

## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SCHOOL QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS IN MAHARASHTRA STATE

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### **Abstract:**

*Education in India aims to promote holistic development and prepare citizens for a global society. Regarding the school curriculum, NEP 2020 expects it to be holistic, integrated and learner-centered. Assessment frameworks play a crucial role in evaluating the education systems and guiding improvements in school performance. School quality assessment has emerged as a central strategy for improving education systems across India. The objectives of school quality assessment are to ensure effective teaching–learning processes, monitor student learning outcomes and promote continuous school improvement. States have developed varying frameworks to evaluate school performance, encourage continuous improvement and ensure accountability. SQAAF (SSC board), SQAA (CBSE board) both are the most structured state-level models, integrating self-assessment, external evaluation and accreditation. This paper compares various models of quality assessment frameworks adopted by SSC and CBSE board to identify commonalities, differences, strengths and lessons for strengthening school quality systems nationally.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment frameworks, school quality assessment, National Educational Policy 2020, school accreditations*

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### **Introduction:**

The education system in India is vast and diverse, serving learners across multiple languages and cultures. It follows a structured framework from early childhood to higher education, guided by national policies. Assessment frameworks play a crucial role in evaluating the education systems and guiding improvements in school performance. Recent reforms like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 focus on quality, equity and skill-based learning. Education in India aims to promote holistic development and prepare citizens for a global society. **Regarding the school curriculum**, NEP 2020 expects it to be **holistic, integrated and learner-centered**. The curriculum should aim at the all-round development of students,

including cognitive, physical, social, emotional, ethical and aesthetic aspects. Equal importance is given to academics, arts, sports, vocational education and life skills.

**Quality** is defined as:

“Quality is the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind.”

(Oxford Dictionary)

“Quality is excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformation.” Harvey and Green (1993)

Quality in education refers to the effectiveness of the teaching–learning process in achieving desirable educational outcomes.

India's QA landscape has expanded significantly, moving from compliance-based inspections to holistic,

multi-dimensional quality assurance that emphasizes learning outcomes, teacher quality, inclusivity, governance, and safety. With frameworks like SQAA, SAAF, NAS, PGI, NEP reforms, and state-level indicators, India now uses a comprehensive QA ecosystem aligned with global standards while addressing local needs.

The objectives of school quality assessment are to ensure effective teaching–learning processes, monitor student learning outcomes and promote continuous school improvement. It aims to evaluate infrastructure, curriculum implementation, leadership, teacher competence, and learner support systems. Quality assessment helps identify strengths and gaps in school functioning, ensures accountability and transparency, and supports evidence-based planning and decision-making. It also encourages adherence to national standards and policies, enhances stakeholder confidence, and fosters equity, inclusiveness, and overall excellence in school education.

As per National Educational Policy 2020, SQAAF guideline framework has been developed for all the of education to assess the performance of private and government schools. The School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAA) (2023) developed by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), This framework has been designed for enriching academic activities, teaching learning process and financial as well as administrative activities.

The objective of this article is as follows:

- To analyze the standards of quality assurance programs;
- To understand the aims of quality assurance programs;
- To understand the philosophy of quality assurance programs;

### Literature Background:

#### *School quality assessment and accreditation (SQAA-CBSE board)*

It is a tool for educationists, leaders, management and all those involved in making a difference in the lives of children. It is an attempt to allow all of us to make informed choices, articulate what we want and compare it with a realistic assessment of current reality, collectively aspire for a goal, reflect and initiate dialogues, recognize and manage the complexities at large and thus deal effectively with the forces that shape the consequences of our actions.

The vision of SQAA is to provide quality education to students through standardized instruments and processes of self-evaluation and external assessment benchmarks in the concept, establishment and running of effective systems within an institution in accordance with changing socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Schools affiliated to CBSE must undergo the process of SQAA and self-assess themselves on the SQAA Framework every year on SQAA Portal. The schools aspiring to be affiliated to CBSE can also undertake self-assessment against the framework in an offline mode and prepare themselves for self-assessment while submitting application for affiliation.

The seven domains are not independent of each other but interlinked and interdependent in a systematic and seamless manner. An example would be that of leadership that develops capacity of teachers by providing resources and training benchmarked with best practices and good governance leading to enhanced learning outcomes in all students in all curricular areas.

For facilitating assessment of school on each standard, four *performance levels* ranging on scale of 1 to 4 have been specified. Performance Level-IV would be highest and Performance Level-I would be lowest. Performance Level indicates the developmental stage of the school.

Further to determine on which performance level school stands, along with each performance level, observable actions or practices termed as *performance indicators* are specified. Technically, if against each standard or benchmarking statement, performance levels and associated performance indicators are specified, resultant scoring guide tool is called 'Rubric'. [6]

The SQAA framework encompasses seven key interrelated domains to ensure school effectiveness. Each domain was subdivided into subdomains. Each subdomain contains benchmarking statements, which are called standards. For each standard set of records, evidence that must be produced to prove practice has been specified. For each benchmarking statement or standard, four performance levels ranging from a scale of 1-4 were specified. There were 84 standards

distributed across seven domains, and the scores of these parameters were spread on a scale of 1-4, with a maximum total score of 336.

