

Internal Assessment as a Mechanism for Quality Enhancement in Teacher Education: A Study in the Context of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasized a paradigm shift from examination-oriented learning to competency-based, holistic, and learner-centred education. In this context, internal assessment has emerged as a significant mechanism for ensuring quality enhancement in teacher education programmes. The present study examines the role and effectiveness of internal assessment in teacher education institutions with special reference to the implementation of NEP 2020 principles and the educational practices adopted in PM SHRI Schools. Internal assessment provides continuous and comprehensive evaluation opportunities that enable teacher educators to monitor the academic progress, pedagogical competencies, professional attitudes, reflective thinking, and classroom performance of student teachers. Unlike traditional summative examinations, it encourages formative assessment practices, self-evaluation, peer assessment, project-based learning, and experiential learning approaches. The study highlights how internal assessment contributes to improving teaching-learning processes, promoting accountability, strengthening competency-based teacher preparation, and fostering reflective professional practice among prospective teachers. Furthermore, it explores the alignment of internal assessment strategies with the objectives of PM SHRI Schools, which emphasize holistic development, competency-based learning, innovative pedagogy, and continuous assessment. The paper argues that a well-structured internal assessment system can serve as a powerful tool for maintaining educational quality, enhancing institutional effectiveness, and preparing future teachers capable of meeting the evolving demands of twenty-first-century classrooms. The findings suggest that

effective implementation of internal assessment practices can significantly contribute to quality assurance and educational transformation envisioned under NEP 2020 and PM SHRI initiatives.

Keywords: Internal Assessment, Quality Enhancement, Teacher Education, NEP 2020, PM SHRI Schools, Competency-Based Assessment, Formative Assessment, Holistic Development, Teacher Competencies, Continuous Evaluation, Professional Development, Educational Quality Assurance.

Introduction

Teacher education occupies a central position in the development of a competent and professionally efficient teaching workforce. The quality of school education largely depends on the quality of teachers and the effectiveness of teacher preparation programmes. In contemporary educational discourse, assessment has emerged not merely as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but as a process for enhancing learning, improving teaching practices, and ensuring educational quality. Internal assessment, therefore, has gained increasing importance in teacher education institutions because it facilitates continuous monitoring of student teachers' academic progress, pedagogical competencies, reflective abilities, and professional development. It enables teacher educators to assess learners beyond traditional written examinations and encourages the use of diverse evaluation techniques such as assignments, seminars, projects, teaching demonstrations, portfolios, reflective journals, peer assessment, and field-based activities.

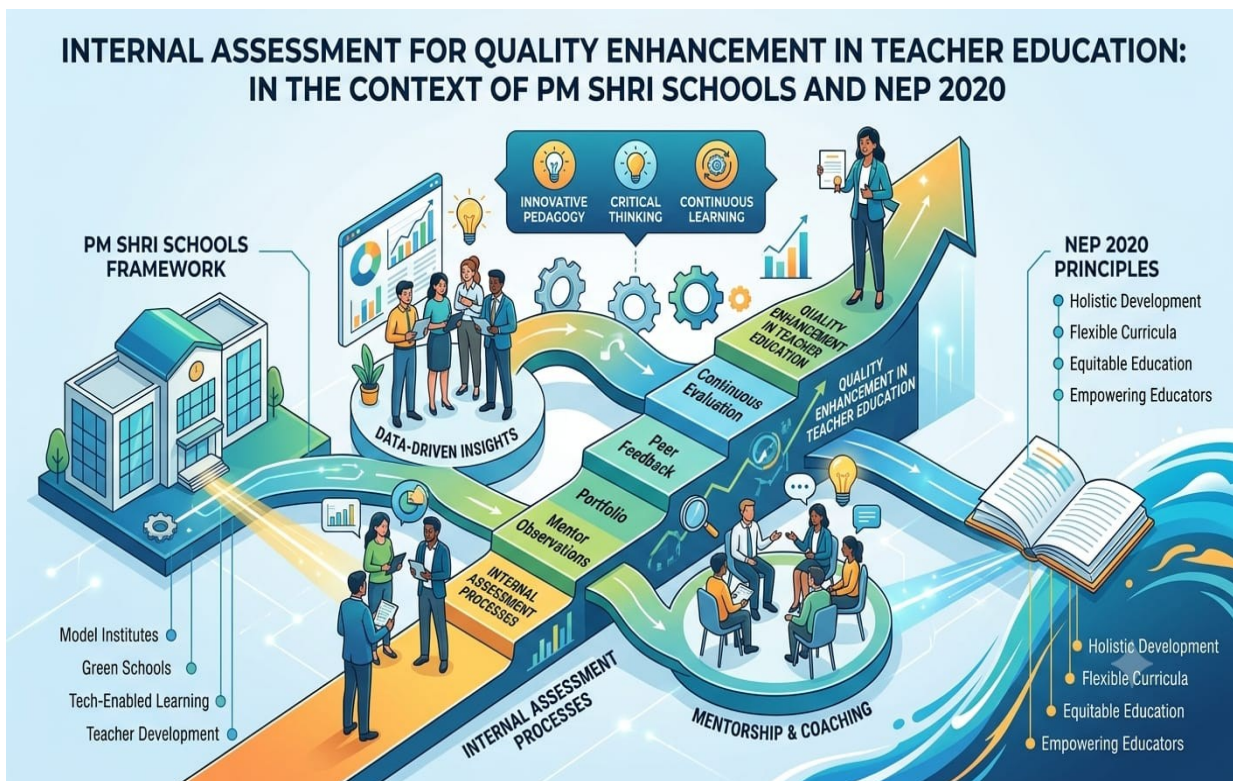


Figure 1

The National Education Policy (NEP)[1] advocates a significant transformation in India's assessment culture. The policy emphasizes a shift from rote-learning-oriented summative examinations towards competency-based, formative, and holistic assessment practices. According to NEP 2020, assessment should support learning and development, promote critical thinking, conceptual understanding, creativity, and problem-solving skills, and provide continuous feedback for improvement. The policy further recommends multidimensional assessment approaches that

include self-assessment, peer assessment, project-based learning, and performance-based evaluation.

The PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India) initiative has been launched as a flagship programme to demonstrate the effective implementation of NEP 2020 in selected schools across the country.[2] PM SHRI schools promote competency-based learning, experiential pedagogy, digital integration, holistic development, and continuous assessment practices. The School Quality Assessment Framework (SQUAF) developed under PM SHRI emphasizes assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning, thereby reinforcing the importance of continuous and formative evaluation in school education.[3] These reforms require future teachers to possess strong competencies in designing, implementing, and interpreting internal assessment practices. Consequently, teacher education institutions must strengthen their internal assessment mechanisms to prepare prospective teachers for the evolving educational landscape envisioned under NEP 2020 and PM SHRI Schools.

In this context, internal assessment functions as a critical quality enhancement mechanism in teacher education. It provides opportunities for continuous feedback, promotes reflective practice, develops professional competencies, and aligns teacher preparation programmes with contemporary educational reforms. Therefore, examining the role and effectiveness of internal assessment within teacher education programmes becomes essential for understanding its contribution to quality assurance and educational transformation in the era of NEP 2020 and PM SHRI Schools.

Rationale of the Study

The implementation of NEP 2020 has brought significant reforms in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher preparation, and educational governance across India. Among these reforms, assessment transformation occupies a crucial place because the success of competency-based education depends largely upon effective and continuous evaluation practices. Traditional examination systems have often been criticized for emphasizing memorization and high-stakes testing while neglecting the development of higher-order thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and reflective learning.[4] NEP 2020 seeks to address these concerns through formative and competency-based assessment approaches.

Teacher education institutions are responsible for preparing future teachers who can successfully implement these assessment reforms in schools. However, the effectiveness of teacher preparation depends on the extent to which internal assessment systems themselves reflect the principles of continuous and holistic evaluation. Internal assessment provides opportunities to assess practical teaching skills, classroom management abilities, professional attitudes, lesson planning competencies, communication skills, and reflective thinking, which cannot be adequately measured through conventional examinations.

Furthermore, PM SHRI Schools are emerging as demonstration schools for implementing NEP 2020 reforms and promoting competency-based learning environments. The success of these schools depends on the availability of professionally trained teachers who understand formative assessment practices and can effectively apply them in classroom settings. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how internal assessment contributes to quality enhancement in teacher education and whether existing assessment practices are aligned with the goals of NEP 2020 and PM SHRI Schools.

The present study is thus justified because it seeks to explore the potential of internal assessment as a mechanism for quality improvement, professional competency development, and educational excellence in teacher education programmes.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its academic, professional, institutional, and policy implications.

1. **Academic Significance:** The study contributes to the growing body of literature on assessment reforms, quality assurance, and teacher education in the context of NEP 2020. It provides theoretical insights into the relationship between internal assessment and quality enhancement.
2. **Professional Significance:** The findings may help teacher educators understand how continuous assessment can develop professional competencies, reflective thinking, and pedagogical effectiveness among student teachers.
3. **Institutional Significance:** Teacher education institutions may use the findings to strengthen their internal quality assurance systems and improve assessment practices in accordance with NEP 2020 guidelines.
4. **Policy Significance:** The study may provide valuable evidence for policymakers, educational administrators, and accreditation agencies regarding the role of internal assessment in achieving educational quality and institutional excellence.
5. **School Education Significance:** Since PM SHRI Schools emphasize competency-based assessment and holistic development, the study may help identify ways to prepare future teachers capable of implementing these reforms effectively.
6. **Quality Enhancement Significance:** The study may offer practical recommendations for improving assessment systems, strengthening teacher preparation programmes, and promoting continuous professional growth among prospective teachers.

Internal Assessment, PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020 in the West Bengal Context

West Bengal has been actively participating in the implementation of NEP 2020 reforms through curriculum restructuring, teacher capacity building, digital education initiatives, and the establishment of PM SHRI Schools. The School Education Department of West Bengal recognizes PM SHRI Schools as model institutions designed to demonstrate the effective implementation of NEP 2020 through experiential learning, competency-based pedagogy, digital integration, and holistic assessment practices.[5] These schools are expected to act as centres of excellence and support neighbouring schools in adopting innovative educational practices.

The state also possesses a large network of teacher education institutions affiliated with institutions such as Baba Saheb Ambedkar Education University and various universities that prepare future teachers for elementary and secondary education. With the gradual implementation of NEP 2020 and the introduction of Integrated Teacher Education Programmes (ITEP), teacher education in West Bengal is undergoing substantial transformation. The emphasis is increasingly shifting towards competency development, professional readiness, reflective practice, and continuous assessment.

