

Integrating Assessment with School Guidance and Counselling: A Study on Supporting Secondary Stage Learners' Academic & Socio-Emotional Development

Shagufta Malik, Ph.D. Scholar,

Jamia Millia Islamia University

Dr. Andleeb, Assistant Professor, Dept. of IASE

Jamia Millia Islamia University

Abstract

The shift towards holistic and competency-based assessment in Indian school education has expanded the purpose of assessment beyond academic achievement to include socio-emotional development, behavioural competencies, and learner well-being. At the secondary stage, where adolescents experience academic pressure, identity formation, emotional transitions, and career-related uncertainty, the integration of assessment with school guidance and counselling becomes increasingly significant. This review examines how holistic assessment frameworks, particularly the Holistic Progress Card (HPC), support personalised academic and socio-emotional interventions through counselling-informed practices.

Drawing upon policy documents, empirical studies, and conceptual literature published between 2020 and 2025, the review employs a thematic narrative synthesis to examine three interconnected domains: holistic counselling approaches supporting adolescent development, assessment as a basis for personalised learner support, and policy-systemic conditions enabling assessment–counselling integration. The findings indicate that assessment becomes more developmentally meaningful when multidimensional learner data is interpreted through counselling processes addressing academic anxiety, emotional well-being, behavioural adjustment, self-awareness, and career readiness. The review also identifies major implementation challenges, including inadequate counsellor availability, limited assessment literacy, fragmented institutional coordination, and the continued dominance of examination-oriented school cultures.

The study argues that counselling-informed assessment is essential for operationalising holistic and learner-centred education within secondary schooling. It concludes that the effectiveness of holistic assessment reforms depends not only on policy transformation but also on schools' institutional capacity to integrate counselling, socio-emotional support, and reflective educational practices within everyday learning environments.

Key words- *Holistic Assessment, PARAKH, Guidance and Counselling, Secondary Stage Learners, Academic Development, Socio-Emotional Development*

Introduction

Contemporary educational discourse increasingly recognises that academic achievement alone is insufficient to represent the multidimensional development of learners. Particularly at the secondary stage, adolescents experience complex cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social transitions that significantly influence learning, identity formation, peer relationships, and future aspirations. However, traditional examination-oriented systems in many schools continue to prioritise marks, ranking, and rote memorisation, often overlooking learners' socio-emotional realities, behavioural concerns, mental well-being, and developmental needs. As a result, assessment frequently remains disconnected from the broader educational goal of supporting holistic learner development.

The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) proposes a significant shift from content-centred and examination-driven schooling towards holistic, competency-based, and learner-centred education. Within this framework, holistic development is conceptualised as the integration of cognitive, socio-emotional, ethical, creative, and physical dimensions of learning. The policy further positions Guidance and Counselling (G&C) as an essential developmental support system rather than an auxiliary school service. Similarly, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE, 2023) identifies guidance and

counselling as a cross-cutting educational process influencing curriculum, pedagogy, inclusion, assessment, learner well-being, and school culture.

The need for integrating assessment with guidance and counselling becomes particularly significant at the secondary stage, where learners encounter heightened academic pressure, emotional vulnerability, career-related uncertainty, and psychosocial adjustment challenges. Conventional assessment systems often fail to identify issues such as academic anxiety, peer distress, emotional withdrawal, low self-confidence, and behavioural difficulties because they primarily focus on measurable academic outcomes. Consequently, there is growing recognition that assessment must extend beyond examination scores to include learners' socio-emotional competencies, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, behavioural patterns, and developmental progress.

NCF-SE 2023 on Assessment: Purposes and Challenges

NCF-SE 2023 reconceptualises assessment as a continuous and competency-based process intended to support learning, reflection, self-awareness, and learner development rather than merely classify students according to performance. The framework critiques the excessive dependence on summative examinations and highlights the limitations of marks-oriented evaluation systems in addressing learners' emotional, behavioural, and developmental needs. Although schools

continue to operate within examination-centred cultures, the framework advocates multidimensional assessment practices that incorporate cognitive, behavioural, psychological, and socio-emotional indicators.

These concerns are especially relevant during adolescence, a developmental stage characterised by identity formation, emotional transitions, social negotiation, and emerging career aspirations. Academic scores alone cannot adequately capture these complex developmental experiences. Therefore, assessment at the secondary stage requires integrated support systems capable of interpreting learners' academic progress alongside their socio-emotional well-being and behavioural adjustment.

Within this reform framework, School-Based Assessment (SBA) functions as a continuous mechanism for documenting learners' academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional development. The Holistic Progress Card (HPC), operationalised through PARAKH, attempts to expand assessment beyond conventional grading by incorporating teacher observations, learner self-reflection, parental feedback, and socio-emotional indicators. At the secondary stage, the HPC emphasises competencies such as self-regulation, reflective thinking, emotional maturity, collaboration, and career readiness, thereby creating greater scope for integrating counselling processes within assessment practices.

However, despite these policy shifts, the integration of assessment and

counselling remains limited in many Indian school contexts due to insufficient counsellor availability, inadequate assessment literacy, institutional fragmentation, and the continued dominance of examination-oriented schooling practices. This gap between policy vision and school-level implementation highlights the need to critically examine how assessment and guidance systems can function together to support holistic adolescent development.

