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A REVIEW ON THE PROGRAM EVALUATION STRATEGIES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to review the program evaluation strategies in point of suitabilities to distance education . In the study, it was used of literature review technique to gather data. Firstly ,relevant and previous studies in the literature on the program evaluation strategies in distance education were searched and in detailed reviewed. Then, thirteen evaluation strategies that were frequently used to collect data for educational program evaluations were described and reviewed in point of suitabilities and utilities to distance education. In conclusion, it was determined that the objectives-oriented strategy and systems -based evaluation strategies were highly suited to distance education programs. But, traditional, expertise-oriented, humanistic and academic evaluation strategies were not suited to distance education programs. The conclusions obtained in this study may be useful in the exploration of further research areas in the field of program evaluation in distance education. In future , qualitative and / or quantitative researches should be realized on the suitabilities of the strategies of the objectives-oriented and systems -based evaluation for distance education programs.

Keywords: Distance education, program evaluation, strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation is defined as “a process used to determine whether the design and delivery of a program were effective and whether the proposed outcomes were met” (Caffarella, 2002, 225). While program evaluation first focuses around this definition, important considerations often include how much the program costs per participant, how the program could be improved, whether the program is worthwhile, whether there are better alternatives, if there are unintended outcomes, and whether the program goals are appropriate and useful (Shackman,2012).

Distance learning is a method of conveying education and instructions, generally on an individual basis, to the students who are not physically available in a usual setting such as a classroom. Distance learning is rapidly becoming an alternative to traditional classrooms. Students can benefit from the flexibility that comes with distance learning, and for students who don't have the time or money to attend traditional schools, distance learning can provide a path to higher education(Rao and Krishnan ,2015).

Distance education is a form of education in which there is normally a separation between teacher and learner and thus one in which other means the printed and written materials, the broadcasting(radio and television), computer and communication technologies and academic consultancy (Usun, 2006). Distance education or distance learning is the education of students who are not physically present at a school. Distance education is designed to give people options. It makes learning attainable for people from all walks of life. A great alternative to traditional, campus-based classes, distance education allows students to study on a more flexible basis. Geber (2000) provides a contemporary definition of distance education as any formal approach to learning in which the majority of the instruction occurs while educator and learner are at a distance from each other.

Evaluation is one of the critical steps in the process of performance improvement. Evaluation feeds evidence-based information back to the next cycle of performance improvement. However, organizations often neglect to conduct comprehensive evaluations on their programs due to environmental barriers or the lack of practitioners' evaluation expertise (Chyung ,2015). Generally, evaluation is used to determine the degree to which program objectives are met through the procedures used by the program. The evaluation determines whether or not the outcomes or results predicted by the program occurred and if their occurrence was due to the project. It is essential that evaluation and feedback be part of all distance learning programs. Evaluation in distance education must be carefully balanced between a traditional view that allows for program justification/development and a new view that has the potential for empowering. Also, evaluation in distance education is undertaken to guide decision-makers program leaders, program coordinators with an overall objective to improve service delivery and client satisfaction. Evaluation commonly aims to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a distance education program or project.

Program evaluation is a systematic way of gathering, analyzing and utilizing information to answer basic questions about projects, policies and programmes. Methodologies included cross sectional surveys and review of literature to gather data. Evaluation in open and distance learning is undertaken to guide decision-makers programme leaders, programme coordinators with an overall objective to improve service delivery and client satisfaction (Miriam and Offat, 2015). Program evaluation is about carefully collecting information on a program or some aspects of a program in order to make necessary decisions. The process can include different types of evaluation, such as needs assessment, accreditation, and cost effectiveness, formative and summative evaluations. Pradhan (2006) described some of the components of a program evaluation activity . Distance and open learning programs are designed for learners. They should be learner centred and should be continually evaluated to improve the quality of the graduate. Programs must be evaluated to decide if the programs are actually useful to the learners and whether they are achieving their stated objectives. Keegan (1996) recommended that the evaluation of any distance education program should focus on four aspects: (a) the quantity of the learning (i.e.,enrollment, new learner markets, and course-completion rates), (b) the quality of the learning (i.e., effectiveness of courses or program to enable desired learner outcomes), (c) the status of the learning (i.e., transferability of coursework and employer recognition of degrees and certificates), and (d) the relative cost of the learning (i.e., institutional cost effectiveness and cost benefits).