However, challenges remain regarding the effective implementation of internal assessment systems, standardization of evaluation practices, faculty preparedness, and alignment between teacher education institutions and school-level reforms. In many institutions, internal assessment is still perceived as a procedural requirement rather than a meaningful quality enhancement strategy. Therefore, there is a pressing need to investigate how internal assessment can be utilized more effectively to improve teacher competencies and support the goals of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020 within the specific socio-educational context of West Bengal.

Such an investigation is expected to provide valuable insights for strengthening teacher education quality and ensuring that future teachers are adequately prepared to meet the demands of competency-based, inclusive, and learner-centred education in West Bengal.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the existing practices of internal assessment in teacher education institutions in the context of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020.
2. To assess the role of internal assessment in enhancing the professional competencies, pedagogical skills, and reflective practices of student teachers.
3. To investigate the alignment between internal assessment practices in teacher education institutions and the competency-based assessment framework advocated by NEP 2020.
4. To explore the preparedness of prospective teachers to implement continuous and holistic assessment practices in PM SHRI Schools.
5. To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of internal assessment as a quality enhancement mechanism in teacher education institutions.

Research Questions

1. What are the prevailing internal assessment practices followed in teacher education institutions in relation to the objectives of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020?
2. How does internal assessment contribute to the development of professional competencies, pedagogical effectiveness, and reflective thinking among student teachers?
3. To what extent are the internal assessment practices of teacher education institutions aligned with the competency-based and holistic assessment principles of NEP 2020?
4. How prepared are prospective teachers to implement continuous, competency-based, and formative assessment strategies in PM SHRI Schools?
5. What major challenges and opportunities influence the effectiveness of internal assessment as a mechanism for quality enhancement in teacher education?

Assessment has long been recognized as a critical component of the teaching-learning process and a significant determinant of educational quality. Earlier studies on educational evaluation emphasized that assessment should not merely measure learning outcomes but should also facilitate learning improvement and instructional effectiveness. Black and Wiliam [6] demonstrated that formative assessment practices significantly improve student achievement by providing continuous feedback and opportunities for learning enhancement. Their work established the theoretical foundation for continuous and internal assessment systems that support learner development rather than solely certifying achievement. Similarly, Sadler[7] argued that effective assessment enables learners to identify gaps in their performance and undertake corrective actions, thereby fostering self-regulated learning and professional growth.

Research on teacher education has consistently highlighted the importance of internal assessment in developing pedagogical competencies among prospective teachers.[8] Darling-Hammond[9] observed that effective teacher preparation programmes integrate continuous assessment with practical teaching experiences, reflective exercises, and classroom-based activities. Such assessment practices enable teacher educators to evaluate not only theoretical knowledge but also teaching skills, classroom management abilities, communication competencies, and professional attitudes. The study further suggested that continuous assessment contributes significantly to the preparation of reflective and competent teachers capable of addressing diverse classroom challenges.

Several studies have emphasized the relationship between assessment and quality assurance in higher and teacher education. Harvey and Green[10] conceptualized educational quality as a multidimensional construct involving excellence, fitness for purpose, value addition, and transformation. Within this framework, internal assessment serves as a quality enhancement tool by

promoting continuous monitoring of learner performance and institutional effectiveness. Yorke[11] further argued that formative assessment enhances educational quality by supporting student engagement, motivation, and academic progression. These findings indicate that internal assessment plays an essential role in ensuring quality outcomes in teacher education institutions.

In the Indian context, educational reforms have increasingly emphasized competency-based assessment and continuous evaluation. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education[12] advocated reflective practice, continuous assessment, and professional development as essential components of teacher preparation. The framework highlighted the need to move beyond examination-centred approaches and adopt assessment strategies that evaluate practical competencies, critical thinking, and professional dispositions. These recommendations laid the groundwork for subsequent reforms in teacher education assessment practices across the country.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further strengthened the emphasis on formative and competency-based assessment.[13] The policy advocates a transition from rote memorization and high-stakes examinations towards holistic, multidimensional, and learner-centred evaluation practices. According to NEP 2020, assessment should focus on conceptual understanding, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities. The policy also encourages self-assessment, peer assessment, project-based learning, and continuous feedback mechanisms. These reforms underscore the importance of internal assessment as a means of promoting educational quality and competency development among future teachers.

Recent studies examining NEP 2020 have reported that successful implementation of competency-based education depends largely on the preparedness of teachers and teacher educators. Kumar and Singh found that teacher education institutions need to redesign their assessment systems to align with competency-based learning outcomes. Their findings indicated that internal assessment can effectively support professional competency development when integrated with reflective journals, portfolios, classroom observations, and performance-based evaluation methods. The study emphasized the necessity of strengthening assessment literacy among teacher educators to achieve the objectives of NEP 2020.[14]

The introduction of PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India) Schools has created new opportunities for implementing innovative assessment practices. PM SHRI Schools are envisioned as model institutions that demonstrate the principles of NEP 2020 through experiential learning, digital integration, competency-based pedagogy, and holistic assessment. The School Quality Assessment Framework (SQAF) associated with PM SHRI emphasizes continuous monitoring, formative assessment, and learner-centred evaluation. Research on school transformation initiatives suggests that such reforms require teachers who are proficient in designing and implementing diverse assessment strategies. Consequently, teacher education institutions must ensure that their internal assessment mechanisms prepare prospective teachers for these emerging professional expectations.