Holistic Progress Card as the Anchor of Reform

The Holistic Progress Card (HPC), introduced under NEP 2020 and operationalised through PARAKH, represents a major shift from marks-oriented evaluation towards multidimensional and developmental assessment. Unlike conventional examination systems that prioritise measurable academic outcomes, the HPC conceptualises assessment as a continuous process documenting learners' cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioural, reflective, and creative development. By incorporating inputs from teachers, parents, peers, learners, and counsellors, the HPC expands assessment beyond academic performance to include emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, behavioural adjustment, and learner agency. This shift is particularly significant at the secondary stage, where adolescents experience identity formation, emotional vulnerability, academic pressure, and career-related uncertainty. Conventional assessment systems often fail to capture

these developmental realities because they privilege standardised academic achievement over learners' psychosocial experiences. The HPC therefore attempts to reposition assessment as a developmental support mechanism linked to personalised learner guidance rather than merely academic classification.

Within this framework, counsellors assume an interpretive role by analysing behavioural observations, reflective feedback, and socio-emotional indicators to identify concerns such as academic anxiety, emotional stress, peer difficulties, low self-confidence, and behavioural withdrawal. Counselling-informed assessment thus strengthens the developmental and inclusive orientation of holistic learner profiling.

However, despite its transformative intent, the HPC also raises important institutional concerns. In many schools, holistic assessment risks becoming documentation-oriented rather than developmentally meaningful due to limited counsellor availability, inadequate assessment literacy, weak interdisciplinary collaboration, and the persistence of examination-centred school cultures. Consequently, the effectiveness of the HPC depends not only on policy reform but also on schools' institutional capacity to operationalise reflective and learner-centred assessment practices meaningfully.

From NAS 2021 to PARAKH 2024: Repositioning Assessment and Counselling

The transition from NAS 2021 to

PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS 2024) reflects a broader transformation in India's assessment philosophy from narrow academic evaluation towards competency-based and holistic learner development. Earlier national assessments primarily focused on subject-wise achievement, whereas PARAKH incorporates cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioural, contextual, and school-related dimensions of learning. This shift reflects growing recognition that learner development cannot be adequately understood through examination scores alone.

At the secondary stage, multidimensional assessment becomes particularly important because adolescents' academic experiences are closely linked to emotional regulation, peer relationships, self-awareness, and psychosocial adjustment. Consequently, PARAKH and the HPC reposition assessment as a developmental process capable of informing personalised learner support and counselling interventions.

The integration of counselling within holistic assessment broadens the educational purpose of assessment beyond performance measurement. Counsellors contribute to learner profiling through behavioural observations, reflective dialogue, and socio-emotional interpretation, thereby contextualising academic performance within adolescents' emotional and social realities. This interdisciplinary approach aligns closely with whole-child and ecological approaches to education.

Nevertheless, important implementation challenges remain. Many schools continue

to function within examination-oriented cultures where measurable academic outcomes dominate institutional priorities. In addition, counsellor shortages, excessive teacher workload, insufficient assessment literacy, and weak institutional coordination

limit the meaningful implementation of holistic assessment practices. Without sustained professional training and interdisciplinary collaboration, there is a risk that holistic assessment may remain procedural rather than developmental.

Table 1
Contrasting NAS 2021 and PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024

Aspect	NAS 2021	PARAKH 2024 (PRS 2024)
Framework	Traditional national assessment	NEP 2020-aligned competency-based assessment
Grades Assessed	Grades 3, 5, 8, 10	Grades 3, 6, 9
Coverage	Nationwide survey	21.15 lakh students, 74,229 schools, 781 districts
Assessment Focus	Mainly Language and Mathematics	Academic competencies + socio-emotional, contextual, and school factors
Grade 3 Mathematics Proficiency	42%	65%
Grade 3 Language Proficiency	39%	57%
Additional Dimensions	Mostly academic achievement	Inclusion, digital readiness, emotional well-being, infrastructure, school climate
Competency Insights	Limited subject-wise outcomes	Identifies strengths and learning gaps across competencies
Overall Orientation	Academic performance snapshot	Holistic and learner-centred evaluation aligned with NEP 2020

PRS 2024 demonstrates improvement in foundational competencies compared to NAS 2021, particularly in Grade 3 language and mathematics proficiency. However, these improvements should not be interpreted as sufficient indicators of holistic learner development. Although large-scale assessments provide valuable system-level insights into

learning outcomes and school contexts, they cannot fully capture adolescents' emotional experiences, identity struggles, interpersonal relationships, behavioural adjustment, or psychosocial well-being. Holistic development therefore requires assessment systems capable of integrating qualitative and contextual understanding alongside measurable competencies.

The shift from NAS to PARAKH is educationally significant because it broadens the purpose of assessment from performance measurement to developmental understanding. Nevertheless, the success of this transformation depends on whether schools can meaningfully integrate counselling processes, reflective practices, and socio-emotional support within assessment structures. Without adequate counsellor training, interdisciplinary collaboration, and institutional preparedness, the holistic vision underlying PARAKH and the HPC may remain difficult to operationalise effectively within everyday school realities.

Positioning Guidance and Counselling within Holistic Assessment

The combined vision of NEP 2020, NCF-SE 2023, and PARAKH demonstrates that Guidance and Counselling (G&C) is an integral component of contemporary assessment reform rather than a supplementary service. Counsellors

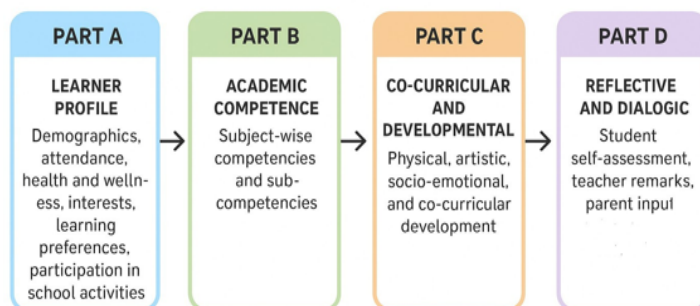
contribute to the Holistic Progress Card (HPC) through socio-emotional assessment, behavioural observations, learner reflections, and developmental profiling, ensuring that assessment captures the multidimensional nature of learner growth beyond academic scores.