Distance education is a discipline that offers solutions to some important education problems. Distance education, contribute to the solution to the problems such as; inequality of opportunities, lifelong education, the implementation of a series of individual and social goals that can contribute to and benefit from educational technology and self-learning. In distance education, methods of measurement and assessment must be consistent with the objectives and contents of teaching.(Kaya and Tan 2015).A series of studies (Zawacki-Richter (2009) ; Zawacki-Richter, Bäcker and Vogt (2009) ; Zawacki-Richter and von Prümmer (2010) ; Zawacki-Richter and Anderson (2011); Zawacki-Richter and Anderson (2014) were conducted by Zawacki-Richter to explore the distance education(DE) research domain **(** Bozkurt et al.,2015).In his study, Zawacki-Richter (2009, cited in Bozkurt et al.,2015) **de**veloped a categorization of research areas in DE and identified the most important and the most neglected research areas in DE. Having conducted an extensive literature review and a Delphi study with expert responses from editorial board members from the major DE journals from September-December 2008, Zawacki-Richter identified 15 research areas which were organized into 3 broad categories. The participants of the study were 19 voluntary experts with an average of 27 years of professional experience in DE who had made significant contributions to DE literature. Based on the experts' responses, Zawacki-Richter grouped the 15 research areas into three categories. In the second round of the Delphi study, each category was prioritized by the expert as three levels. Macro level; distance education system and theories ; meso level: management, organization and technology and micro level: teaching and learning in distance education. We see that there is no any research level and area on the program evaluation and/ or evaluation model or strategy in distance education.

According to current literature, some of the studies (Gunawardena,Lowe and Carabajal, 2000; Alhawiti,2014) on the evaluation model of distance education and learning programs focus on on-line programs and courses . Davie's (1995) study focus on computer mediated communication, Osika and Camin's (2005) study

focus on Internet –Based distance learning programs and Khow's(2014) study focus on e-learning.The other evaluation models on the distance education and learning programs are the followings (Usun,2016):
*Kaufman's(1981) Organizational Needs Model
*Simonson,Smaldino and Zvacek's (2002) AEIOU(**A**ccountability, **E**ffectiveness , **I**mpact, **O**rganizational Context, **U**nanticipated Outcomes) Model
*Forster and Washington's(2000) Interactive Video Technology Model
*Compora's(2003) Administrative Operational Model .

Worthen et al. (1997) identified six evaluation strategies (objectives-oriented, management-oriented, consumer-oriented, expertise-oriented, adversary-oriented and participant-oriented) that are frequently used, either singly or in some combination, to collect data for educational program evaluations. Rovai (2003) ,in his study titled "A practical framework for evaluating online distance education programs" reviwed these strategies in point of suitabilites and utilities to distance education.

As above seen, in current literature although there are some studies on the program evaluation models in distance education, but there are only a few study on the program evaluation strategies in distance education. So, current study can contribute to related literature on the program evaluation strategies in distance education.

The aim of this study is to review the program evaluation strategies in point of suitabilities to distance education.

METHODS

In the study, it was used literature review method to gather data. This study provided a descriptive review on the the program evaluation strategies in distance education. Firstly,relevant and previous studies in the literature on the program evaluation strategies in distance education were searched and rigorously reviewed. Then, thirteen evaluation strategies that were frequently used to collect data for educational program evaluations were described and reviewed in point of suitabilities and utilities to distance education.

A Review of Program Evaluation Strategies in Point of Suitabilities to Distance Education

Usun (2016) in his Turkish book titled "Eğitimde Program Değerlendirme: Süreçler,Yaklaşımlar ve Modeller" (Program Evaluation in Education:Processes, Strategies and Models) " identified thirteen evaluation strategies that are frequently used to collect data for educational program evaluations. In this section, these strategies are ,shortly,described and reviewed in point of suitabilities and utilities to distance education:

Objectives-oriented Evaluation Strategy

The objectives-oriented evaluation strategy focuses on specifying the goals and objectives of a given program attained. Ralph Tyler, who conceptualized the objectives-oriented approach to evaluation in 1932, is recognized as being the pioneer of this approach (Stufflebeam & Shinklefield, 1985). According to Worthen and Sanders (1987,63), Tyler's early approach to evaluation was logical, scientifically acceptable, and readily usable by educational evaluators.

Objectives-oriented approach is highly suited to distance education programs that have highly defined objectives, and the purpose of the evaluation is to determine if, and to what extent, these objectives have been met (Rovai, 2003). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), there were problems associated with the objectives-oriented approach. Critics of this evaluation approach claimed that the selection of appropriate objectives to evaluate was problematic, as not all objectives could be evaluated and the process by which objectives were selected was open to bias (Stufflebeam & Shinklefield, 1985).

