EVOLVING E-BASED EVALUATION SYSTEM: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The technological revolution of the world is now being led by the young generation. The increased investment in creating technological infrastructure reflects the commitment of the world in exploiting the potential of ICTs for development. Now-a-days lot of discussions is going on nation-wide regarding the e-learning system which ultimately secures an e-evaluation system. The system of e-evaluation is one of the most important components of any education system. In the recommendations of almost all commissions and committees of education, there is special emphasis on evaluation pattern of students. E-evaluation is a way to make the whole evaluating system feasible, meaningful and purposeful. Most of the educational institution has adopted some form of e-evaluation mechanism for its overall growth of the students/institutions. Since the learners pursue study at their own pace and place (campus/home/workplace), they don't have to withdraw themselves from their work/job and they can pursue their course of study from different institutions, even from different countries simultaneously. In this context, e-evaluation system fulfills the evaluating needs of diversified institutions and ultimately their learners. But, most of the organizations are facing some of the issues and challenges in the implementation of the e-evaluation system. In the present paper some sort of discussion have been made regarding the evolution of e-evaluation system and aim of this paper is to study the issues and challenges in the implementation of e-evaluation system. In the present paper, a number of studies are being quoted which signify the issues and challenges of e-evaluation system.

Key words: E-evaluation, ICT, E-learning, E-assessment, Web based learning.

1.0 Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are recognized as a vehicle of success and growth of the nation and help the society at large to learn, communicate and share knowledge. Among the various modes of education, online learning is becoming a need of the hour. The rapid growth of technology along with increased access to both the networked and stand–alone computers makes online learning possible. As learners exchange information with the teachers through a verity of ICT tools, this can enable the learner to gain control of the learning process and achieve mastery in given subject / topic. Networked technologies such as the internet and world wide web are dramatically changing education and training as they enable people to access information and communicate with others across terrestrial boundaries, cultures and on a global

scale. They offer the potential for sharing high quality learning resources, exchanging information and working in learning groups. The term e-learning is used in a variety of ways by different authors, and the literature shows that it is often used interchangeably with terms such as online learning, computer-based learning(CBT), web-based training (WBT) and others (Allan,2002). In this context, e-tutors are bound to assess the performance of the e-learners by using the e-evaluation tools.

E-evaluation can also be made flexible to suit the need of the learners. Normally, the performance of the learners is evaluated through Tutor Marked Assignment, Project work, and through summative and formative evaluation. It has been noticed that many of the learners particularly those who are working somewhere miss their examination during particular time duration. But they can pursue their course of study from different institutions with the help of e-evaluation system. The e-evaluation is expected to reduce the urban – rural digital divide in the country.

2.0 Evolving e-based Evaluation System

Since the last one decade, with the increased use of the internet as well as modern technologies, e-learning is gradually becoming popular and some learners have started giving preference to it. As flexible e-learning becomes more pervasive, there is a growing need for educators to consider modes of assessment using e-learning tools. With increasing use of ICT in the field of education, the concept of online and On-demand Examination is being encouraged all over the world (Fluck, et. al , 2009). In India, the Position Paper of National Focus Group on Examination Reforms (2006) has very clearly recommended to provide flexibility to the students to select data and time as per their convenience. In order to overcome the limitations of the traditional system of examination, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) brought out a more flexible and learner centric scheme of On-demand Examination (ODE). The scheme of On-demand Examination is successfully operational in National Institute of open Schooling (NIOS) at different locations (Prasad, 2008). The individualized question papers were generated locally and the registration for On-Demand Exam was also done manually at these locations. Impressed by the features and usefulness of On-Demand Examination System, the National Open University of Nigeria has also taken initiative to start On-demand Exam as an alternative to the end of Semester exam(Okonkwo, 2008). Sharma and Bharadwaj (2001) point out that recognizing the importance, need and potential of On-Demand Examination at higher educational level where majority of learners are employed or working somewhere, the National Centre for Innovations in Distance Education (NCIDE) at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has developed a comprehensive ICT enabled system of examination On-Demand which not only provides the learners to appear in the examination as per their preparation and convenience, but also provides automated examination management system covering all aspects except the evaluation of answer sheets. The benefits and the difficulties associated with various forms of online assessment have been described by BC consulting (2006). But, they are usually done online, taken when the candidate is ready, rather than at the convenience of the system. In the present age of increasing use of information technology, the scheme of On –

Demand Exam has immense potential to revolutionize the entire e-evaluation system by making it learner centric and flexible. E-evaluation is now very common all over the world.

3.0 E-based Evaluation: An Innovative Approach

E-based Evaluation is an innovative approach, as it is completely flexible and ICT enabled system of evaluation independent of the traditional fixed time frame, the student need not to wait for the six monthly examinations. Dhankhar (2010) states that without a serious evaluation procedure, it cannot be judged whether a student is fit for professional studies or research or any other profession. In the recommendations of almost all commissions and committees of education, there is special emphasis on evaluation pattern of students. Every institution has adopted some form of evaluation mechanism for its students. E-evaluation makes use of ICT to solve problems which arise due to human limitation much as instant generation of parallel question papers, and authorized data entry at different point, leaving no chance for human error. In fact, it is an initiative without abrupt changes in the prevailing system. From the learner perspective, they choose data and venue of the exam and can appear in exam as per their preparation. Especially, the working students need not to take long leave for appearing in the examination conducted in a fixed schedule. The e-evaluation system provides another chance for those who have failed in exam. From teachers point of view also it has lots of scope in reducing the work load of setting question papers and assignment etc. the e-evaluation presents an interaction between a world of information and communication technology and a world of education. Many educational institutions have provided special training and incentives to the instructors who are willing to incorporate e-evaluation to their teaching learning process.