The HPC process begins with the identification of academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional indicators through School-Based Assessment. Data is collected from teachers, classroom observations, peer interactions, learner self-reflection, and contextual inputs, which counsellors analyse to develop comprehensive learner profiles. These insights guide personalised counselling interventions related to academic planning, emotional support, goal-setting, and career readiness. Thus, the integration of assessment and counselling transforms the HPC into a developmental framework supporting academic progress, emotional well-being, identity formation, and holistic learner development in alignment with NEP 2020.

Structural Organisation of the Holistic Progress Card (HPC)

Figure 1

STRUCTURAL ORGANISATION OF THE HOLISTIC PROGRESS CARD (HPC) AT THE SECONDARY STAGE



The structural design of the HPC reflects a significant transition from one-dimensional academic reporting towards comprehensive learner profiling. The framework integrates academic competencies, socio-emotional development, behavioural indicators, co-curricular participation, reflective engagement, and learner well-being within a unified assessment structure. Importantly, the inclusion of student self-assessment, teacher reflections, parental inputs, and counsellor observations encourages collaborative understanding of learner development.

The educational significance of the HPC lies in its emphasis on learner voice, self-awareness, reflective learning, and socio-emotional growth. Through multidimensional documentation, the framework creates possibilities for more personalised educational support and counselling-informed interventions, particularly during adolescence where emotional regulation, identity formation, and social belonging substantially influence learning experiences.

However, the effectiveness of such multidimensional assessment depends heavily on the reliability and interpretive quality of teacher and counsellor observations. In many school contexts, limited assessment literacy, inadequate counsellor availability, and heavy teacher workload may weaken the authenticity and consistency of socio-emotional assessment practices. As a result, reflective documentation may become superficial unless schools establish strong interdisciplinary collaboration,

ethical assessment practices, and sustained professional development mechanisms.

Methodology of the Review

This section outlines the systematic procedures adopted to identify, screen, analyse, and synthesise literature related to the integration of guidance and counselling within holistic and competency-based assessment frameworks at the secondary stage. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to enhance methodological transparency, systematic organisation, and analytical rigour. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, the methodology was designed to integrate empirical studies, conceptual literature, and policy frameworks examining the relationship between assessment, socio-emotional development, and school counselling.

Search Strategy

A structured and comprehensive literature search was conducted across major academic databases, including:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- Google Scholar

The search process used combinations of keywords and Boolean operators to enhance search precision and coverage. Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to combine search terms related to counselling, holistic assessment, socio-emotional development, and secondary education.

Examples of search combinations included:

- (“school counselling” OR

“guidance services”) AND (“holistic assessment” OR “competency-based assessment”)

- (“Holistic Progress Card” OR “HPC”) AND (“secondary education” OR “adolescents”)
- (“PARAKH” OR “National Achievement Survey”) AND (“socio-emotional development” OR “learner well-being”)
- (“NEP 2020 assessment”) AND (“school counselling” OR “learner support”)

Additional keywords included:

“School guidance and counselling”, “Holistic Progress Card”, “PARAKH”, “National Achievement Survey”, “NEP 2020 assessment”, “socio-emotional assessment”, “secondary education India”, and “competency-based assessment”.

The search covered publications from 2020–2025 to capture recent educational reforms, emerging assessment frameworks, and contemporary discourse on holistic learner development.

Additional sources included:

- Government and institutional reports
- PARAKH documents
- NCERT frameworks
- OECD publications
- Reference lists of retrieved studies

The inclusion of policy documents alongside empirical studies was considered necessary because the topic is strongly situated within evolving educational reform frameworks, particularly NEP 2020, NCF-SE 2023, and PARAKH.

A total of 648 records were initially identified through database searches and supplementary sources.

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies published between 2020–2025
- Peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and conceptual studies
- Studies related to secondary education
- Literature focusing on assessment, counselling, socio-emotional development, or holistic education

Exclusion Criteria

- Primary/higher education-focused studies
- Non-English publications
- Non-accessible full texts
- Studies unrelated to assessment–counselling integration

Screening Process

The screening process followed the sequential stages recommended under the PRISMA 2020 framework, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. The PRISMA flow process is presented in Figure 1.

Identification Stage

A total of 648 records were identified through database searches and supplementary sources. Duplicate entries were removed prior to screening.

Title and Abstract Screening

After preliminary screening, 483 studies were excluded due to lack of relevance, mismatch with the target population, or insufficient connection to assessment–counselling integration.

Eligibility Assessment

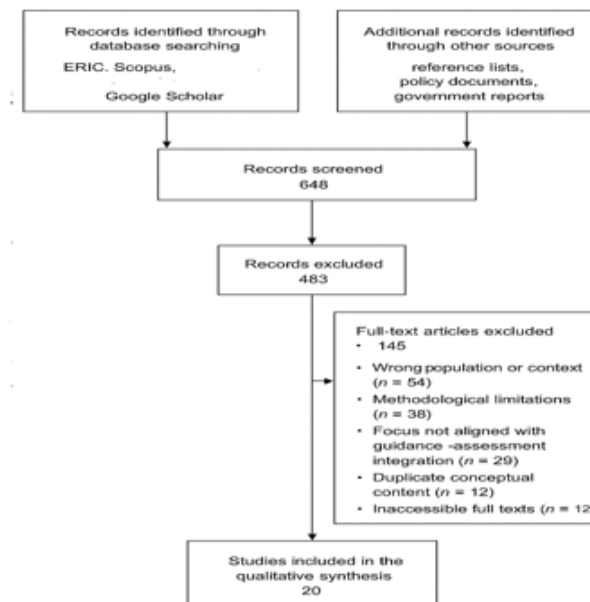
The remaining 165 studies underwent full-text review. During this stage, 145 studies were excluded for the following reasons:

- Wrong educational context (n = 54)
- Methodological limitations (n = 38)
- Limited relevance to guidance–assessment integration (n = 29)

- Duplicate conceptual content (n = 12)
- Inaccessible full texts (n = 12)
- Final Inclusion

Finally, 20 studies met all inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the qualitative synthesis.

