

PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024: Reflections on Indian School Education System Post-NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

Background: The National Council for Educational Research and Training has released the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (Na-tionwide Survey) 2024 report, summarizing nationwide assessment results conducted on the same day. The report highlights the status of school education in India.

Purpose: The report plays a pivotal role in the landscape of school education. However, there are several points where the national report left unprecedented aspects which need to be tackled timely.

Methods: This article is based on document analysis of the national report. The analysis was done on the secondary data on performance of the learners in the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (Nationwide Survey).

Results: This article presents a holistic overview of the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 report along with highlighting the mar-ginal gaps where the policy makers can ponder upon.

Conclusion: The findings of the analysis reveal that there exists a significant gap in the learning competencies of learners based on disparities in resource allocation and social inequality, which needs to be addressed urgently. In the context of new results, its signifi-cance is evident.



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1. Introduction

Education is the backbone of a developing country like India. Educational interventions and mass-scale educational programs are launched over time to improve the learning performance of the minds enrolled in the schools of India. However, these reforms and practices are subjected to regular examination in every possible dimension. Large-scale educational survey assessments (LSAs) are among the most used assessments across the nation at various levels (van Rijn *et al.*, 2024; Johnson & Porrado, 2021) due to their representativeness of the nation. The LSAs provide the status of the educational landscape over a broader geographical boundary. India has been conducting the state-sponsored large-scale educational survey assessment named National Achievement Survey (NAS) from 2001 onwards, covering various aspects of learning performance across levels. The most recent survey report was published in 2022, presenting information about students' learning

competencies and identifying observable learning gaps (Gazta & Jadhav, 2022).

With the introduction of the National Education Policy (2020), the postulation of Performance Analysis, Review and Assessment of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) as a national assessment center has subsumed the National Achievement Survey under its aegis. Apart from undertaking the role of NAS, this centre investigates the objectives of formulating norms, standards, and guidelines for assessing learning performance, providing guidance to state achievement surveys, and assisting school boards in updating assessment methods to align with 21st-century skills and targets set forth in the policy of 2020 (Section 4.41, National Education Policy 2020, p. 19). The first report of the nationwide assessment survey on learning outcomes named *PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (Nationwide Survey) 2024* was officially released in the month of July 2025. This report presented student

achievement, teacher readiness, school facilities, and pedagogical practices as per the three stages of school education. The recently published report is particularly significant as it is positioned at the intersection of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the post-COVID context. Although the NAS 2021 report was released after the pandemic, it could not align with the new school structure introduced by the policy. This latest report serves as a valuable resource, reflecting four years since NEP 2020 was enacted and over two years since conditions returned to pre-pandemic norms at the time of the survey. The present article emphasizes summarizing the overall statistical status of India along with highlighting the key challenges arising at the forefront of the relevant stakeholders and the means to tackle the same.

2. Survey Brief

The report worked on the revamped school education structure of India on a sample of almost 2.1 million students from the population of around 185 million students enrolled in the foundational, preparatory, and middle stages of education (Ministry of Education, 2024). Approximately 0.27 million teachers from all three stages were sampled for the survey from approximately 86 thousand schools comprising central and state government, government-aided, and private recognized schools. The performance of the learners was assessed based on the competencies identified by the centre from the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2023) for the selected subjects.

This nationwide survey considered the subjects transacted to the learners of the foundational, preparatory, and middle stages. The subjects in the foundational stage comprised language and mathematics. While moving to the preparatory stage, a subject of 'World Around Us' was added to the survey. Moreover, in the middle stage, the subject was renamed and reconfigured into two distinct subjects, i.e., Science and Social Science. The performance of the learners in these subjects was further examined across multiple variables, including gender, location, school management, and social categories.

3. Methodology Used in the Study

To understand the overall performance pattern of the learners in the report, the researchers used document analysis as the primary method of investigation in the

study. Document analysis is a process of systematically reviewing printed or electronic documents (Bowen, 2009) to elicit meaning and develop an empirical understanding of the concerned document. This process is a combination of the elements of both thematic analysis and content analysis. As specified by Bowen (2009), document analysis involves identification of meaningful and relevant passage of the text or data. Document analysis here entails interpretation of the results beyond quantification of the data.