**Level-I (Inceptive)** System is at initial stage. Practices are individual based.

**Level-II (Transient)** System is in early constructive years. Practices are generally corrective in nature.

**Level-III (Stable)** Evidences of database improvement processes. System is defined and documented. People are aware of their roles in the institution and practicing it. Practices are preventive and corrective in nature.

**Level-IV (Dynamic-Evolving)** Demonstrates strong benchmarked defined and documented processes. Governance and leadership exhibits accountability, responsibility, self-evaluation and improvement planning. [5]



Figure 1 CBSE SQAA Framework.

### *School quality assessment and assurance Framework (SQAAF-SSC board)*

The assessment process will entirely different than existing one. As per SQAAF the assessment framework is structured in various domains and sub-domains which are aligned to corresponding standards. The domains are categorized as –

1. Curricular, Teaching methods and assessment (44 standards and 12 sub domains)
2. Fundamental Facilities (30 standards and 12 sub domains)
3. Human resources and school Leadership (12 standards and 05 sub domains)
4. Integrated Education and Gender Equity (14 standards and 11 sub domains)
5. Management, Control and Administration (17 standards and 12 sub domains)
6. Beneficiary Satisfaction (11 standards and 07 sub domains)

The above 06 domains, 59 sub-domains and 128 standards will be applicable (not uniformly) to various stages of education like Pre-primary (up to standard 2<sup>nd</sup>), Primary (standard 3<sup>rd</sup> to standard 5<sup>th</sup>), pre-secondary (standard 6<sup>th</sup> to standard 8<sup>th</sup>) and Secondary (standard 9<sup>th</sup> to standard 12<sup>th</sup>).

Further, there are four possible outcomes of assessment to define the stages of schools as; Preparatory (प्रारंभिक), Progressive (प्रगतशील), Advanced (प्रगत) and Proficient (प्रवीण). These categories are based on the marks obtained for each domain after internal and external assessment process and expressing marks in grades.

Regarding marking scheme, each standard has assigned maximum four (04) marks. The assessor can offer the marks in the range of 01 to 04 based on evidences provided by school.

Finally, grades will be expressed as A+ (91 – 100), A (81 – 90), B+ (71 – 80), B (61 – 70), C+ (51 - 60) and C (less than 50).

This assessment approach will be adopted by academic year 2025-2026 with internal assessment followed by external assessment.



**Figure 2 SSC SQAAF**

Consolidated scores for all the parameters are used to measure the school's grade. There are 128 standards distributed across all 6 key domains and these standards are rated on a scale of 1-4, with a maximum total score of 464.

**Quality Enrichment Campaign (शैक्षणिक गुणवत्ता संवर्धन अभियान)**

Government of Maharashtra is implementing a continuous comprehensive evaluation method for assessment and improvement of teaching learning process. In Maharashtra Educational Quality Enrichment Campaign (शैक्षणिक गुणवत्ता संवर्धन अभियान) was announced in the year 2015 which involves the monitoring and assessment of schools through expert team.

The assessment is based on –

1. Physical infrastructure (55 Marks)
2. Administrative policies (90 Marks)
3. Teaching – Learning process (60 Marks)
4. School Section (50 Marks)
5. Quality Enrichment activities (35 Marks)
6. Significant unique Activities (10 Marks)

Thus, after thorough monitoring and inspection the marks out of 300 are calculated.

Schools are ranked as –

1. Grade A : 176 to 300 Marks
2. Grade B : 151 to 175 Marks
3. Grade C : 76 to 150 Marks
4. Grade D : 1 to 75 Marks



**Figure 3 (SSC Board) Quality Enrichment Campaign**

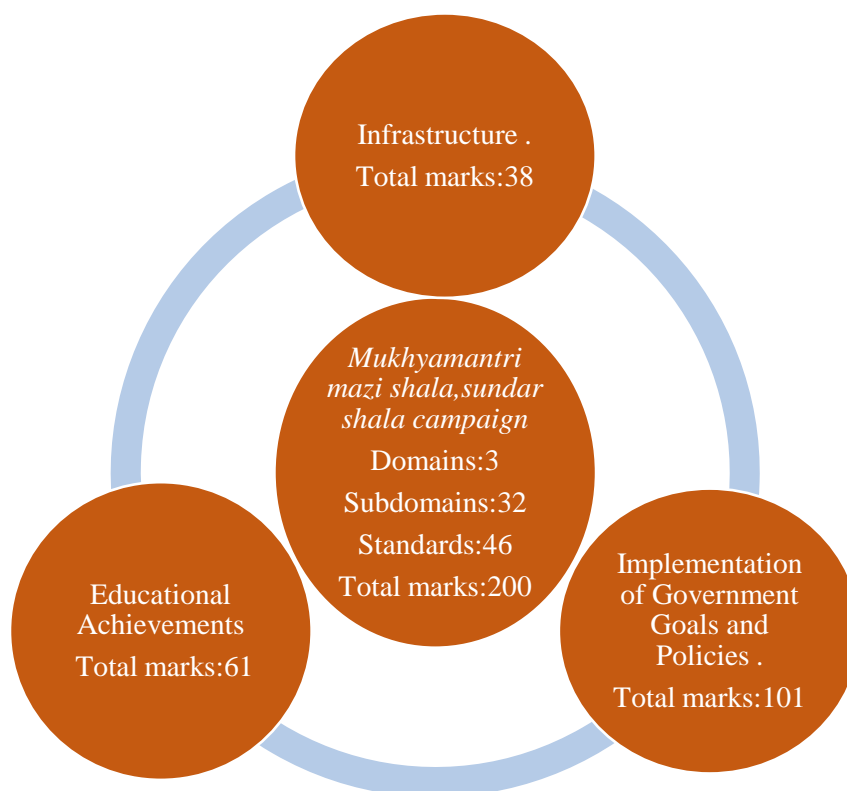
**“Mukhyamantri mazi shala,sundar shala campaign”**

