

*In the Name of God, the
Compassionate the Merciful*

**Quality evaluation of the
educational systems:
Educational administration
and institutions**

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Introduction

- **Since 1950s, education has undergone great changes mostly due to the followings:**
- **Different approaches, methods, techniques and designs formed, developed and adopted**
- **Various learning and teaching designs applied**
- **New tools and techniques developed to support those approaches**



e.g.
**Teaching and Learning
Technologies Programme of the
1990s**

- **+ sciences and social sciences**
- **- arts and humanities in a poor third position**



- **Is evaluation universal?**
- The **ubiquitous nature of some of evaluating organizations** seems to imply that some applications **have a universal appeal**, and one would be hard-pushed to notice any discernable differences between the disciplines and their use of such blunt student support systems.
- So, some of **the world's foremost educational practitioners** with acknowledged leadership and competence in building educational systems based on the use of new technologies **have to make up their mind to evaluate the existing educational systems not to deviate from what they have been supposed to achieve.**



- **What is Evaluation?**
- **Elliot Stern (1992) claims that it refers to any activity that throughout the planning and delivery of innovative programmes enables those involved to learn and make judgements about the starting assumptions, implementation processes and outcomes of the innovation concerned.**

- **Traditionally evaluation was categorized into:**
 - 1. formative (contributing to the redesign of the system) and**
 - 2. summative (considering the system for purchase),**



- **But now it can occur at the following points:**
- **while a system is being built**
- **once a system is built, but before it is installed in any organization**
- **while a system is being installed in a 'test' organization**
- **once a system has been running in a 'test' organization for some time**
- **while a system is being installed in a wider setting**
- **once a system has been running for some time**

- **All of these can contribute to the redesign of the system.**
- **All can contribute to decisions by IT managers etc.**
- **The differences in the utility of the evaluation will depend partly on the used and partly on the information provided to the different stakeholders.**

Review of literature

- The developments of recent years have created a need for **more systematic quality assurance of the educational systems**. In effect, all these changes occurred due to the institutions' increased autonomy, international developments, the sharp rise in the number of students, new teaching methods, a changing environment for study and rising expectations in general with regard to transparency and documentation.

- **In effect, evaluations and other surveys have demonstrated that institutions work in a targeted way on quality issues, but their work is often somewhat lacking in systematisation and coherency, documentation, follow-up of decisions and linkage to management.**

- **The necessity to strengthen work on quality has long been recognized both by the political authorities and by the institutions themselves. So each year this need has been felt more than ever. In 2003, the private institutions of higher education and other educational departments have been required to have routines to ensure continuous improvement of the system and to embrace all processes of significance for the quality of studies, from provision of information to potential applicants to the completion of courses.**

Quality and quality assurance system and the relevant yardsticks

- **Due to lack of a succinct definition of educational quality, the criteria may vary according to objectives and disciplines, and assessments apply to conditions that often cannot be qualified. Besides, quality changes with the development of disciplines, educational activities and environments, while different stakeholders place varying emphasis on different aspects of it.**

- The question is whether **the quality assurance system** must involve only **one part of the system or the whole institution**, applying to the areas of activity that are related to educational quality. These areas in effect are as follows. **The manner in which work on educational quality is made an integral part of the institution's strategic work**, the way in which the institution assesses its educational quality and gets a feedback of its work quality is one of the **essential areas of activity** in rising the qualitative standards of educational systems.

- **Moreover, the way in which authentic data collection is retrieved, embarking on measures that ensure broad participation, with clearly defined distribution of responsibility and authority for various stages of the work, and the vogue in which systems of education ensure a focus on total learning environment and the active role given to students to contribute to working on quality and the total learning area.**

Method

- **Preview**
- The diverse influences feeding into the issue provide a wide range of existing evaluation methods for practitioners to use and adapt.

- **These methods include:**
- **heuristic,**
- **experiment based,**
- **interviews & questionnaires,**
- **focus groups and customer feedback,**
- **longitudinal trials (semi-realistic ethnography (sociology),**
- **ethnography (sociology),**
- **conversation analysis and interaction analysis (Ethno-methodology),**
- **and breakdown analysis (computer science / philosophy).**

- **Heuristic evaluation:**
- **This method can be considered as an inevitable part of any system design process, as designers do something and then try to figure out if they like it.**
- **It is seldom mentioned explicitly in the literature, but can be seen in trials of systems by their designers.**
- **As Nielsen (1993) maintains it depends partly on an evaluator's biasness in terms a set of design principles and usability attributes in his mind.**

- **Experiment-based method** as most frequently used one is employed to collect quantitative data about a single specific factor, attempting to screen out other influences.
- However, as with user testing, there are significant problems with the decontextualised and artificial nature of these experiments.