This analysis is based on a single document released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training entitled '*PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024: National Report*', published digitally in 2025. It involved an in-depth exploration of the report with respect to the overall performance of the learners along with their performance based on variables like gender, location, school management, and social categories drawing upon the findings of the report as the secondary data source of this study.

4. Findings of the Report

In the context of competency-based assessment, the survey findings offer insights into students' learning competencies, alongside other relevant variables. The report focused exclusively on measurable competencies, as opposed to the comprehensive set outlined in the Curriculum Framework (2023). Nevertheless, it should be noted that some competencies have been excluded from the survey.

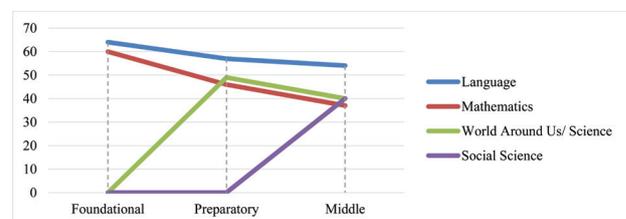


Figure 1: Performance of the Learners across Stage and Subjects in the Report

Based on the identified competencies, the findings revealed that the performance of the learners has continuously decreased with an increase in their educational levels, with language being the subject with good performance across the stages (Figure 1). The middle stage learners failed to even cross the fifty percent mark in any subject nationally except language, meaning more than 0.3 million middle stage students could not perform well in the assessment.

As visible from Figure 1, learner performance declined from lower to higher stages in language, with reading and comprehension dropping from sixty percent at the foundational stage to fifty-four percent at the middle stage. In mathematics, over half of the foundational learners answered competency questions correctly, but this fell to only two competencies above fifty percent in the preparatory stage, and none in the middle stage. Science, introduced as “World Around Us” in the preparatory stage, saw six out of eleven competencies pass the fifty percent mark, though questioning and prediction skills were weak; in the middle stage, only nutritional knowledge exceeded fifty percent. Social Science, introduced in the middle stage, witnessed just two out of fifteen competencies showing satisfactory results.

According to the survey, the students of six states performed consistently well in comparison to other states and were categorized as high-performing states. As per the Census (2011), three states from the high-performing category, namely Odisha, Maharashtra, and

Rajasthan, were tribal-dominated states (having more than five percent of the national tribal population), symbolizing that these states have focused on the education of tribal communities. On the other hand, two states and two union territories were consistently poor performing across the stages in the specified competencies. Gujarat was one of the lowest-performing states among the tribal-dominated states despite being one of the high-income states of India.

The report also delved into the analysis of different demographic factors affecting the performance of the learners across stages and subjects.

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In terms of the gender-based findings of the report, female learners consistently outperformed male counterparts across all stages and subjects. However, the performance of female learners initially indifferent at foundational stage declined in mathematics during both the preparatory and middle stages, as well as in science during the middle stage (Table 1).

Table 1: Gender-based Performance of the Learners in the Report

	Language		Mathematics		Science/ World Around Us		Social Science	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Foundational	63	65	60	60	-	-	-	-
Preparatory	55	59	47	46	49	50	-	-
Middle	52	56	37	36	41	40	39	41

This situation, when looked at with the lens of location of the learners, reflects that while at foundational stage, rural learners somehow display better performance than urban counterparts. However, this trend is turned upside down

in the next two stages with widest gap in the language of middle stage learners. Adding to this, the learners of both urban and rural backgrounds have recorded poorest performance in mathematics at middle stage (Table 2).

Table 2: Location-based Performance of the Learners in the Report

	Language		Mathematics		Science/ World Around Us		Social Science	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Foundational	64	63	60	59	-	-	-	-
Preparatory	55	59	45	47	48	51	-	-
Middle	51	58	36	38	39	42	39	42

In terms of school management, the learners enrolled in schools of state government and government aided recorded the poorest performance across the stages except in language of foundational stage. Private schools,

on the contrary, have displayed better performance across the stages irrespective of the subject. Central government schools, however, witnessed a roller coaster across the stages and subjects (Table 3).

