



Today's Written Examination in Higher Education: a Spell about Memory Scaling or Performance Evaluation

Dr. Jagannath Kunar, Lecturer, Dept. of Education, Rural Institute of Higher Studies (RIHS), Balasore, Odisha

Abstract:

People often says examination can evaluate performance, yet the reality is it does, but the tangible truth is today's written examination can only spell about memory scaling not performance. So examination reform especially in higher education is a need of hour to streamline higher education like Finland and United Kingdom. Reform in education is solely depends on reform of examination and evaluation system. It is a system where teacher, student and management may works hand in hand to establish a time demanding examination concept, cope with curriculum, teaching practices and other aspects of reform. The intent behind this paper is to highlight the facets of examination for a dogmatic shift from memory scaling to performance evaluation. This may includes theme discussion, special defense, project, model making etc. This paper also highlights the scientific nature of test content which may guide the students towards divergent thinking. Furthermore this paper reflects upon a proposed model for assessment and outcome, designed on the basis of review. Finally conclude with some recommendations for diversity and dynamics of the examination form which can improve the comprehensive ability of students.

Keywords: Examination; Higher Education; Memory scaling; Performance evaluation ;Theme discussion; Special defense;

Conceptual framework:

Examination is a system closely associated with teaching, learning as reactant and quality education and quality learner as product .The basic functions of examination are assessment, evaluation, guidance as well as feedback. In other words examination in higher education is comprehensive evaluation of students. However the present scenario was somewhat different because the evaluators are considering examination as final conclusion, and it was a method rather than a purpose. These form of examination having a very little use for oral presentations, group discussions (may be fractional group discussion or focused group discussion), projects etc.. The present days examination system mainly emphasizes on theoretical and standardized examinations, and less focused on process examinations, comprehensive examinations, the evaluation of ability as well as evaluation of performance. Although the diversification of examinations has been approved widely at universities, in reality, they tended to simplify the examination form. Many universities set up standardized teaching methods: paper contents, answering methodology and scoring criteria were clearly defined. Therefore, a form-based



unified paper format was set up for each course. These examination forms were less used for oral examinations, focus-group discussions, course projects, reports, and so on. Many teachers adopted the simple examination form to evaluate students.

As per Arab human development report 2005 , Assessment continues to be a weakness, particularly in three aspects, first too much emphasis on memory recall of descriptive knowledge, second not enough is done to test higher order cognitive skill, third no moderation either external or internal to ensure fairness and transparency of marking (QAA 2014)

Challenges /concerns of examination reform in higher education

In the annals of examination reforms are evident; the UGC consultative meeting on examination reform held on 6th September 2018 is significant. As per this report the major challenges are; the unemployability of passing out UG/PG students, lack of outcome based curriculum, lack of evaluation which can evaluate attitude and skill of the learner rather than memory, lack of question database etc. By keeping an eye on these challenges the committee also recommended that objectives of examination system, models of examination system, structural and procedural changes is a need of examination system. Therefore the present scenario having an urgent need to evaluate the performance of UG/PG students at higher education level, rather the secured marks. The ability test to assess the ability of a student is a necessity (UGC report 2018)

Need for Performance evaluation

Today's info savvy society expect a change in every ways so performance evaluation of learner is not only a need but also a mandatory requirement, so need of performance evaluation are

1. Providing information that helps to counsel the learner by themselves
2. Diagnose deficiency in learners regarding knowledge, skills etc.
3. Provide a platform for systematic analysis of the strengths, weakness of the learner.
4. It is periodic ,so it refresh the learner every time and make the learner ready for next task/plan
5. Keeps the learner happy enthusiastic.
6. Maintain the equality between all learners
7. It motivates the under performers.



Methods of performance evaluation

There are many ways for performance evaluation of learner but the following tetrads are very much important in the learner point of views.

1. **Superior evaluation:** superior include the immediate senior of the learner from the same department, as they are come across each other in departmental seminar and ceremonial events. Finally the superior evaluation in urn reviewed by the department head or supervisor.
2. **Peer evaluation:** Peer evaluation is especially borrowed from military field. Peer evaluation is the method in which one learner is evaluated by his co-learner rather than teacher/supervisor/head of the department as they have enough opportunities to review the performance on daily basis.
3. **Subordinates evaluation:** A novel method in which the subordinate may evaluate the performance of superior. This method can be helpful to find out efficient and competent superior
4. **Self- evaluation:** if the individual learner understand the objectives, they are expected to achieve by which they are to be evaluated, then they are in the best position to evaluate themselves. This method can make the learner highly systematic as well as highly motivated one.