Studies conducted in West Bengal have highlighted the ongoing transformation of teacher education in response to national educational reforms. Research related to teacher education institutions affiliated with Baba Saheb Ambedkar Education University and other universities has reported growing emphasis on outcome-based education, reflective practice, and competency development. However, several scholars have identified challenges such as lack of assessment standardization, inadequate faculty training, limited use of innovative evaluation tools, and excessive dependence on traditional written examinations. These challenges often restrict the effectiveness of internal assessment as a genuine quality enhancement mechanism.

A review of empirical studies also reveals that internal assessment positively influences student engagement, academic achievement, professional confidence, and teaching competency when implemented systematically. Continuous assessment methods such as micro-teaching evaluation,

teaching practice supervision, portfolio assessment, project work, and reflective journals have been found to enhance self-awareness and professional preparedness among student teachers. Furthermore, assessment practices that provide constructive feedback contribute to improved instructional performance and lifelong learning skills.

Despite the growing body of literature on assessment reforms, a significant research gap remains regarding the specific role of internal assessment in teacher education within the framework of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020, particularly in the context of West Bengal. Most existing studies focus either on school-level assessment reforms or on general quality assurance mechanisms in higher education. Limited research has examined how internal assessment practices in teacher education institutions contribute to preparing future teachers for competency-based, holistic, and continuous assessment environments envisioned under PM SHRI Schools. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by investigating internal assessment as a mechanism for quality enhancement in teacher education and exploring its relevance to contemporary educational reforms in West Bengal.

Table 1. Research Gap Analysis

Sl. No.	Previous Research Findings	Identified Research Gap	Relevance to the Present Study
1	Most studies on NEP 2020 have focused on structural reforms in teacher education, including ITEP, multidisciplinary approaches, and professional development.	Limited attention has been given to internal assessment as a specific quality enhancement mechanism in teacher education institutions.	The present study specifically investigates how internal assessment contributes to quality enhancement in teacher education.
2	Existing literature discusses competency-based assessment reforms proposed under NEP 2020 at a broad policy level.	Empirical evidence regarding the actual implementation of competency-based internal assessment practices in teacher education institutions remains insufficient.	The study examines the extent to which internal assessment practices align with competency-based assessment principles.
3	Research on PM SHRI Schools primarily focuses on school transformation, holistic learning, and competency-based education.	Very few studies have explored the linkage between PM SHRI School expectations and teacher preparation through internal assessment mechanisms.	The study bridges the gap between PM SHRI School requirements and teacher education assessment practices.
4	Several studies identify challenges in implementing NEP 2020 reforms, including infrastructure, faculty preparedness, and institutional readiness.	Limited research has examined how internal assessment can address these challenges and support continuous quality improvement.	The present study evaluates internal assessment as a practical strategy for strengthening institutional quality.
5	Existing literature emphasizes continuous professional development and teacher competencies under NEP 2020.	There is inadequate evidence on the role of internal assessment in developing pedagogical, reflective, and professional competencies among prospective teachers.	The study investigates competency development through internal assessment processes.
6	Research has highlighted the	Few studies have focused on	The study explores how

	importance of assessment reform and formative evaluation in schools.	assessment literacy and assessment preparedness of student teachers within teacher education institutions.	internal assessment prepares future teachers for competency-based assessment environments.
7	Most available studies are national-level policy reviews or conceptual analyses.	State-specific studies, particularly in the context of West Bengal teacher education institutions, remain scarce.	The study generates context-specific evidence from West Bengal, contributing to regional educational research.
8	Studies on quality assurance in teacher education generally focus on accreditation, curriculum, and institutional governance.	Internal assessment has rarely been examined as an independent indicator of quality assurance and quality enhancement.	The present study positions internal assessment as a core component of educational quality enhancement.
9	Existing research often examines school-level assessment reforms under NEP 2020.	Research linking school assessment reforms with teacher education assessment practices is limited.	The study establishes the connection between teacher preparation and school-level assessment transformation.
10	Literature acknowledges the need for reflective practitioners and learner-centred pedagogy under NEP 2020.	There is limited empirical investigation into whether current internal assessment systems effectively foster reflective teaching practices.	The study evaluates the effectiveness of internal assessment in promoting reflective and learner-centred teaching competencies.

Research Gap Statement

A review of the available literature reveals that while substantial attention has been given to teacher education reforms, competency-based learning, professional development, and assessment transformation under NEP 2020, limited empirical research has specifically examined **internal assessment as a mechanism for quality enhancement in teacher education institutions**. Furthermore, studies linking internal assessment practices with the objectives of **PM SHRI Schools**, competency-based assessment, and teacher preparedness remain scarce. The available literature also lacks comprehensive evidence from the **West Bengal context**, where teacher education institutions are adapting to NEP 2020 reforms. Therefore, the present study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the role of internal assessment in enhancing teacher education quality, developing professional competencies, and preparing prospective teachers to meet the assessment expectations of PM SHRI Schools and the broader vision of NEP 2020.

Materials and Methods

Research Approach and Design

The present study will adopt a **qualitative research approach** with a **descriptive and analytical research design**. The study will seek to understand and critically interpret the role of internal assessment as a mechanism for quality enhancement in teacher education in the context of **NEP 2020 and PM SHRI Schools**, with particular reference to **West Bengal**. A qualitative approach will be appropriate because the study will focus on interpreting policy provisions, institutional practices, assessment principles, quality indicators, and conceptual relationships rather than measuring variables statistically. The study will examine how internal assessment is positioned within the broader framework of competency-based education, formative assessment, professional development, reflective practice, and quality enhancement.

