

Pearson Augments its Mental Healthcare Solutions Through Digital Assessment Platform, Q-global



PCTA is a Pearson business in India that operates in mental healthcare and talent management spaces, through its clinical & education and talent business lines, respectively.

Philip Kurian, Country Manager & Director, Pearson Clinical and Talent Assessment speaks at length to **Elets News Network (ENN)**

Tell us about Pearson Clinical & Talent Assessment (PCTA). How is this division located within Pearson.

PCTA is part of the Clinical Assessment group of Pearson that has been at the forefront of test publishing for over 80 years. The Clinical Assessment group has a rich history, beginning with the founding of the Psychological Corporation in 1912 that sold assessments under the brand Psychcorp. Psychcorp today is one of the most respected brands in psychological assessment and offers scientific solutions that are used in clinical, educational and research settings globally, as well as throughout India and the subcontinent.

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India that operates in the mental healthcare and talent management spaces, through its clinical & education and talent business lines, respectively.

What are the complexities involved in getting these tests operated across geographies and cultures?

Globally, the Clinical Assessment group invests huge sums of money in test development. Once a test is developed in a particular geography, in order for it to be used accurately in other geographies or cultures, it needs to be adapted for those cultures. This work is an expensive and slow process that results in tests that are accurate for a given culture. In India, Pearson has invested its

people and monetary resources to develop tests that are more relevant for the Indian culture. This expensive process involves a global team of psychologists, psychometricians and other professionals who work on our adaptation projects across the length and breadth of the country. Through this work, we aim to equip mental health, school and allied professionals in India and the subcontinent with tests that are scientific, reliable and valid for the child and adult populations in this region.

What are the barriers to better mental healthcare services in India?

India, as a nation, has evolved economically, socially and culturally,

in the nearly two-and-a-half decades since economic liberalisation began. Unfortunately, mental healthcare infrastructure in the country has not kept pace and requires major reforms. Consider this: According to a study conducted by the National Commission on Macroeconomics and Health in 2005, nearly 5 per cent of India's population suffered from common mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety.

More recently, media reports on a World Health Organization (WHO) sponsored study indicate nearly 36 per cent of Indians suffer from major depressive disorder (MDE). What's worse, as per government data, there are only about 3,800 psychiatrists, 898 clinical psychologists, 850 psychiatric social workers and 1,500 psychiatric nurses in the country, to cater to a population of 1.2 billion Indians. As a result, mental health needs of Indians are not adequately addressed, right from childhood and into adulthood.

Besides a shortage of professionals, two other fundamental barriers to better mental health are stigma attached to mental illness and the subsequent ignorance around it, that need to be overcome in India. The Indian culture tends to hold various traditional views of mental illness that unfortunately may interfere with an open dialogue around mental illness and ways to prevent or treat it.

Can these barriers be realistically removed?

Yes, I see the media is doing its bit to help educate the masses about

- Learning Disability
- ADHD
- Emotional Health

3 areas of mental health solutions in school settings

Barriers to Mental Care Services in India

- Shortage of professionals
- Stigma attached to mental illness
- Subsequent Ignorance around it

mental illness. In a country where popular culture worships Bollywood stars, their admissions on their battles with mental illness and their efforts to normalise their struggles by bringing such conversation to the mainstream television and print media, will go a long way in demystifying and removing the stigma around mental illness. More mental health awareness programmes need to be organised across the country, in schools, colleges and hospitals, to foster conversations and debates on what needs to be done in this area.

Does policymaking have any impact on how mental health services are delivered in India?

Yes, it does. The WHO publication, Mental Health Atlas of 2011, states that India spends less than 1 per cent of its total health budget on mental health. This spend may not be adequate to address pressing mental health concerns in the country. A Mental Health Care Bill was proposed in 2013 that made access to mental healthcare a right of all persons. The Union Health Ministry launched the country's first National Mental Health Policy in 2014 to give universal access to mental healthcare, with a focus on those living in poverty. These policy decisions, when implemented, have the potential to ensure more funds are channelised towards building the required infrastructure to offer better mental health services and



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mental health services reaching the far corners of the country.