Table 3: School Management-based Performance of the Learners in the Report

	Language				Mathematics				Science/ World Around Us				Social Science			
	S ^a	G ^b	P ^c	C ^d	S ^a	G ^b	P ^c	C ^d	S ^a	G ^b	P ^c	C ^d	S ^a	G ^b	P ^c	C ^d
Foundational	64	63	64	60	61	58	60	57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Preparatory	52	52	60	69	43	40	49	62	47	45	52	58	-	-	-	-
Middle	48	49	59	69	33	33	39	48	37	37	44	51	37	37	42	49

Note: ^a State Government, ^b Government Aided, ^c Private Recognized, ^d Central Government

Social group-based stratification offers a clearer understanding of learner performance across various strata. Learners from upper caste backgrounds demonstrated higher achievement compared to other social categories at all stages and in all subjects. While differences in performance were minimal at the foundational stage, these

disparities became more pronounced at advanced stages. Conversely, learners from scheduled tribes consistently scored lower across subjects and stages. Scheduled caste and other backward caste learners generally performed at an average level but did not surpass the results of upper caste learners at any stage (Table 4).

Table 4: Social Group-based Performance of the Learners in the Report

	Language				Mathematics				Science/ World Around Us				Social Science			
	S ^a	T ^b	O ^c	U ^d	S ^a	T ^b	O ^c	U ^d	S ^a	T ^b	O ^c	U ^d	S ^a	T ^b	O ^c	U ^d
Foundational	64	61	63	66	60	57	60	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Preparatory	54	51	56	61	44	41	46	50	47	45	49	53	-	-	-	-
Middle	50	47	53	60	35	32	37	40	39	36	40	44	38	36	39	43

Note: ^a Scheduled Caste, ^b Scheduled Tribe, ^c Other Backward Castes, ^d Upper Castes

5. Analysis

It is clearly visible from the national report of *PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024* that the learners have several areas of improvement which were not addressed in the suggested interventions provided in the report. The report has also highlighted the reality of the Indian school education system even after continuous policy interventions since independence.

The researcher based on the findings identified three key areas of concern supported by the national report. These concerns are represented in the Figure 2 followed by a detailed discussion.

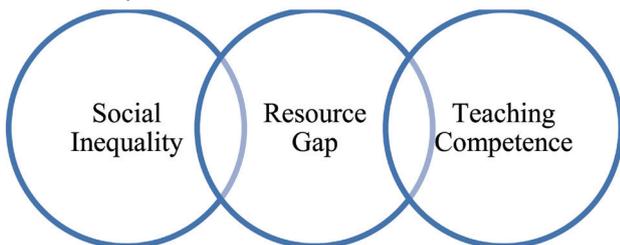


Figure 2: Areas of Concern in the Learners' Performance

5.1. Social Inequality

The female performance, though better than their male counterparts, is behind males in the subject of mathematics, highlighting an immediate need to tackle the concern. There have been several studies that have proven that gender does not play any role in the performance of learners in mathematics (Lindberg, Hyde, Petersen, & Linn, 2010; Ghasemi & Burley, 2019; Singh & Singh, 2022), which is contrary to the report findings. The performance has worsened compared to the report of the National Achievement Survey (2021). In line with the same aspect, the tribal learners have performed the poorest throughout the stages irrespective of subject, and the upper caste learners have performed the highest at every stage (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2025).

This raises concerns about social inclusion in classrooms, suggesting issues like teasing, exclusion, and ridicule from classmates even after having

behavior and protection policies at the school level, as highlighted in the report itself. The rationale behind the performance of the underperformers also aligns with concerns like physical aggression and school safety (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2025, p. 29). These concerns must be addressed by the concerned stakeholders at the earliest opportunity to make education more inclusive and just. Involving the school management committees and the local people in the situation concerned can have a strong possibility of tackling these concerns.

5.2. Resource Gap

At the school management level, it is reported that private schools have registered the best performance compared to the learners of government and affiliated schools. This raises an important question about the quality of teaching transacted in government schools. Central schools, one of the most funded government-sponsored schools, have also fluctuated in their performance in the survey. The performance of the state-sponsored schools is even more concerning. The state government and aided schools' students face a much greater fund crunch compared to private and central government schools (Kundu, 2017).