Results

Nature and Sources of Data

The study will be **entirely secondary-data based** and will not involve primary data collection through questionnaires, interviews, observations, or experiments. Secondary information will be collected from authoritative and relevant documentary sources, including the **National Education Policy 2020, PM SHRI Framework on School Transformation, School Quality Assessment Framework (SQAF), National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCTE documents, Ministry of Education publications, Government of West Bengal documents, UDISE+ reports, policy papers, institutional reports, research articles, books, doctoral theses, conference proceedings, and other credible academic and governmental publications.**[15] The PM SHRI framework identifies curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as one of its major quality domains and positions PM SHRI Schools as exemplar institutions for demonstrating NEP 2020 practices.

Study Area: West Bengal

The geographical context of the study will be **West Bengal, India**. The state will be selected because its school education system is implementing the PM SHRI initiative within the broader framework of NEP 2020. The official School Education Department of West Bengal describes PM SHRI Schools as exemplar institutions intended to demonstrate NEP 2020 and highlights experiential, holistic, inquiry-driven and competency-oriented educational practices. The West Bengal context will therefore provide an appropriate setting for examining the relationship between school-level assessment expectations and the preparation of prospective teachers through internal assessment practices in teacher education.

Documentary Analysis

The principal method of data collection will be **documentary analysis**. Relevant documents will be systematically identified, selected, classified, read, and interpreted according to their relevance to the research objectives. Particular attention will be given to documents dealing with internal assessment, formative assessment, competency-based assessment, teacher competencies, reflective practice, quality assurance, teacher education, PM SHRI Schools, and NEP 2020. The PM SHRI framework specifically incorporates **Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment** within its quality framework, while SQAF provides a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating school quality.

Selection of Secondary Sources

The study will employ **purposive selection of documents** rather than probability sampling. Documents will be included when they directly address teacher education, internal or formative assessment, NEP 2020, PM SHRI Schools, educational quality enhancement, competency development, or the West Bengal educational context. Priority will be given to official government and regulatory documents, followed by peer-reviewed academic literature and credible institutional publications. Sources with inadequate authorship, unclear provenance, unreliable information, or weak academic relevance will be excluded from the analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected secondary data will be analysed through **thematic analysis**. Initially, the relevant documents will be carefully reviewed and important statements, concepts, recommendations, and assessment practices will be identified. The extracted information will then be organized into major themes such as (i) **internal assessment practices**, (ii) **competency-based assessment**, (iii) **formative assessment and feedback**, (iv) **professional competencies of student teachers**, (v) **quality enhancement in teacher education**, (vi) **NEP 2020 assessment reforms**, (vii) **PM SHRI assessment expectations**, and (viii) **the West Bengal context**. Similarities, differences, emerging patterns, policy expectations, and implementation concerns will subsequently be compared across documents.

Analytical Framework

The analysis will establish a conceptual relationship between **internal assessment** → **competency development** → **reflective practice** → **teacher preparedness** → **quality enhancement**. The study will examine whether the principles promoted through internal assessment are consistent with the assessment orientation of NEP 2020 and the quality expectations of PM SHRI Schools. PM SHRI Schools emphasize learning outcomes, conceptual understanding, application of knowledge to real-life situations, competency-based assessment, and systematic quality monitoring. These dimensions will therefore serve as important analytical categories for interpreting the role of internal assessment in teacher education.

Quality and Trustworthiness of the Study

Since the study will rely exclusively on secondary sources, **source triangulation** will be used to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Information will be compared across government policy documents, regulatory frameworks, official West Bengal sources, academic literature, and institutional reports. Greater weight will be given to primary and authoritative policy documents when interpreting official provisions. The PM SHRI framework, for example, establishes a structured quality-assurance mechanism through SQAF and identifies curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, human resources, inclusion, and governance as major dimensions of school quality.

Analysis and Interpretation

Since the present study will be **qualitative and based entirely on secondary data**, the analysis and interpretation will be undertaken through **thematic documentary analysis**. The findings will be organized according to the five research objectives and corresponding research questions. Relevant provisions of NEP 2020, PM SHRI framework, NCTE/teacher education documents, West Bengal government documents, and selected scholarly literature will be compared and interpreted to identify recurring themes, similarities, gaps, challenges, and opportunities.

Objective 1: To examine the existing practices of internal assessment in teacher education institutions in the context of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020

The documentary evidence will indicate that internal assessment in teacher education is increasingly moving beyond conventional written tests towards a more continuous and multidimensional process. Assignments, seminars, project work, practical activities, teaching demonstrations, lesson planning, internship performance, portfolios, reflective activities, and continuous feedback can provide evidence of student teachers' learning and professional development. Such practices are consistent with the broader assessment orientation of NEP 2020, which emphasizes competency, conceptual understanding, application, and holistic development.

In relation to PM SHRI Schools, this transformation becomes particularly important because prospective teachers will increasingly be expected to work in learning environments that emphasize

experiential, competency-based, learner-centred, and holistic education. Therefore, internal assessment in teacher education should not remain merely a mechanism for awarding internal marks; rather, it should function as a continuous process for identifying strengths, diagnosing learning difficulties, providing feedback, and improving professional competencies.

Interpretation: The analysis will suggest that the effectiveness of internal assessment depends more on its **quality, diversity, continuity, transparency, and feedback orientation** than on the mere existence of an internal assessment component.