Components of performance evaluation

In higher education it is necessary to have a skilled and efficient performer rather than a memory retriever. Therefore it is needs of hour to concentrate on different components of performance evaluation. There are four basic components of performance evaluation as far as class room is concerned. These are:

1. **Theme discussion:** It is nothing but an idea, abstract thought, construct or a topic to be expanded in a discourse or discussion. The teachers'/examiners role is a very silent and minute observer. The teacher/examiner will observe the conceptualization, presentation, communication, connecting power to real life situation and nobleness of the learner. Finally evaluate the performance of the learner.
2. **Special defense:** it is the unique ability of every individual for problem solving. This ability will not come to the fore front unless and until there is no other option. While conducting written exam it is necessary to frame questions which a learner can't get from book, handout, internet but it should be the only reflective thoughts of the learner. As example: if the question is "Explain Piaget's theory of cognitive development", then only memory or hardly understanding will work. Instead of that if the question will be "if you saw Piaget in live then what changes you will suggest to his famous cognitive development theory". In the second question the special defense of the learner will work.
3. **Project:** Through project the learners have to apply their own skills and knowledge, which they have learned in the course of their studies. Here the instruction of the teacher does not precede the project but integrated in it. Instead of written examination if the learner is allowed to prepare a project by improvisation then definitely it can enhance the skill and performance of the learner.

4. **Model making:** model making can help the learner in terms of time management, attention to detail, quality of work, confidence and interaction with classmates. Some students may have several attempts at the model to get it right, proving that they were analyzing, evaluating and creating; all high order aims of Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001).

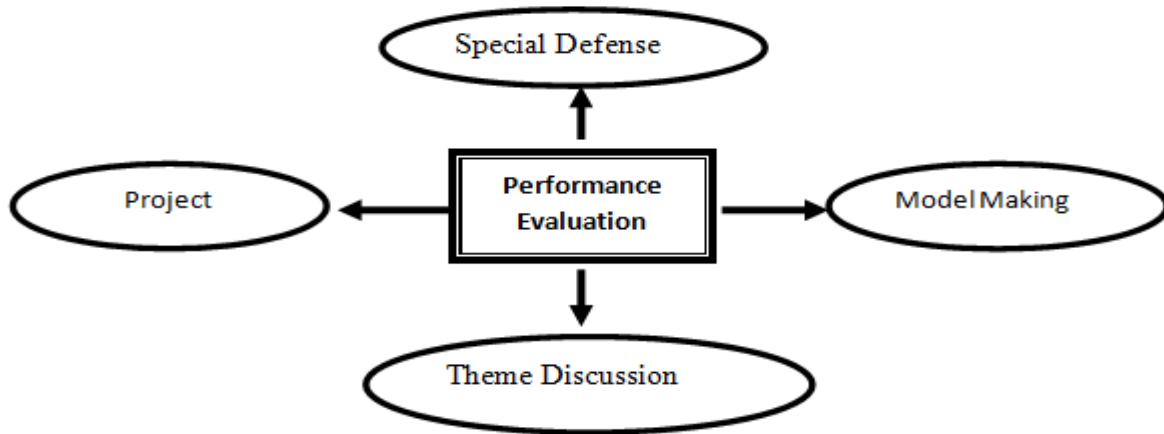


Fig: 1 (Key constituent of performance evaluation)

Proposed model for assessment and outcome of performance:

In this present model the reviewer wants to draw the attention of intellectual mass towards the proposed examination pattern and in return the proposed outcomes as empathetic learning, reproduction of knowledge and finally the sustainable knowledge construction. Hence as per this model examination should be flexible, scientific (objectivity) and reflection based which in turn may enhance the performance of the learner. Open ended and scientific nature of test content leads to divergent thinking. Divergent thinking is employed when an individual is faced with an open ended task Mark A. Runco & Selcuk Acar (2012).