- **All in all, to obtain qualitative data about the users' experiences with systems either immediately or a little while after use, one of the easiest ways to do that is to employ:**
 - **Interviews**
 - **questionnaires,**
 - **focus groups and customer feedback (Social Psychology).**

- **The preference is due to the fact that they are considered as a way to capture data prior to further analysis and to improve a commercial product by collecting customer feedback.**
- **However, the subjectivity of this method, the way in which users' opinions have been directly collected- might have brought about certain merits and demerits to them. It has made them useful, but also limited. Though one can ignore the shortcoming by using a large group of people and by wording questions so they contain various 'consistency checks').**

- **Longitudinal trials** (sociologically speaking termed as a semi-realistic ethnography) which lie somewhere between the unsituated lab experiment and the messy, real-world ethnographic study often involve having one's colleagues (or a similar accessible, controllable group) use a system for a prolonged period of time, before it is tried out on real users.
- -- Such studies can suffer from being rather inward-looking, in that they end up focussing on their own research teams, and as Harper (1992:36) comments, research labs are "**peculiar fish bowls**" due to "**the forms of working relationships one finds therein**". However, such methods are often highly instructive in practice, given some degree of care as to their wider applicability.

- **Ethnography:** It refers to the cases where the evaluator goes into the place of work to collect data documentarily and to illustrate the nature of work in process by using audio and video-tapes of work practices, field notes, descriptions and diagrams of the work setting, and samples of various artefacts.

- **Traditionally**, ethnography required a long period of immersion - months or even years - in the study setting before the ethnographer could perform an informed analysis (not often practical in a systems design project). However, as Hughes et al. (1994) discuss, methods such as "**quick and dirty ethnography**" (a brief study, typically a few days, with specific questions in mind as to the nature of the work) can still provide useful amounts of data in a shorter time.

- **Another ethnomethodological approach is conversation analysis and interaction analysis** which study real group interactions as revealed by their (directly recorded) conversation and actions. **The aim is, in fact, to study the users' categories directly, rather than imposing a theoretical framework. They focus on the detailed features of interaction (at various levels), either on conversations alone or on interactions between people and between people and technology.**

- **Breakdown Analysis**: another way to tap directly elicited data essential to a quality evaluation is the method mostly employed in computer science/philosophy.
- It is defined as any incident where the user has caused to focus on the system rather than the task (Winograd & Flores, 1986).
- **+** This is a useful method not only for studying group interactions and conversation transcripts to highlight such breakdowns but also for identifying key problems associated with user-system (or user-user) communication (Urquijo et al., 1993).
- **-** However, the focus is necessarily restricted, disregarding many other interesting aspects of collaborative work, such as the distribution of roles and power amongst the group members. Like many of the other methods above, it might be usefully used in conjunction with others.

- ***Evaluators' Autonomy with respect to the educational administration***
- One can imagine of several possible forms of autonomy including the followings autonomies of:
- ***Objectives***: The evaluating team has to be autonomous in setting their objectives though rarely found in the world.
- ***Approaches***: The evaluating team might adopt an approach to efficiency-orientedness of the range of expenditure and the quality of performance on the part of the educational systems. This evaluation includes both implicit and explicit variables involved in the efficiency of educational systems such as the extent to which education systems hinge on applying mass media, and hi- tech instructional instruments, in-service training courses, the type of management of schools, the strategies the principals put into effect in their schools.

- **Pedagogical:** As an approach which concentrates directly on improvement of the quality of education and to that end appraises the role of the various components of the system: **the educational administration itself, the management and organization of schools, the teachers, the pupils, the curriculum, the teaching methodologies, and so on.**

Scope of evaluation

- It refers to the extent to which an educational administration has **the power to determine the object and the limits of the evaluation**. In other words, to answer the question of what to assess such as:
 - academic performance,
 - the degree of success in teaching the core curriculum,
 - the determination of effectiveness and efficiency indicators,
 - the effectiveness of innovations and reforms, etc.

Methods:

- methodologically two distinct **quality** and **quantitative** methods seem to be significant both of which tend to improve the quality of education and managerial policies.
- While **the former** is more concerned with **qualification** of the educational systems, **the latter** is more concerned with **quantification** of the data which are here the learners' behaviours and performances. By which the evaluator basically analyzes the academic achievements of pupils as an indicator of quality. The statistical orientation and the implementation of periodic assessments prevail.

- These days this model **aims to** improve achievement as a matter of equity.
- **Greater concern** is to show what attitudes and civic and ethical values does the education system instil in future citizens?
The relative weight of qualitative and quantitative methods in the evaluation of the system is another aspect in which the decisions of the educational administration can influence the work of an evaluation institution.