Objective 2: To assess the role of internal assessment in enhancing the professional competencies, pedagogical skills, and reflective practices of student teachers

The reviewed literature and policy documents will be interpreted to establish that internal assessment can contribute substantially to the professional preparation of student teachers. Activities such as lesson planning, micro-teaching, teaching practice, classroom observation, project work, reflective journals, presentations, and portfolios provide opportunities for prospective teachers to demonstrate practical competencies that cannot be adequately assessed through conventional examinations.

Internal assessment can also promote reflective practice by encouraging student teachers to analyse their own teaching performance, identify weaknesses, receive feedback, and modify their pedagogical strategies. Continuous feedback from teacher educators can support the development of communication skills, classroom management, instructional planning, assessment literacy, problem-solving ability, and learner-centred teaching practices.

Interpretation: Internal assessment can therefore be understood as a **developmental mechanism rather than merely an evaluative mechanism**. Its contribution to quality enhancement becomes stronger when assessment results are used for remediation, reflection, mentoring, and improvement.

Objective 3: To investigate the alignment between internal assessment practices in teacher education institutions and the competency-based assessment framework advocated by NEP 2020

The analysis will compare the major principles of NEP 2020 with the nature of internal assessment practices described in the reviewed literature and official documents. NEP 2020 promotes assessment approaches that focus on competencies, higher-order thinking, application of knowledge, creativity, problem-solving, and holistic development rather than rote memorization alone.

From this perspective, assessment practices such as performance-based tasks, projects, portfolios, demonstrations, reflective activities, practical work, peer assessment, and self-assessment demonstrate stronger alignment with competency-based education. However, where internal assessment continues to depend predominantly on written assignments, attendance, routine class tests, or marks-oriented activities, the alignment with the spirit of NEP 2020 becomes comparatively weaker.

Interpretation: The analysis will indicate that **formal inclusion of internal assessment does not automatically ensure competency-based assessment**. Meaningful alignment requires clearly defined learning outcomes, appropriate assessment tools, transparent criteria, continuous feedback, and opportunities for students to demonstrate practical and higher-order competencies.

Objective 4: To explore the preparedness of prospective teachers to implement continuous and holistic assessment practices in PM SHRI Schools

The documentary analysis will focus on the competencies that future teachers require for implementing assessment reforms in PM SHRI Schools. Prospective teachers need to understand

formative assessment, competency-based assessment, observation techniques, portfolio assessment, project-based evaluation, self-assessment, peer assessment, feedback mechanisms, and the use of assessment evidence for improving teaching and learning.

The analysis will further indicate that teacher education institutions have a significant responsibility in developing **assessment literacy** among prospective teachers. If student teachers experience diverse and meaningful assessment practices during their own teacher preparation, they are more likely to understand and reproduce such approaches in their future classrooms.

Interpretation: The preparedness of prospective teachers should therefore be viewed not simply in terms of their knowledge of assessment terminology but in terms of their ability to **design, implement, interpret, and use assessment information for improving learners' educational experiences**. Internal assessment can serve as a practical training ground for developing these capabilities.

Objective 5: To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of internal assessment as a quality enhancement mechanism

The analysis of secondary literature is expected to reveal several challenges. These may include excessive dependence on traditional examination practices, inconsistent assessment standards, limited assessment literacy among teacher educators, inadequate use of innovative assessment tools, large student groups, time constraints, difficulties in maintaining reliable records, subjectivity in evaluation, insufficient technological support, and the possibility of treating internal assessment primarily as a procedural requirement.

At the same time, substantial opportunities exist. Digital portfolios, learning-management systems, competency-based rubrics, peer assessment, self-assessment, reflective journals, project-based evaluation, teaching-performance assessment, and continuous feedback can make internal assessment more meaningful. PM SHRI Schools can also provide a model for connecting teacher preparation with contemporary school-level assessment practices.

Interpretation: The evidence will indicate that internal assessment has considerable potential for quality enhancement, but its success depends upon **institutional preparedness, teacher educator capacity, transparent assessment criteria, technological support, regular feedback, and effective quality assurance mechanisms**.

Table 2. Thematic Interpretation of the Five Research Questions

Research Question	Major Analytical Theme	Interpretation
RQ1. What are the prevailing internal assessment practices?	Nature and diversity of assessment	Internal assessment is increasingly multidimensional, but the extent of implementation varies across institutions.
RQ2. How does internal assessment contribute to professional competencies?	Competency and professional development	Continuous practical assessment, feedback, reflection, and teaching-related activities can strengthen professional and pedagogical competencies.
RQ3. To what extent are practices aligned with NEP 2020?	Competency-based and holistic assessment	Alignment is stronger where assessment emphasizes application, performance, reflection, creativity, and continuous feedback rather than rote learning.
RQ4. How prepared are prospective teachers for PM SHRI assessment practices?	Assessment literacy and preparedness	Teacher preparation needs to develop practical assessment literacy so that future teachers can implement formative and competency-based assessment effectively.
RQ5. What challenges	Institutional barriers and	Implementation is influenced by faculty

and opportunities influence effectiveness?	possibilities	preparedness, standardization, time, resources, technology, assessment practices, and institutional quality culture.
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The overall analysis will establish that **internal assessment can function as an important mechanism of quality enhancement in teacher education when it is designed as a continuous, competency-oriented, feedback-driven, and developmental process.** Its significance becomes greater in the context of NEP 2020 because the policy seeks to transform assessment from a predominantly examination-centred activity into a multidimensional process supporting learning and holistic development.