Figure 2
PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process



Research Questions

1. How does the integration of assessment with school guidance and counselling influence the academic and socio-emotional development of secondary stage learners?

emotional development.

2. To examine the impact of assessment processes on the academic and socio-emotional development of secondary stage learners.
3. To examine the scope of the integration of assessment with school guidance and counselling for secondary stage learner's academic and socio-emotional development.

Research Objectives

1. To study the role of guidance & counselling on the secondary stage learners' academic and socio-

Rationale of the Study

Recent reforms under NEP 2020, the Holistic Progress Card (HPC), and PARAKH have redefined assessment at the secondary stage as a continuous, competency-based, and socio-emotionally informed process. This expanded view of assessment aligns closely with the aims of school guidance and counselling, which support learners' academic progress, emotional well-being, and career readiness. However, in most Indian secondary schools, assessment practices and counselling services continue to function in isolation, resulting in fragmented support for learners. Counsellors rarely receive or utilise assessment data in systematic ways, and schools often lack structures to translate assessment insights into personalised interventions.

This study investigates how assessment can be effectively integrated with school guidance and counselling to enhance academic and socio-emotional development among secondary-stage learners. By examining existing

practices, challenges, and opportunities, the research seeks to generate evidence that can strengthen school support systems and operationalise the holistic vision of NEP 2020. The study aims to contribute to more responsive, equitable, and development-oriented schooling by positioning assessment and counselling as interconnected processes central to adolescent learning and well-being.

The present literature review examines the integration of assessment with school guidance and counselling in secondary education. The review adopts a thematic approach, drawing on empirical, theoretical, and policy-oriented studies from India and comparable global contexts. It aims to synthesise evidence on how assessment-counselling integration supports academic progress, socio-emotional well-being, and career readiness, thereby addressing gaps in operational mechanisms for embedding counsellor insights into national assessment frameworks such as the Holistic Progress Card (HPC).

Figure 3

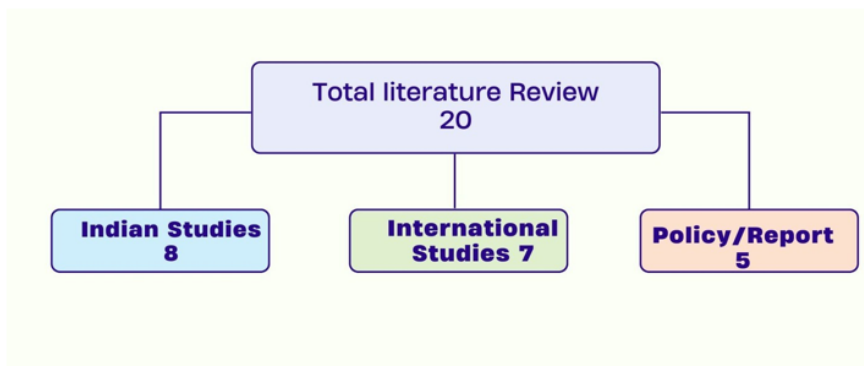


Table 2

Author(s)	Year	Type	Key Focus / Findings	Related Objectives
Firman, Neviyarni & Okti	2025	Empirical Study	Holistic counselling improves academic motivation and socio-emotional competencies.	RO1, RO3
Herlinda, Munir & Nurhasnawati	2025	Literature Review	Culturally grounded counselling enhances motivation, behaviour, and emotional regulation.	RO1
Rustianti, Putra & Hidayat	2025	Literature Review	Assessment supports learner profiling and personalised counselling interventions.	RO2, RO3
Parag R. Kawale	2024	Policy Analysis	NEP 2020 supports flexible and counselling-informed learning pathways.	RO2, RO3
Kuldeep Singh Tomar	2024	Policy Study	Inclusive reforms and teacher capacity building strengthen learner-centred systems.	RO2, RO3
P. Padmambika et al.	2024	Empirical Study	Counselling and wellness programmes improve well-being and life skills.	RO1
V. Vaithianathan et al.	2024	Policy Analysis	Curriculum reform and training are needed to institutionalise counselling.	RO1, RO3
Agatha Dianovi	2022	Review	Counselling contributes to personal, social, and academic growth.	RO1
Ishita Wadhwani	2022	Survey	Learners show positive attitudes towards counselling and mental health support.	RO1
Macario et al.	2023	Literature Review	Counselling programmes strengthen socio-emotional well-being.	RO1
Fadli, Daharnis & Yusuf	2022	Literature Review	Assessment-based evaluation improves counselling effectiveness.	RO2, RO3
Furlong et al.	2023	Empirical Study	Socio-emotional assessment tools support learner profiling and interventions.	RO2, RO3
Pellegrino	2024	Conceptual Study	Holistic assessment integrates cognitive, behavioural, and emotional indicators.	RO2, RO3
Lombardi	2024	Empirical Study	Counselling enhances reflection, goal-setting, and formative assessment.	RO2, RO3
World Bank	2023	Policy Report	Recommends socio-emotional indicators in national assessment systems.	RO2, RO3
NEP 2020	2020	Policy Document	Advocates multidimensional and competency-based assessment reforms.	RO1, RO2, RO3
NCF-SE	2023	Policy Document	Supports learner-centred and socio-emotional assessment practices.	RO2, RO3
Thomas & Dey	2020	Empirical Study	Highlights role ambiguity and structural gaps in counselling services.	RO3