4.0 Favourable effects of E-Based Evaluation System

In the present age of increasing use of information technology, the e-evaluation system has immense potential to revolutionize the entire evaluation system by making it learner centric and flexible. Online assessment is now very common all over the world. For the university, there may be a cost reduction in getting question papers prepared. IGNOU's On-Demand (OD) Exam software can be used for instant generation of the question papers for term and examination, which has made the process of question paper setting highly cost effective and less time taking. There will be a reduction in the frequent dependence on the external expert for paper setting and moderation etc. Particularly for small enrollment courses, the exercise of manual paper setting may be totally avoided which is otherwise very costly. The rapid innovation and development of Internet and network technologies provided many organizations with the ability to enhance product and service. New technologies are suggesting new ways to measure performance of the learners. The use of an e-evaluation offers a number of benefits which justify the capital expense for installing such a system.

- Lower turnaround time to deliver immediate feedback to faculty, department Chairs, and deans.
- Increased ability to perform statistical analysis with course evaluation data.
- More substantive feedback from students on open ended questions.
- Increased efficiency, less manual manipulation required by administrative staff.
- Better data, since errors are less likely and open ended responses are generally more complete.
- Universal access for all students, regardless of class attendance.
- Substantial saving to the institution for materials and staff time, including reduced printing, distribution, collection and storage costs.
- Accuracy and confidentiality of evaluation data is maintained.
- Both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of students are captured by the e-evaluation system.
- Timely and accurate reports are generated to enable academic managers to make immediate, educated decisions and intervention as needed.

5.0 Emerging issues and challenges in the implementation of e-evaluation system

The most recent influence of the e-learning in the field of education is recognized as e-evaluation system in the field of education. In the e-evaluation, environment, the learner and the teacher need not to travel ot a   common physical location for the purpose of examination. They can be away from each other, yet achieving the goal of education through   technological means. Though, the e-evaluation system has so many favourable effects but still this system faces several issues in the implementation of e-evaluation system. The issues that need to be resolved   for building   the bridge between e-learning and e-evaluation are :-

- Lack of penetration of e-evaluation system in semi-urban and arenar areas.
- Lack of reliable communication infrastructure.
- Lack of psychological acceptance due to the observe of the personal touch associated with classroom evaluation.
- Lack of trained teachers and experts for development, deployment, and orientation of the e-evaluation systems as well as experience and understanding of the e-evaluation market.
- Lack of standard and a long gestation period for implementation.
- Lack of collaborative work in the context of e-learning e-evaluation. Efforts need to be made in undertaking collaborative work from the beginning to provide effective services.
- The students and tutor need reliable access to a computer and the internet.
- Training is required for the both tutor and student.
- The biggest challenges is to involve and prepare people to accept reforms and change in the existing evaluation system.
- The second challenges is in getting and managing resources such as money, mans and material needed for the development and implementation of the e-evaluation system.

- The next real challenges was in developing a customizable system which could generate different question papers with different design and blueprints which caters to every need for more than 2000 courses of 150 programmes.
- As the software for question paper generation is to be backed by a good comprehensive question bank in different courses for which experts from different fields are identified and involved. But most of the time, it is a challenging task to get right kind of experts at the right time for question bank development and its finalization.
- Delivery of question papers, having secrecy and security issues in mind, to different centres of the institution at different places at the same time is another challenge.
- The software can be used for individualized assignment delivery or for online assessment as part of comprehensive and continuous evolution. But, the software management is an another challenge.

6.0 Recommendation

E-evaluation is a vast and vexing subject that is practically difficult to arrive at straight jacket suggestions without regard to time and space. However, we feel that e-evaluation has its unquestionable importance as it is flexible in nature. Besides e-evaluation is the best form of evaluation system which eliminates the personal biasness and subjectivity.It is imperative that institutions and government come together to resolve the issues discussed above. Some of the recommendations that can be adopted are listed below:

- Indian institutions should be encouraged to participate in e-evaluation fairs globally.
- Mechanisms should be developed to attract leading Indian faculty from universities abroad.
- A forecast system should be developed to retrain people for future needs.
- Integrate technology and examination to enhance quality and reach of education.
- Develop e-evaluation models in education to prepare the next generation workforce.
- Government should subsidies institutions through finance for easy implementation of e- evaluation system.
- The collaboration for the implementation of e-evaluation can be at institutional level or at country level or between government and private players at national and international level.
- There is a strong need to encourage learners and teachers to develop the positive attitude towards e-evaluation process.
- The exchange of e-evaluation models amongst different countries at educational level improves the social cohesion and mutual understanding which further pave the path of strengthening the quality, standards, and modalities in education.

- The fear syndrome associated with examinations needs to be eliminated from the entire process with the implementation of e-evaluation process.

7.0 Conclusion

Conclusively it can be said that the e-evaluation system can be easily adopted by the institutional management and it may provide a more credible system of examinations free of unfair means with less paper work before the exam. It may also help in reducing workload on the evaluation process. Besides, the e-evaluation system will boost the image of the University as is evident from the appreciation of the programme by the press, the educationist, the students and their parents. It is also expected that it may help in improving the pass percent of students in different courses as the students may like to appear in the examination only when they are well prepared.

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