Another way policy impacts mental health services is in terms of education policy that has a bearing on the number of professionals available in India to deliver such services, as highlighted previously. Psychology as an academic subject needs to be introduced across the country in secondary and especially senior secondary education where students choose subjects linked to their college education and career aspirations.

At the higher education level, colleges and universities offering education in psychology ought to be mandated to introduce practical training in the use of scientifically

PAI Services

- Psychological assessment
- Intervention/ remediation
- Career counselling
- Training & Certification workshops for psychologists, special educators, paediatricians & other professionals

created psychological assessments. This is because scientific and objective psychological assessment through the use of tests is often the first step in providing quality mental healthcare. If advanced students of psychology, such as those in Masters, MPhil or PhD programmes, are not adequately trained in the use of assessments, they may not be able to integrate assessments in their clinical practice, thus depriving end beneficiaries of the benefits that such tests provide in terms of objective and rich clinical information about their psychological state.

Tell us about Q-global India version.

Q-global is our online assessment platform to administer, score and interpret test results for Pearson assessments. In the West, due to its digital and online nature, this platform has been embraced by mental health professionals, as it gives them portability, besides security of test data stored and convenience of automatically generated reports leading to valuable time savings for the professional.

Q-global is in line with Pearson's global focus on digital solutions. With this global digital focus in mind, PCTA has launched this solution to India as we believe the mental healthcare market is ready to embrace digital solutions.

Q-global Features

- Online assessment platform
- Administers, scores & interprets test results
- Portability
- Security of test data stored
- Automatically generated reports
- Time saving
- Affordability

Q-global helps the professional manage multiple tests and clients without having to deal with physical test kits that can be cumbersome and expensive to acquire. This is because traditionally psychological assessment is conducted using what are called 'paper and pencil' tests.

Q-global will house some of the best Pearson assessments that were hitherto available as paper and pencil tests only and give a digital option to those who prefer to adopt this medium for testing. Gradually, most of our assessments will become digital only.

Finally, pricing of the digital assessments on Q-global will be another attractive factor as the professional can pay on a need basis, for each test report generated, instead of buying the entire kit. Our first digital only assessment on Q-global is Beck Youth Inventories, Second Edition, India (BYI-II^{INDIA}) that help identify emotional difficulties, disruptive behavior and social impairment in children and adolescents. BYI-II^{INDIA} will change the way schools in India address such issues, due to its online nature, ease of administration and convenience of scoring and reporting.

What distinguishes your product & services mix in the domain?

Pearson believes in helping each individual learn better and live better. Our psychological assessment solutions have helped millions of children and adults around the world by identifying difficulties at the intellectual or emotional level, that interfere with academic achievement, professional success and daily living.

Many of our titles are global gold standards in assessment, used by mental health professionals, such as psychologists and psychiatrists, in clinical settings and school professionals, such as special educators and school counsellors, in

Beck Youth Inventories, (BYI-II^{INDIA})

Helps identify in children and adolescents

- Emotional difficulties
- Disruptive behaviour
- Social impairment

educational settings.

Through our own survey, we discovered three areas of priority where professionals are looking for mental health solutions in school settings: Learning Disability, ADHD and Emotional Health. This is because, often these psychological conditions manifest themselves early on, during a child's school years. Hence, schools need to be aware and empowered to identify such conditions and offer timely remedial support so that each student can learn optimally, despite learning barriers posed by these conditions.

Are there extension services beyond the assessment platform?

Here, Pearson Academy India (PAI), our services arm, works closely with schools and other institutions to create awareness and resources to address these conditions. PAI offers a host of services, such as psychological assessment, intervention/remediation and career counselling, for students that are referred to a PAI by schools. PAI also offers training and certification workshops for professionals ranging from psychologists, special educators to paediatricians, to help them learn new skills and upgrade current skills and knowledge around assessment and mental healthcare. We are actively looking for suitable institutions and individuals associated with psychology, education and training who can partner with us as PAIs in their respective cities. ☺