Singh & Kaur	2024	Empirical Study	Counselling improves adolescent socio-emotional adjustment.	RO1
OECD Learning Compass	2020	Conceptual Framework	Promotes holistic learner development through integrated assessment and well-being.	RO1, RO2, RO3

The reviewed literature demonstrates increasing convergence around the idea that holistic assessment and school guidance and counselling are interconnected processes essential for supporting adolescents' academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional development. Across empirical studies, policy analyses, conceptual frameworks, and literature reviews, a consistent pattern emerges emphasising that learner development cannot be adequately understood through academic performance indicators alone. Instead, multidimensional assessment systems incorporating emotional well-being, behavioural competencies, learner reflection, and personalised support are increasingly viewed as necessary components of learner-centred secondary education.

A major similarity across the studies is the recognition that counselling contributes significantly to learners' socio-emotional adjustment, self-awareness, motivation, behavioural regulation, and academic engagement. Empirical studies by Firman et al. (2025), Padmambika et al. (2024), and Singh and Kaur (2024) collectively indicate that counselling interventions positively influence adolescents' emotional well-being and developmental adjustment. Similarly, studies focusing on assessment frameworks, including Pellegrino (2024), Furlong et al. (2023), and Rustianti et

al. (2025), emphasise that holistic and competency-based assessment systems become more meaningful when assessment data is interpreted for developmental support rather than merely academic classification.

Another important pattern within the literature is the growing alignment between international whole-child education frameworks and Indian educational reforms under NEP 2020, NCF-SE 2023, and PARAKH. Policy-oriented studies consistently advocate learner-centred, competency-based, and socio-emotionally responsive education systems. The OECD Learning Compass (2020), World Bank (2023), and Indian policy documents collectively reinforce the need for integrating well-being, reflection, life skills, and socio-emotional competencies within assessment structures. This reflects a broader global shift away from examination-dominated educational cultures towards developmental and inclusive educational approaches.

At the same time, the literature also reveals important structural and implementation gaps. Several studies highlight institutional limitations such as inadequate counsellor availability, limited teacher preparedness, insufficient assessment literacy, and ambiguity regarding counsellors' professional roles within school systems. Thomas and Dey (2020) particularly emphasise the

structural challenges affecting counselling services in schools, while policy studies indicate that institutional coordination between assessment and counselling systems remains underdeveloped. These findings suggest that although policy discourse strongly supports holistic learner development, practical implementation within school contexts remains uneven.

The review further indicates that the existing evidence base remains dominated by conceptual discussions, policy analyses, and literature reviews, with comparatively fewer empirical studies directly examining the operational integration of assessment and counselling within Indian secondary schools. Longitudinal research examining sustained developmental outcomes of counselling-informed assessment practices is also limited. Moreover, there is insufficient school-level implementation research exploring how teachers, counsellors, students, and administrators collaboratively engage with Holistic Progress Cards and socio-emotional assessment processes in everyday educational settings.

These gaps highlight the need for future empirical and practice-oriented research examining how holistic assessment frameworks can be meaningfully operationalised within diverse school environments. They also indicate the importance of developing institutionally coordinated, ethically grounded, and contextually responsive models linking assessment, counselling, and learner well-being within secondary education.

Thematic analyses & interpretation aligned with research objectives

The reviewed literature was

synthesised into three interconnected thematic domains that collectively explain how the integration of assessment and guidance and counselling contributes to secondary learners' academic engagement, socio-emotional well-being, behavioural development, and personalised educational support. Rather than functioning as isolated educational processes, assessment and counselling increasingly emerge within the literature as mutually reinforcing systems that support holistic learner development. The themes also reveal important tensions between progressive policy visions and the practical realities of implementation within school contexts.

Theme 1: Holistic Counselling Frameworks Supporting Academic and Socio-Emotional Development

The literature consistently demonstrates that school counselling plays a significant role in supporting adolescents' academic engagement, emotional regulation, behavioural adjustment, and socio-emotional well-being. Empirical studies by Firman, Neviyarni, and Okti (2025) indicate that holistic and assessment-informed counselling enhances learners' academic motivation, behavioural regulation, and interpersonal competencies. Similarly, Herlinda, Munir, and Nurhasnawati (2025) emphasise that culturally responsive counselling approaches improve attendance, emotional resilience, behavioural stability, and learner participation. Singh and Kaur (2024) further report that counselling interventions positively influence adolescents' emotional adjustment, peer relationships, coping strategies, and self-confidence.

These findings are developmentally significant because adolescence represents a critical stage of identity formation, emotional transition, and psychosocial negotiation. Erikson's psychosocial theory highlights adolescence as a period characterised by the conflict between identity formation and role confusion, where emotional support, self-understanding, and social acceptance become central to healthy development. Within this context, counselling functions not merely as problem resolution but as a developmental process facilitating self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, and academic engagement.

The literature also reflects increasing recognition that examination-oriented educational systems often fail to acknowledge learners' emotional realities and psychosocial experiences. Academic achievement alone cannot adequately represent adolescents' behavioural difficulties, emotional vulnerabilities, peer conflicts, or mental well-being. Consequently, counselling-informed educational approaches attempt to address dimensions of learner development that remain invisible within conventional assessment structures.

Macario et al. (2023) further demonstrate that counselling programmes strengthen socio-emotional well-being, particularly within culturally diverse educational environments. At the policy level, the World Bank (2023) advocates integrating socio-emotional and mental health indicators within educational assessment systems. Collectively, these studies indicate that holistic counselling frameworks contribute not only to learner well-being but also to academic readiness,

behavioural development, school participation, and long-term developmental adjustment.