Autonomy of organization

- **The extent to which an institution is entitled to equip itself with the evaluating system that it considers best suits its purposes.**

Autonomy of resources

- **This refers to the degree of autonomy vouchsafed the evaluation institution to procure resources of all kinds -human, material and financial.**

The use and dissemination of results

- **This is an issue that directly concerns the educational administration, and hence it may be more problematic to allow an evaluation centre a degree of autonomy.**

Relations between evaluators and the educational administration

- **The first subject is what is the necessity of evaluation? That is, should a single institution be responsible for the evaluation of the education system? What are the standards of evaluation? Should the evaluator be from inside the educational system or from the outside of the system?**

- **A Question to be raised:**
- **Has anywhere in the world such an integrated, global and comprehensive evaluation of the education system? If so, who will be in charge of coordinating the different evaluating bodies, like evaluation institutes and the education inspectorate?**

- **Hasn't the time come to dream of the desirability of setting up plural-annual evaluation plans as an element of continuity and stability against possible changes in the educational administration?**
- **Hasn't the time come to dream of decision-making by the educational administration or the evaluation institution on specific aspects: assessment of learning of values and metacognitive skills, determination of the system of education indicators, etc.?**
- **Hasn't the time come to dream of providing the evaluation institution with human, material and financial resources to perform a sound and fact-based evaluation?**

- Hasn't the time come to **dream of removing the influence of the pressure of adopting given evaluation policies exerted by the educational administration?**
- **Who has to adopt the responsibility of the educational administration for the quality of education?**
- **If there is such acceptability, such an evaluation makes it possible to reform concrete aspects of the organisation and management of education systems with a view to achieving quality education in equitable terms. But if there is no such a system to accept all these responsibilities, what can be best solution to the problem?**

- The most readily remembered one would be **self-evaluation**. To do such a self-assessment, the most logical question is raised whether the evaluation organization has to adopt a **utilitarian approach or illuminating approach**? **The utilitarian approach** is normally adopted when the information should be used for the running of the education system by its administrators, **whereas the illuminating approach** is used when the information should be used for a contribution to public debate and the democratic functioning of society.

- In effect, both are needed because **in terms of the former (utilitarian approach)** evaluation is an essential element in gathering and disseminating clear, objective and reliable information on the situation of the education system and its components; **while in terms of the latter (illuminating approach)** we can establish a well-informed society, and it is through such a society that we can provide a decisive impulse for improving the quality of education.

- **The requirements for comparisons in education: firstly**, clear specification of the necessary conditions for a fair comparison
- **secondly**, the added value in education is the consideration of basic conditions which may mean that a poorer end result is more praiseworthy than a better one **if the contribution to the education of the pupils has actually been greater.**

- **To do so, according to American Evaluation Association, there are certain principles as follows:**
 - ***1. Systematic Inquiry***
 - ***2. Competence***
 - ***3. Integrity/ Honesty***
 - ***4. Respect for people***
 - ***5. Responsibilities for public welfare***

1. Systematic Inquiry

- **The systematic set of scientific procedures taken step by steps, adherence to the highest technical standards appropriate to the methods the evaluators employ in terms of data-based inquiry to provide accuracy as well as credibility of the evaluative data they yield. Moreover, it refers to the extent to which evaluators explore with the client the merits and demerits of the questions raised and those of the approaches to answering them. Finally, it refers to the extent to which evaluators leave the details of their methods and approaches as well as their limitations open to critics to do their critiques and criticize them.**

2. Competence

- **It refers to the extent to which the evaluators do have the capability, skill and experience to accept such a great responsibility for:**
- **understanding the worldviews of their culturally-different participants, and the use of appropriate evaluation strategies and skills in working with culturally different groups.**
- **being brave enough to confess their constraints to the degree to which they try to attain their data from informants as much directly as possible.**
- **seeking continually to maintain and improve their expertise-based performances through holding coursework and workshops, self-study, and self-evaluation.**

3. Integrity/ Honesty

- **It refers to honest negotiation with clients whether laymen or professionals concerning what they do, what their tasks, costs, limitations, scope of the possible results are.**

4. Respect for people

- **: It refers to a set of prerequisites to be met by the evaluators to keep security, dignity and self-worth of people as their clients. These requisites are as follows:**
 - **1. understanding the contextual elements of evaluation including geographical, political, and economical settings;**
 - **2. awareness of the consequences regarding the risks, harms which may befall after evaluation;**
 - **3. knowledge of the social face and respect to clients when evaluating a program.**

5. Responsibilities for general and public welfare

- **It refers to inclusion of relevant perspectives and interests of the full range of clients, consideration of both immediate and broad assumptions, implications and potential side effects, provision of direct knowledge for people to know what the processes and results of the evaluation might be.**

The End