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan this campaign was started in academic year 2023-2024.

This campaign includes the following points:

- 1) Infrastructure 38 marks
- 2) Implementation of Government Goals and Policies – Total 101 Marks
- 3) Educational Achievements – Total 61 Marks

Under these three basic domains there are 32 subdomains. There are total 46 standards under these 32 subdomains. If the existence of the standard is yes then 1 or 2 marks are assigned. It is only a quantitative analysis. Quality of the standard is not considered. Assessors only check the presence of the standard and not quality.



**Figure 3 (SSC Board) Mukhyamantri mazi shala, sundar shala campaign**

**Method:**

Methods include comparative content analysis, review of assessment tools, and interpretation of grading and evaluation criteria. The study highlights best practices and gaps to improve school quality assessment across both boards.

The purpose of this research method is to interpret and understand CBSE’s SQAA and SSC board school quality assessments. In-depth reading and

interpretation of the documents examines similarities and differences in assessment objectives, evaluation patterns, and quality assurance mechanisms. Qualitative research methods provide various benefits, provides scope for reading each context of the text. The quality assessment and assurance manual documents available online are reviewed. By comparing methods of important quality assurance and accreditation

programs, similarities and differences between the both frameworks this research article is formulated.

### Result and Discussion:

In both the frameworks school self-evaluation is an annual process and external evaluation is a process that is performed once every three years.

Particularly, SQAA of CBSE board encourages Self-Evaluation, Accountability, Collaboration and Innovation, promotes of use of technology, interdependence, research and innovation, enhancement in employability skills, nationalism, focuses on global citizens. Excluding the domain Curriculum pedagogy and assessment the remaining domains are equally weighted. In the SQAA framework, the standards are set in seven different domains of school functioning, which are further subdivided into subdomains, detailing the areas under them. Performance indicators have been mentioned for each standard, which indicate observable actions or practices in response to that particular standard. The objectives of self-assessment of CBSE SQAA are

- 1) To create an enabling environment in the school for the achievement of student learning outcomes.
- 2) To prepare students for an increasingly complex and interdependent world.
- 3) To develop individual and collective responsibility and accountability in ensuring the achievement of student learning outcomes. [4]

CBSE SQAA is applicable to all CBSE affiliated schools as well schools willing to get CBSE affiliation. The CBSE's SQAA is a more comprehensive framework because, apart from seven key domains, this framework has a provision to check schools' safety measures with comprehensive checklists.

The objectives of self-assessment of SSC board's SQAAP are

- 1) To empower schools to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- 2) To enable schools to adopt policies.

- 3) The school and school staff should critically analyze the findings obtained from the school quality assessment.

Based on the findings...

Set future plans and objectives.

Strengthen schools to collaborate with parents and the community for collective action.

Prepare an action plan for school improvement.

In case of "Educational Quality enrichment campaign" and in "Mukhyamantri mazi shala, sundar shala campaign" criterions have sub and sub-sub criterions in three hierarchy levels. Minimum and maximum weightage for each sub criteria is "1".

The assessor has to mention the presence of facility and practices followed. The marks ranges for final grading are in whole numbers.

The CBSE's SQAA and SSC's SQAAP are more comprehensive frameworks because these frameworks have a provision to check schools' safety measures with comprehensive checklists and also have one key domain for checking the beneficiary satisfaction of stakeholders at four levels. Also satisfaction of all stakeholders is considered in these frameworks. So mental health and satisfaction of all employee, parents, students, leaders at workplace play crucial role is the remarkable consideration in these frameworks. So comparatively CBSE's SQAA and SSC's SQAAP are more domainwise comprehensive than the rest of the frameworks. But only quantitative and qualitative analysis is considered there for grading. So there is a need of a tool with logical analysis to execute more appropriate school quality assessments.

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**Cite This Article:**

**Mrs. Anaokar P. & Dr. Patil P. (2026).** *Comparative Study of School Quality Assessment Frameworks in Maharashtra state. In Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal: Vol. XV (Number II, pp. 147–154)*