At the same time, the literature reveals that socio-emotional support within schools often remains inconsistently institutionalised. In many educational settings, counselling services continue to function as peripheral or crisis-oriented interventions rather than integrated developmental systems embedded within everyday school practices. This contradiction highlights the continuing gap between holistic educational discourse and institutional realities.

Theme 2: Assessment as the Foundation for Personalised Counselling Interventions

The second thematic domain positions assessment as a critical foundation for personalised counselling interventions and learner-centred educational support. The reviewed studies collectively suggest that assessment acquires greater developmental significance when it extends beyond performance measurement to include behavioural, emotional, reflective, and contextual understanding of learners.

Rustianti, Putra, and Hidayat (2025) emphasise multidimensional learner profiling integrating academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional indicators to guide targeted counselling interventions. Similarly, Fadli, Daharnis, and Yusuf (2022) argue that evidence-based evaluation improves counselling effectiveness by enabling systematic understanding of learner needs. Furlong et al. (2023) further contribute socio-emotional assessment tools that support

learner profiling and intervention planning, while Pellegrino (2024) conceptualises holistic assessment as the integration of cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and reflective dimensions of learning.

These studies collectively indicate that assessment becomes educationally meaningful when it informs personalised developmental support rather than merely ranking learners according to academic performance. Counselling-informed assessment enables schools to identify academic anxiety, emotional withdrawal, low self-esteem, behavioural difficulties, peer-related concerns, and motivational barriers that conventional examinations frequently fail to capture.

The theme also reflects principles associated with Rogers' learner-centred theory, which emphasises empathy, self-reflection, and supportive educational relationships as conditions for healthy learner development. Reflective assessment processes, self-assessment practices, and counselling interactions create opportunities for learners to engage in self-understanding, goal-setting, emotional expression, and developmental reflection. Lombardi (2024) demonstrates that counselling enhances formative assessment by strengthening learners' capacity for reflection, self-regulation, and personal goal-setting.

However, the literature also raises important concerns regarding the increasing expansion of learner profiling systems. While multidimensional assessment creates opportunities for personalised support, there is also a risk that socio-emotional indicators may become overly standardised, reductionist, or procedurally documented

without adequate contextual interpretation. The validity and ethical interpretation of socio-emotional assessment therefore remain important concerns requiring professional expertise, confidentiality safeguards, and sensitive implementation practices.

Theme 3: Policy and Systemic Frameworks Enabling Assessment–Counselling Integration

The third thematic domain highlights the growing policy emphasis on integrating counselling within holistic and competency-based assessment frameworks. Studies by Kawale and Tomar (2024) indicate that NEP 2020 promotes learner-centred, flexible, inclusive, and multidisciplinary educational structures that create favourable conditions for assessment–counselling integration. Similarly, Padmambika et al. (2024) and Vaithianathan et al. (2024) emphasise wellness programmes, mental health initiatives, curriculum reform, and stakeholder collaboration as essential for institutionalising counselling within school systems.

Policy frameworks such as NEP 2020, NCF-SE 2023, PARAKH, and the OECD Learning Compass 2030 collectively advocate multidimensional learner development integrating academic achievement, socio-emotional well-being, behavioural competencies, reflective learning, and future readiness. These frameworks represent a significant shift from examination-centred education towards whole-child and developmental approaches to assessment.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective is particularly relevant in

understanding this policy shift because learner development is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by family relationships, peer interactions, school culture, institutional systems, and broader social environments. Holistic assessment frameworks such as the HPC attempt to recognise these interconnected developmental influences by incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives and socio-emotional indicators within learner profiling systems.

Despite this progressive policy orientation, the literature simultaneously reveals major implementation challenges affecting assessment–counselling integration within schools. Studies by Dianovi (2022), Wadhvani (2022), and Thomas and Dey (2020) identify persistent structural barriers including counsellor shortages, role ambiguity, inadequate institutional regulation, insufficient professional training, and limited coordination between teachers and counsellors. In many schools, teachers remain heavily burdened with administrative and academic responsibilities, reducing their capacity to meaningfully engage with holistic assessment practices.

The literature further indicates unequal implementation across educational settings, particularly between well-resourced urban institutions and resource-constrained schools where counselling services remain minimal or absent. Institutional fragmentation, lack of interdisciplinary collaboration, inadequate assessment literacy, and limited socio-emotional assessment expertise also weaken the practical implementation of holistic learner profiling systems. These findings reveal a significant contradiction

between policy aspirations and school-level realities. Although NEP 2020 and PARAKH strongly advocate holistic and counselling-informed assessment, the institutional infrastructure required for meaningful implementation often remains underdeveloped. Policy transformation alone cannot ensure holistic assessment unless schools possess the institutional capacity to integrate counselling processes within assessment systems. Without trained counsellors, collaborative school cultures, ethical assessment practices, and sustained professional development, holistic assessment risks becoming procedural documentation rather than a meaningful developmental support mechanism.

Discussion

The illustrative counselling cases presented in Table 3 provide practical insight into how holistic assessment and counselling intersect within everyday school realities. Collectively, the cases demonstrate that adolescents' academic experiences are deeply interconnected with emotional well-being, peer relationships, behavioural adjustment, self-concept, and social belonging. Concerns such as peer distress, bullying, academic anxiety, emotional withdrawal, and low self-confidence often remain invisible within conventional examination-centred systems because such systems prioritise measurable academic outcomes over psychosocial experiences.

Table 3
Practical counselling cases demonstrate how theoretical ideas appear in real school settings.