This clearly voices the need to increase the allocation of adequate resources to these schools to ensure quality education for under-resourced learners. The rise in the popularity of shadow education is also an important hurdle behind the poor performance of learners from state government and aided schools, especially from rural settings, marking a steep rise in inequality (Chanchal, Meo, & Das, 2025; Kaur & Sharma, 2025). The policymakers must cater towards increasing the resource allocation of state-funded and aided schools in India, as the majority of the minds are enrolled in these schools only, with almost sixty percent of total learners enrolled (Ministry of Education, 2024, p. 75).

As informed in the report itself, teachers have also complained about the lack of adequate resource books as a hurdle in the teaching-learning process. School administrators have also reported that school buildings require significant repair. These concerns are even more critical in government schools in rural settings in the survey. Seventeen percent of rural schools lack library facilities for learners, and seventy-two percent of schools do not have computer facilities. The data reveal that five percent of rural schools are yet to be

electrified across India (Pratham, 2024). Therefore, it is important for the necessary stakeholders to investigate timely and adequate resource provision for schools to encourage the holistic development of learners across all stages and subjects.

5.3. Teaching Competence

Teachers' competence has always been subjected to debate in the Indian context (Kundu, 2019). The teachers have reported that almost forty percent of them have never read the NCF Foundational Stage and School Education, which can have a possible impact on their teaching strategies and result in being unaware of recent innovations to be adapted in the classroom setting (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2025). Adding to this, the survey revealed that very few teachers have participated in professional development programs organized by the concerned authorities, which is also reflected in the performance of the learners.

Even though schools have adequate ICT infrastructure, more than half of the teachers participated in training related to ICT competencies. The teachers, however, reported using innovative assessment practices in the classroom. In terms of community support, fifty percent of the teachers admitted not having received any assistance from the community during the teaching process while still being overworked in the school (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2025).

In summary, this reflection signifies an urgent need for compulsory professional development sessions for in-service teachers to cater to the learning needs of learners with reference to 21st-century skills. Teachers' professional development programs are continuously organized by national platforms using the DTH program, which needs to be monitored and assessed effectively to ensure quality in every aspect of the teaching-learning process.

School is a miniature society where social relations and culture are reflected. School and community participation have been stressed in the policy of 2020 to ensure and promote experiential learning of learners right from the initial stages of learning. This can only be achieved through effective collaboration between both the agencies. Educational leaders must examine bridging this gap, especially in the tribal and remote parts of the country.

6. Implications and Limitations

This analysis sheds light on summarizing the report based on the findings revealed from the nationwide survey of PARAKH across several variables, along with some critical points to be considered by the concerned stakeholders. The researchers attempted to present a broader picture which can further trigger studies on the underlying concerns still unaddressed after the introduction of the National Education Policy 2020.

However, the analysis considered only one report and not a comparative analysis of pre-existing national and state reports. Moreover, due to the recent release of the policy of 2020 and the report, minimal articles were accessible. These constraints are part of the limitations of this research.

7. Conclusion

The *PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024* has provided valuable insights into the learning outcomes of students across India. Administered four years after the implementation of the National Education Policy, the survey highlights the actual progress made in school education nationwide. While student performance has shown improvement compared to the National Achievement Survey report of 2021, it remains a matter of concern, as scores are still below seventy percent across all indicators.

Furthermore, disparities in resource allocation and social inequality have exacerbated the existing learning gaps among learners. Key areas requiring focused attention from stakeholders include educational equity, teacher professional development, adequate resource distribution, and active community engagement in the educational process. Prompt action is essential in order to realize the objectives outlined in the 2020 policy.

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Authorship Contribution

Arabinda Kumar Sahoo: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Visualization, Writing-Original Draft Preparation

Anjali Bajpai: Conceptualization, Supervision, Visualization, Writing- Review & Editing.

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Declaration

The author hereby declares that this research paper is an original work conducted by the author. All sources and references have been properly acknowledged, and the work has not been submitted or published elsewhere. Proper acknowledgment has been given to all sources and support.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The article is based on the publicly available data of PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan which can be accessed on https://parakh.ncert.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-07/REPORT_India_IND.pdf.

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