these, detailed guidelines have been provided in the equivalence report shared with all Boards. These domains, she noted, align closely with the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) designed by PARAKH, further integrating the goals of quality assurance with those of assessment equity.

Importantly, she clarified that the SQAAF is not intended to function as an authoritarian compliance tool, but as an instrument for transparent self-disclosure. By making quality-related data publicly accessible, schools can help parents and communities better understand institutional performance.

PARAKH, she shared, has insisted that evidence be uploaded to validate the self-ratings submitted by schools under the SQAAF.

Returning to the subject of assessment, Prof. Bhaduri reiterated that even within the same Board, question paper difficulty and structure often vary significantly across years. Hence, the effort is not just about standardizing formats, but about fostering critical reflection among educators: What are we assessing? Why are we assessing it? Are we overlooking deeper learning by relying too heavily on certain types of questions?

This session deepened participants' understanding of how curricular and assessment equivalence can be realistically achieved without compromising diversity, but with a shared commitment to fairness, rigour, and inclusivity.

Actionable Point from session on Equivalence of Boards:

- i) States/UTs should ensure full-scale rollout of adopted/adapted HPCs from this academic year and consider adopting the suggested ratio of formative to summative assessment (at Gade 9 to Grade 12) to align with national frameworks and build parity.**
- ii) States/UTs should standardize question paper difficulty and structure across academic years and subjects using PARAKH's question templates and blueprints as a guide.**
- iii) States/UTs could consider developing an Integrated Test Management Systems (ITMS) for secure and efficient board examination management.**
- iv) All States/UTs should establish SSSA and explore SQAAF designed by PARAKH to encourage self-disclosure and evidence-based school evaluations so as to ensure minimum quality standards across all schools.**
- v) All States/UTs may discuss and disseminate PARAKH's Equivalence Report at the State, District and School Board levels. Thereafter,**

consultations with DEOs, SCERTs and Board officials may also be organized.

☞ The following session was dedicated to State-level innovations by Seven State Education Boards from **Goa, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh**. The Boards presented their key efforts and best practices aimed at strengthening curricular and assessment equivalence. Each Board brought forth a context-specific, reform-oriented approach aligned with the broader goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, while also highlighting their collaborative work with the National Assessment Centre–PARAKH.

Smt. Meghna Shetgaonkar, Director, SCERT, Goa shared the State's structured and phased rollout of the Goa School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (GSQAAF), developed in alignment with PARAKH's SQAAF. The State has established the Goa State School Standards Authority and has introduced achievement-level-based scoring, with evaluation mechanisms combining self and external components. A strong emphasis has been placed on document-based validation, and a manual to support this process is currently under development with assistance from PARAKH.

Shri Jayant Kumar Mishra, Secretary, Jharkhand Academic Council informed that the State has focused on capacity building and standardisation. Through a two-phased workshop series on Holistic Progress Cards (HPC) and Question Paper Templates (QPT), the State trained over 330 teachers across more than 260 blocks. The district-wise capacity-building model, has led to the creation of standardised formats and a structured monitoring system, developed in close coordination with PARAKH.

Mr. Lalrinmawia Ralte, Controller of Examinations, Mizoram Board of School Education outlined a range of reforms that include the introduction of competency-based assessments and bilingual textbooks, as well as the

implementation of same-year improvement exams. The State has developed digital tools such as MBSE-CTMS (Confidential Material Tracking and Monitoring System) and the SRS mobile app for school reporting and secure material tracking. These efforts were supported by workshops conducted jointly with PARAKH in both Aizawl and Delhi, with ongoing planning for a full-scale Integrated Test Management System (ITMS).

Prof. (Dr.) Sudhir Singh, Director (Academics), Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education shared how the Board has incorporated inclusivity into its assessment reforms, providing accommodations for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) and reaching over 8.5 lakh beneficiaries through outreach and awareness campaigns. The board has digitised student records, introduced real-time certificate validation, and integrated equivalence-related reforms into its broader administrative functions.

Shri Narnaryana Nath, Secretary, Assam State School Education Board detailed the recent unification of its two boards: SEBA and AHSEC, into the newly formed Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB). It has organized workshops on standardised QPTs and HPC for secondary stage, and formed district-level committees for internal assessments. Initiatives such as the “DARPAN” online admission portal and rotational answer script evaluations reflect the state's initiatives to bring reform. The state’s collaboration with PARAKH included training for over 250 educators and school heads and the creation of a special implementation cell.

Dr. Vijay Rama Raju. V, Director, School Education, Andhra Pradesh highlighted the State’s holistic assessment reform through a state-wide five-day workshop on HPC and QPT facilitated by PARAKH. The State introduced a HPC format that incorporates 21st-century skills, health indicators, and parental feedback. These progress cards were distributed during large-scale Mega Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), ensuring wide outreach and parental

engagement. The State continues to work with PARAKH on competency-based assessment reforms.

The Presentation by Smt. Priti Shukla, Deputy Secretary, Chhattisgarh Madhyamik Shiksha Mandal focused on structural alignment and technical preparation. The State developed subject-specific paper templates for Classes 10 and 12, conducted intensive trainings across all administrative levels, and realigned the curriculum for 15 subjects with NCERT guidelines. It also piloted a second main board examination for Classes 10 and 12 to provide grade improvement opportunities. Blueprint-based question paper design using Bloom's revised taxonomy has been embedded into the training of faculty, supported by extensive collaboration with PARAKH over a two-year period.

These diverse practices by State Education Boards highlighted a shared commitment towards making school systems more equitable, data-informed, and aligned with national quality standards. By embracing innovation and working closely with PARAKH, these States are setting important examples of how equivalence in curriculum and assessment can be translated into actionable reforms on the ground.



☞ **Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary (SE&L), addressed the participants to facilitate a joint reflection on the equivalence of boards initiative and the way forward.** He highlighted that the report titled ‘Establishing Equivalence across Education Boards had been uploaded on the PARAKH website and must be discussed widely, not just among National stakeholders, but also at the State level, involving district education officers and local academic leadership.

He explained that while curricular and assessment equivalence has been a recurring topic in education policy circles, the current report outlines the recommendations that deserve close attention. Based on the findings, he pointed out that variations observed in the question papers across Boards and academic years raises concerns about the lack of consistency in assessment practices.

Secretary (SE&L) stressed the need to introduce a reasonable degree of comparability, posing a critical question: if a student secures 80% in one State

and another secures the same in a different State, would they have equal access to centralised examinations or academic opportunities? Such questions, he said, lie at the heart of the equivalence agenda.

He concluded by assuring all States and UT representatives that PARAKH would be happy to provide technical support for any State-level consultations, meetings, or workshops aimed at discussing the report's content and taking forward its recommendations.

👏 The conference concluded with a formal vote of thanks by **Ms. Anusree Raha, Deputy Secretary, DoSE&L, Ministry of Education**. She thanked all participants for their active engagement and acknowledged the collaborative spirit shown throughout the day. Reaffirming the Ministry's commitment to inclusive, equitable, and



evidence-based education reforms, she invited States and UTs to continue working closely with PARAKH and the Ministry to take these initiatives forward.