Case	Major Issue	Theme Linked	What Counselling Achieved	HPC Domain
Peer distress	Emotional hurt due to peers	Developmental counselling	Better coping, restored confidence	Socio emotional skills; Interpersonal relationships
Bullying + low confidence	Withdrawal, sadness	Developmental counselling	Improved self-esteem	Emotional well-being; Values & behaviour
Academic anxiety	Stress, inability to identify strengths	Assessment as diagnostic tool	Goal-setting, strength identification	Approaches to learning; Self-awareness
Behavioural adjustment	Low engagement, unclear emotions	Global holistic assessment	Improved social participation	Collaboration; Behaviour & emotional expression

The cases therefore reinforce one of the central arguments emerging from this review: learner achievement cannot be understood exclusively through marks, grades, and subject performance. Instead, adolescents' educational experiences require multidimensional interpretation capable of recognising emotional vulnerability, behavioural changes, interpersonal difficulties, motivational barriers, and identity-related concerns. In this context, the Holistic Progress Card (HPC) becomes educationally significant because its socio-emotional and behavioural domains create possibilities for identifying developmental concerns

that conventional assessments frequently overlook.

Importantly, the counselling interventions reflected in these cases illustrate that assessment can function not merely as an evaluative mechanism but also as a diagnostic, preventive, and developmental process. Counsellor observations, learner reflections, behavioural indicators, and contextual interpretation enabled the identification of underlying emotional concerns before they intensified into more severe academic disengagement or psychosocial difficulties. This finding aligns closely with developmental and preventive approaches

to school counselling, which emphasise early intervention, emotional support, resilience-building, and learner well-being rather than reactive problem management alone.

The cases also provide important theoretical insight into adolescent development. For example, experiences related to bullying, withdrawal, emotional insecurity, and self-doubt reflect Erikson's psychosocial understanding of adolescence as a period shaped by tensions between identity formation and role confusion. Similarly, the emphasis on reflective dialogue, emotional validation, and supportive educational relationships aligns with Rogers' learner-centred perspective, which views empathy, acceptance, and self-understanding as central to meaningful learning and personal growth. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory further helps interpret how peer interactions, school culture, emotional climate, and institutional support structures collectively influence learner adjustment and educational participation.

At the same time, the cases reveal broader institutional implications for holistic assessment reform. The effectiveness of counselling-informed assessment depends substantially on schools' ability to create collaborative systems where teachers, counsellors, parents, and learners contribute meaningfully to developmental understanding. In resource-constrained school contexts lacking trained counsellors or adequate socio-emotional support systems, many such learner concerns may

remain unidentified despite the presence of holistic assessment frameworks. Consequently, the cases illustrate that the success of the HPC depends not merely on expanding assessment domains but on developing institutional structures capable of supporting sustained counselling integration and reflective educational practice.

The cases further highlight an important tension underlying holistic assessment reforms. Although multidimensional learner profiling aims to promote inclusive and developmental education, socio-emotional interpretation remains highly context-sensitive and professionally demanding. Emotional experiences, behavioural indicators, and interpersonal difficulties cannot be reduced to standardised categories or checklist-based reporting formats. Without adequate assessment literacy and ethical sensitivity, there remains a risk that socio-emotional documentation may become superficial, inconsistent, or administratively procedural rather than developmentally meaningful.

Collectively, the counselling cases strengthen the broader argument of this review by demonstrating that holistic assessment acquires educational significance only when linked with interpretive, relational, and developmentally informed counselling practices. The integration of counselling within assessment therefore represents not merely an institutional reform but a deeper shift towards understanding education as a process concerned with learner well-being,

identity development, emotional resilience, and human growth alongside academic achievement.

Conclusion

The present review concludes that the integration of assessment with school guidance and counselling is fundamental to achieving holistic and learner-centred education at the secondary stage. The findings demonstrate that assessment becomes educationally meaningful when academic achievement is interpreted alongside learners' socio-emotional, behavioural, developmental, and contextual experiences. In this sense, assessment and counselling emerge as interdependent processes rather than separate institutional functions.

Counselling-informed assessment enables schools to identify concerns related to academic anxiety, emotional stress, peer difficulties, behavioural withdrawal, self-esteem, and adjustment challenges that frequently remain invisible within examination-oriented systems.

The review further establishes that the Holistic Progress Card (HPC), PARAKH, NEP 2020, and NCF-SE 2023 collectively represent an important conceptual shift from marks-based evaluation towards multidimensional learner development. These reforms attempt to reposition assessment as a reflective, developmental, and supportive educational process aligned with whole-child approaches to learning. However, the findings simultaneously reveal substantial tensions between policy aspirations and institutional realities.

Examination-centred school cultures, excessive teacher workload, limited assessment literacy, inadequate counsellor availability, weak interdisciplinary coordination, and unequal access to mental health support continue to constrain the meaningful implementation of holistic assessment practices across diverse school settings.

Importantly, the review suggests that the effectiveness of holistic assessment depends not merely on expanding assessment domains but on schools' institutional capacity to interpret learner experiences developmentally and ethically. Without professionally trained counsellors, collaborative school cultures, socio-emotional assessment literacy, and sustained organisational support, holistic assessment risks becoming procedural documentation rather than transformative educational practice. Thus, the success of assessment reform depends less on policy redesign alone and more on the creation of educational environments capable of integrating counselling, emotional support, reflective pedagogy, and learner well-being within everyday school practices.

The review also contributes to existing scholarship by conceptualising counselling-informed assessment as an interdisciplinary developmental framework linking learner profiling, socio-emotional support, and educational guidance within secondary education. By synthesising literature across assessment reform, counselling, learner well-being, and policy discourse, the study highlights the central role of counselling in

operationalising holistic education reforms within Indian school contexts.