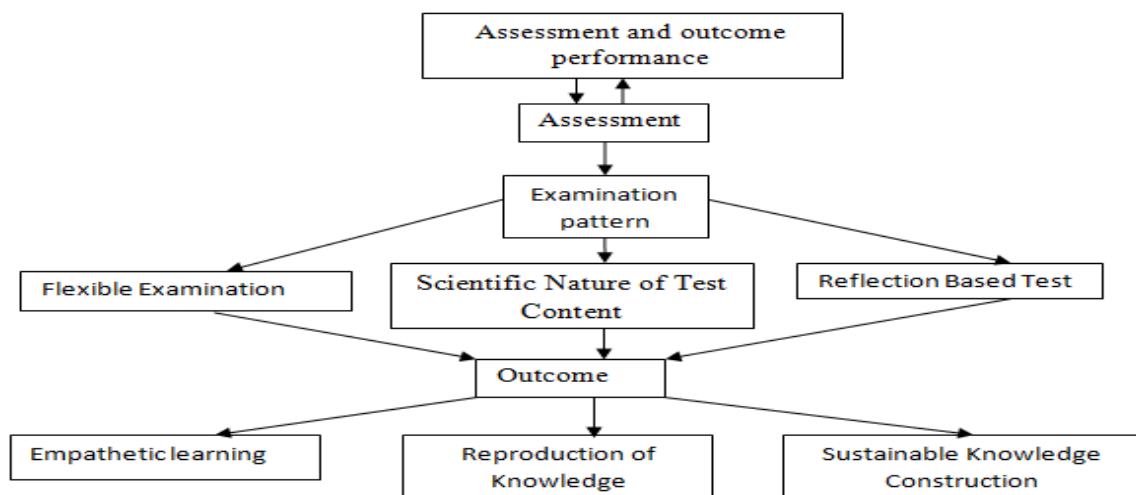


Fig: 2 (Proposed model for assessment and outcome of performance)



Recommendations for examination reform

a) Curriculum development and Streamlined Examinations:

Continuous updating and revision of curricula is something that must be deeply ingrained in the academic culture of a university. The universities need to streamline their examination process such that the results are declared in a time bound manner and no student suffers in his/her career mobility and academic progression due to delay in declaration of results and issue of mark sheets.

b) Flexibility of curriculum and student mobility:

Choice based credit system and credit accumulation need to be further emphasized. In order to provide flexibility to students, course duration should be provided in terms of credit hours and also a minimum as well as a maximum permissible span of time in which a program can be completed by the student. Furthermore all UG/PG students of all streams should take artificial intelligence course in the last semester to enable themselves as per the present demand.

c) Introduction of semester system:

Annual examination with emphasis on external written examination needs to be reformed. Semester system should be introduced wherever it has not been introduced so far. The system should emphasize on continuous internal assessment and reduce the written examination component to a reasonable level. Duration of the semester, number of contact hours per course as well as per semester and relative weightage of continuous internal assessment and semester-end examination need to be prescribed unambiguously. The greatest advantage of this system is that it reduces the load of the students and inculcates regular study habits in them. Since the academic year is divided into two semesters, it also has the advantage of providing upward mobility; the students can clear the backlog even after moving to the next semester.

d) Continuous internal assessment:

This is inspired by the age-old adage that it is the teacher who knows the student best, and it is through this teacher that we would get to know how the learner is progressing with reference to his/her own earlier achievements, his/her peer group as also with reference to the expected levels of attainments set by the teacher. It also enables the students to learn at their own pace.

e) Question Banks:

If quality questions of different types are generated with varying difficulty levels, the quality of question papers will improve. For this, question banks need to be developed for each course. These question banks should be made accessible to the teachers who can use them for setting various tests and also to students who can use them for their own drill and practice. The young teachers who are new to the profession will be facilitated in learning the integrity of setting question papers.

f) Multiple sets of question paper:

It reduces the possibility of question paper leakage. Even paper setter himself/herself would not know that which set has been chosen for the examination.

g) Moderation of Questions Papers:

It is a healthy practice to get the question papers moderated by a senior subject expert. Moderation is a mechanism to ensure full coverage of the syllabus and correct usage of the technical and subject related language. The question pattern may be 50 % objective type question and 50 % subjective type question.

h) Use of ICT in Examination Management:

Online examination modules should be introduced. Results should be processed through IT applications. This will not only improve efficiency, but would enhance the accuracy too. It would bring in transparency and tendency of false allegations will be discouraged.



i) Grading System:

We need to move away from marks and division system in evaluation and introduce Grading System in order to make our evaluation system at par with the best practices in the rest of the world. Grading system enables a student to know his/her relative standing in the class, or amongst the students of the batch.

j) Moderation of Result:

This is a mechanism to check anomalies. Result decides the future course of action for a student. Therefore, it is essential to ensure the correctness of the result before it is declared.

Conclusion:

The single-aspect examination form was not conducive to talent cultivation in Universities, and the students' learning usually involved cramming rather than flexible learning methods, which have affected the students' quality cultivation. On the other hand, the lack of dynamic feedback information in the teaching process caused a disjunction between teaching and learning; it was not conducive to cultivating students' self-study ability.

The present higher education evaluation system needs a rectification which will shift the learner's course completion motive to empathetic participation in learning; they can reproduce their knowledge and finally leads to sustainable knowledge construction. It is only possible if examination system will gauge performance instead of memory and pedagogical practices includes the developmental aspects of skill, life skill, attitude and performance, regardlessness of percentage of mark, grade and class.

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