The PM SHRI initiative further strengthens this relevance by creating model school environments where competency-based, experiential, holistic, and innovative educational practices are expected to be demonstrated. Consequently, teacher education institutions in West Bengal need to prepare prospective teachers who possess not only subject and pedagogical knowledge but also the ability to assess learning continuously and use assessment evidence to improve classroom practice.

The interpretation will therefore support the central proposition of the study: **the quality of internal assessment in teacher education is closely connected with the quality of future teachers' professional preparation.** When internal assessment incorporates practical performance, reflection, feedback, competency-based tasks, portfolios, projects, and authentic classroom experiences, it can become an instrument of **quality improvement rather than merely a mechanism for internal marking.** This makes internal assessment particularly relevant to the successful implementation of NEP 2020 and the educational objectives associated with PM SHRI Schools in West Bengal.

Discussion

Findings of the Study

Based on the qualitative analysis of secondary sources, policy documents, research literature, and relevant educational frameworks, the following major findings will emerge:

- **Internal assessment is an important component of quality enhancement in teacher education.** The analysis indicates that internal assessment can extend beyond the measurement of academic achievement and support the continuous development of student teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional competencies.
- **A shift towards competency-based assessment is necessary.** The existing literature and policy framework indicate a gradual movement from examination-centred evaluation towards competency-based, formative, practical, and holistic assessment, which is consistent with the objectives of NEP 2020.
- **Internal assessment contributes to professional competency development.** Activities such as teaching practice, lesson planning, micro-teaching, project work, presentations, portfolios, reflective journals, and practical assignments provide opportunities for student teachers to demonstrate and improve pedagogical competencies.
- **Feedback is a crucial element of effective internal assessment.** Assessment becomes more meaningful when teacher educators provide timely and constructive feedback that enables student teachers to identify learning gaps and improve their subsequent performance.
- **Internal assessment can promote reflective practice.** Reflective journals, self-assessment, peer assessment, classroom observations, and teaching-performance reviews can encourage

prospective teachers to critically examine their pedagogical practices and develop professional self-awareness.

- **Alignment with NEP 2020 is uneven.** While several recommended internal assessment practices correspond with the principles of competency-based and holistic education, the continued use of conventional written tests and marks-oriented activities may limit the transformative potential of internal assessment.
- **Teacher assessment literacy is essential for successful implementation.** Prospective teachers need systematic preparation in designing assessment tasks, developing rubrics, collecting evidence of learning, providing feedback, and using assessment results for instructional improvement.
- **PM SHRI Schools create a strong context for assessment-oriented teacher preparation.** The emphasis on experiential learning, competency development, holistic education, and innovative pedagogy in PM SHRI Schools increases the need for teachers who are capable of implementing diverse formative and continuous assessment strategies.
- **Institutional challenges affect the effectiveness of internal assessment.** The literature indicates that inadequate faculty preparation, large student groups, time limitations, inconsistent assessment standards, insufficient technological resources, and excessive procedural orientation may reduce the effectiveness of internal assessment.
- **West Bengal requires stronger linkage between teacher education and school-level assessment reforms.** The study indicates a need to establish closer connections between teacher education institutions and emerging school-level reforms so that prospective teachers are adequately prepared to implement NEP 2020-oriented assessment practices.
- **Digital technology offers significant opportunities for improvement.** Digital portfolios, online assessment platforms, electronic feedback, learning-management systems, and digital documentation can make internal assessment more systematic, transparent, accessible, and evidence-based.
- **Internal assessment should be viewed as a quality-enhancement process rather than only an examination requirement.** The central finding is that its effectiveness depends on how assessment evidence is used to support learning, professional development, reflection, remediation, and continuous improvement.

Recommendations of the Study

1. Develop a comprehensive internal assessment framework

Teacher education institutions should develop a structured internal assessment framework covering **knowledge, pedagogical skills, professional attitudes, reflective practice, creativity, communication, collaboration, and classroom performance**. The framework should be aligned with programme learning outcomes and the principles of NEP 2020.

2. Strengthen competency-based assessment

Internal assessment should focus on what student teachers **can demonstrate and apply**, rather than what they can reproduce in written examinations. Performance-based tasks, teaching demonstrations, projects, portfolios, case studies, classroom-based activities, and practical assignments should receive greater emphasis.

3. Introduce assessment rubrics

Clearly defined **assessment rubrics and performance indicators** should be developed for lesson planning, micro-teaching, teaching practice, internship, presentations, projects, portfolios, and

reflective activities. This can improve transparency, consistency, and objectivity in internal evaluation.

4. Promote continuous feedback

Teacher educators should provide **timely, constructive, and individualized feedback** after major internal assessment activities. Feedback should identify strengths, learning gaps, and specific areas for improvement rather than merely communicating marks.

5. Strengthen reflective assessment

Student teachers should be encouraged to maintain **reflective journals, teaching diaries, portfolios, and self-assessment records**. Such practices can help prospective teachers understand their own pedagogical strengths and limitations.

6. Improve assessment literacy among teacher educators

Regular professional development programmes should be organized for teacher educators on **formative assessment, competency-based assessment, authentic assessment, rubric development, portfolio assessment, digital assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment**.

7. Prepare student teachers for PM SHRI Schools

Teacher education curricula and internal assessment activities should explicitly prepare prospective teachers for the educational environment of PM SHRI Schools. Student teachers should receive practical exposure to **experiential learning, competency-based assessment, holistic evaluation, project-based learning, and technology-supported assessment**.