Future research should therefore move beyond policy analysis towards empirical and longitudinal investigations examining how counselling-integrated assessment functions within everyday school environments. There is particular need for school-based research exploring learner experiences, institutional preparedness, assessment literacy practices, interdisciplinary collaboration models, and the long-term impact of counselling-informed assessment on adolescents' academic engagement, emotional well-being, behavioural adjustment, and career development. Further inquiry is also required into counselling policy frameworks, ethical socio-emotional assessment practices, and inclusive support systems capable of addressing educational inequalities across diverse school settings.

Ultimately, the integration of assessment with guidance and counselling represents a significant rethinking of educational purpose itself. It shifts schooling away from narrow performance measurement towards a more humane and developmentally responsive understanding of learner growth where academic achievement, emotional well-being, identity formation, and social development are recognised as interconnected dimensions of education.

List of Abbreviations:

CWSN – Children With Special Needs

G&C – Guidance and Counselling

HPC – Holistic Progress Card

MOE – Ministry of Education (India)

NAS – National Achievement Survey

NCF – National Curriculum Framework

NCF-SE – National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2023)

NCERT – National Council of Educational Research and Training

NEP 2020 – National Education Policy 2020

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PARAKH – Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development

PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

PRS 2024 – PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024

SBA – School-Based Assessment

SQAAF – School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework

UTs – Union Territories

References

- Ansari, R. (2023). Behavioural challenges and counselling outcomes among secondary school adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology and Education*, 12(2), 45–58.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2012). School counseling and student outcomes: Summary of six statewide studies. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2), 146–153.
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2020). What is SEL? CASEL. CASEL
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Fadli, R., Daharnis, D., & Yusuf, A. M. (2022). Assessment-based evaluation in counselling interventions and learner support systems. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Studies*, 16(3), 221–235.
- Firman, F., Neviyarni, N., & Okti, S. (2025). Holistic counselling approaches and socio-emotional competencies among adolescents. *International Journal of Guidance and Counselling Research*, 11(1), 33–48.
- Furlong, M. J., Dowdy, E., Carnazzo, K., Boverly, B., & Kim, E. (2023). Social-emotional assessment and multidimensional learner profiling in schools. *School Psychology International*, 44(2), 150–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343221124567>
- Gupta, A., & Bhatnagar, R. (2020). Career maturity and decision-making among adolescents: Impact of structured career counselling. *Indian Journal of Career Development*, 7(1), 12–25.
- Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2012). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program* (5th ed.). American Counseling Association.
- Herlinda, H., Munir, A., & Nurhasnawati, N. (2025). Culturally responsive counselling and adolescent behavioural adjustment. *Journal of Counselling and Human Development*, 9(1), 55–70.
- Kawale, P. R. (2024). National Education Policy 2020 and learner-centred educational transformation in India. *Educational Policy Review*, 18(2), 95–112.
- Lombardi, D. (2024). Counselling, learner reflection, and formative assessment practices

- in secondary education. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 31(1), 62–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2023.2284512>
- Macario, J., Flores, P., & Santos, R. (2023). School counselling programmes and socio-emotional well-being among adolescents. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 45(3), 410–426. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-023-09512-6>
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India. Ministry of Education India
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2021). *National Achievement Survey 2021: National report*. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2023). *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2024). *PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024: National assessment report*. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- OECD. (2020). *OECD Learning Compass 2030*. OECD Publishing. OECD Learning Compass 2030
- Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L., & Rose, T. (2018). Drivers of human development: How relationships and context shape learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(1), 6–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650>
- Padmambika, P., Ramesh, S., & Devi, K. (2024). School wellness programmes and socio-emotional development among adolescents. *Journal of Educational Psychology and Wellness*, 14(2), 144–159.
- Pellegrino, J. W. (2024). Holistic assessment and competency-based education: Emerging directions for learner-centred evaluation. *Educational Assessment Review*, 29(1), 1–19.
- Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Merrill Publishing.
- Rustianti, R., Putra, H., & Hidayat, T. (2025). Learner profiling and personalised counselling interventions within competency-based education. *Journal of Educational Development Studies*, 13(1), 88–104.
- Singh, P., & Kaur, J. (2024). Socio-emotional adjustment among adolescents across school contexts. *Journal of Indian School Psychology*, 18(1), 25–40.
- Sink, C. A., & Stroh, H. R. (2023). Comprehensive school counseling programs and student outcomes: Contemporary evidence and implications. *Professional School Counseling*, 27(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231152487>
- Steinberg, L. (2017). *Adolescence* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Tagat, A., Balaji, A., & Kapoor, H. (2025). The impact of life skills education on socio-emotional development and school-related outcomes among adolescents in India. *BMC Public Health*, 25, 759. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-21195-0>
- Takizawa, Y., Bambling, M., Matsumoto, Y., Ishimoto, Y., & Edirippulige, S. (2023). Effectiveness of universal school-based social-emotional learning programs in

- promoting social-emotional skills, attitudes, positive social behaviours, and reducing emotional and conduct problems among Japanese children: A meta-analytic review. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, 1228269. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1228269>
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 88(4), 1156–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864>
- Thomas, E., & Dey, A. M. (2020). Role of school counselors and the factors that affect their practice in India. *Journal of School-Based Counseling Policy and Evaluation*, 2(1), 22–28.
- Vaithianathan, V., Kumar, S., & Rao, P. (2024). Institutionalising counselling and mental health support through curriculum reform in schools. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 33(2), 188–205.
- Wadhvani, I. (2022). Students' attitudes towards school guidance and counselling services in India. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, 8(6), 179–187.
- World Bank. (2023). Ending learning poverty and supporting socio-emotional development in schools. World Bank Group. World Bank Education