8. Integrate digital technology

Teacher education institutions should gradually introduce **e-portfolios, digital rubrics, online formative assessment, digital feedback systems, and electronic records of student performance**. This can improve documentation and facilitate continuous monitoring of professional development.

9. Establish stronger school–teacher education linkages

Teacher education institutions should develop stronger academic relationships with PM SHRI and other model schools. School visits, collaborative projects, teaching internships, observation programmes, and joint professional-development activities can help student teachers understand contemporary assessment practices.

10. Ensure moderation and quality assurance

Internal assessment should be supported by institutional moderation mechanisms. Departments or internal quality assurance bodies should periodically review assessment instruments, rubrics, records, feedback practices, and student performance to ensure consistency and academic credibility.

11. Reduce excessive dependence on written examinations

Written tests should not constitute the dominant component of internal assessment. A balanced approach should combine **theoretical understanding, practical performance, reflective activities, projects, portfolios, presentations, teaching practice, and other authentic assessment methods**.

12. Develop an institutional culture of quality enhancement

Internal assessment should be integrated with the institution's broader **quality assurance and quality enhancement mechanisms**. IQACs and academic committees can periodically review

assessment practices and use evidence from internal assessment for curriculum improvement, teacher development, and institutional planning.

13. Give greater attention to the West Bengal context

Teacher education institutions in West Bengal should consider the state's diverse linguistic, cultural, rural, urban, and socio-economic educational contexts while designing assessment practices. Internal assessment should allow prospective teachers to demonstrate their ability to respond to **diverse learners and locally relevant educational challenges**.

14. Encourage self and peer assessment

Self-assessment and peer assessment should be incorporated systematically into teacher education. These approaches can develop **critical reflection, responsibility, collaboration, evaluative judgement, and professional autonomy** among student teachers.

15. Establish continuous monitoring and review

Internal assessment practices should be reviewed periodically to determine whether they are actually contributing to student teachers' learning and professional competencies. The results should be used for **remedial support, curriculum improvement, faculty development, and institutional quality enhancement**. The study recommends that internal assessment in teacher education should be **reconceptualized from a marks-generating activity into a continuous quality-enhancement mechanism**. In the context of NEP 2020 and PM SHRI Schools, assessment should be competency-based, formative, inclusive, reflective, technology-supported, and linked with authentic teaching experiences. For West Bengal, strengthening the connection between teacher education institutions and school-level educational reforms will be particularly important for preparing teachers capable of implementing the emerging vision of **holistic, experiential, competency-based, and learner-centred education**.

Conclusion

The present study examined **internal assessment as a mechanism for quality enhancement in teacher education in the context of PM SHRI Schools and NEP 2020**, with particular reference to West Bengal. Based on qualitative analysis of secondary sources, policy documents, institutional frameworks, and relevant scholarly literature, the study establishes that internal assessment has the potential to become an important instrument for improving the quality of teacher preparation. Its significance extends beyond the allocation of internal marks because a well-designed assessment system can continuously monitor learning, identify areas of difficulty, provide constructive feedback, promote reflection, and strengthen the professional competencies of prospective teachers. The study further indicates that the assessment philosophy of NEP 2020 requires a transition from predominantly examination-oriented practices towards **competency-based, formative, holistic, experiential, and learner-centred assessment**. In this transformation, teacher education institutions have a particularly important responsibility because prospective teachers must experience effective assessment practices during their own preparation before they can confidently implement them in schools. Internal assessment involving lesson planning, teaching demonstrations, projects, portfolios, reflective activities, practical work, peer assessment, self-assessment, and continuous feedback can provide authentic opportunities for developing such competencies. The emergence of PM SHRI Schools further strengthens the relevance of this issue. As model schools intended to demonstrate the principles of NEP 2020, PM SHRI Schools require teachers who can facilitate experiential learning, assess competencies, use multiple forms of evidence, and provide meaningful feedback. Consequently, teacher education institutions need to establish stronger connections between their internal assessment practices and the assessment expectations emerging

at the school level. Internal assessment can serve as a bridge between theoretical teacher preparation and the practical requirements of contemporary classrooms, The West Bengal context is particularly significant because teacher education institutions in the state are operating within a changing educational environment shaped by national policy reforms, competency-oriented curricula, digital transformation, and evolving quality-assurance expectations. The study suggests that institutional variation, limited assessment literacy, inadequate standardization, time constraints, resource limitations, and excessive dependence on conventional assessment practices may restrict the effectiveness of internal assessment. These challenges indicate the need for systematic institutional support, professional development of teacher educators, transparent assessment criteria, digital documentation, and continuous quality monitoring. Overall, the study concludes that **internal assessment should be reconceptualized as a continuous process of learning improvement and professional development rather than merely a component of examination and certification**. Its effectiveness will depend upon the extent to which assessment evidence is used constructively for feedback, reflection, remediation, competency development, and institutional improvement. A meaningful internal assessment system can therefore contribute simultaneously to student teacher development, teacher educator effectiveness, institutional quality enhancement, and the successful implementation of NEP 2020. Thus, strengthening internal assessment in teacher education can play a significant role in preparing professionally competent, reflective, innovative, and assessment-literate teachers for PM SHRI Schools and other contemporary educational settings in West Bengal. The study ultimately proposes that **quality teacher education and quality assessment are mutually reinforcing processes**, and that the transformation of assessment practices is essential for realizing the broader vision of equitable, holistic, competency-based, and learner-centred education envisioned by NEP 2020.

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