Major weaknesses often cited regarding this strategy include the difficulty of evaluators of distance education to operate in a program environment with ill-defined objectives, to identify unintended program outcomes, and to measure learning. Grades, often used to operationalize learning, can have little relationship to what

students have learned as students may already know the material when they enroll, or their grades may be more related to class participation, or work turned in late, than to learning (Rovai, 2003). Furthermore, grades may not be a reliable measure of learning, and using grades as a measure of distance learning can be problematic .

Systems -based Evaluation Strategy

A systems-based strategy of evaluation is based on efficiently- determining which are the most effective programs. It focuses on the organization, determining whether appropriate resources are devoted to goal activities (and to nongoal activities, such as staff training or maintenance of the system) . The systems approach to program evaluation is highly compatible with strategic planning, which has the goal of strengthening the management decision-making process by having it recognize and address key internal and external factors that affect the organization. Moore and Kearsley (1996, 5) suggested that a systems approach is very helpful to understanding distance education and that ‘‘the systems model provides a tool that not only helps us recognize many of the issues that separate distance education from conventional education, but also helps us distinguish good distance education from bad.’’ Consequently, it is important to evaluate distance education programs by how they work as a whole rather than by evaluating individual components without regard to overall program effectiveness (Rovai, 2003).

According to Worthen et al., (1997), potential weaknesses of the systems based (management oriented) approach may occur from evaluators giving partiality to top management, from evaluators' occasionalinability to respond to questions, from costly evaluation processes, and from the assumption that important decisions can be clearly identified in advance. The other weakness of this strategy is that it tends to reinforce the status quo of management rather than balancing the interests of management with those of other internal and external stakeholders. If management does not value distance education, evaluation results will likely reflect this bias (Rovai, 2003).

Collaborative Evaluation Strategy

Collaborative evaluation is a proactive evaluation strategy that enables program staff to engage in continuous program improvement. A collaborative program evaluation can employ a variety of approaches, but focuses on building a relationship between the evaluation team and program staff with the goal of building the capacity of program staff to use evaluation results and promote program improvement (O'Sullivan, 2012). The process of a collaborative evaluation occurs in three general phases: (1) getting underway, (2) full engagement, and (3) wrapping up. While the phases appear linear, they are, in fact, dynamic and iterative as implemented throughout the evaluation process.

The collaborative program evaluation strategy allows the evaluation team and program staff to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in determining how to improve program implementation and effectiveness, thereby increasing the probability of improved student outcomes. In this type of evaluation, evaluators apply appropriate data collection and methods of analysis to determine whether the program is having the desired impact and provides recommendations for program improvements. While a collaborative program evaluation requires an ongoing commitment by all parties, it also produces high value to stakeholders and greatly increases the likelihood that educational programs will meet their intended goals and objectives (Usun ,2016).
A possible weakness to the participant-oriented approach is that each stakeholder is likely to have different criteria regarding program value and effectiveness (Rovai, 2003). One of the best way to ensure objectivity in the measurement of quality of outcomes in a distance education program is the exploration of the stakeholders views. Cost, time and resistance to multiple evaluation sources are important limitations in the search for objective parameters.

Participant-oriented Evaluation Strategy

The participant-oriented evaluation strategy stresses firsthand experiences with program activities and emphasizes the importance of the participants in the process. As defined by Royse, Thyer, Padgett, and Logan (2006,93), participative evaluation “centers on enlisting the cooperation of the least powerful stakeholders in

the evaluation from start to finish".Stakeholders define the evaluation approach and determine the evaluation parameters.

The participant-oriented evaluation strategy allows for the evaluator to engage with the stakeholder as a partner in solving the problems. One advantage to this approach is that it uses the technique of progressive focusing to data gather and analyse for prospective studies. Participant-oriented strategy is suited to distance education programs .But, the participant-oriented evaluation (including empowerment) strategy is not without disadvantages. A possible weakness to the participant-oriented strategy is that each stakeholder is likely to have different criteria regarding program value and effectiveness. If the evaluator attempts to find common ground and to satisfy all stakeholders, the evaluation is likely to become ineffective, and those designing and conducting evaluations may focus on answering questions that are not relevant, but to which everyone agrees.

Adversary-oriented Evaluation Strategy

The adversary-oriented evaluation strategy utilizes a judicial process in examining a program. According to Levine (1982, 149), the adversarial approach operates with the assumption that the truth emerges from a hard, but fair, fight in which opposing sides present supporting evidence. One advantage to this strategy is that it illuminates both positive and negative view points. Additionally, the strategy is open to participation by stakeholders and decisions place greater assurance in the conclusion of the trial. This evaluation strategy is not commonly adopted because of it's determination of guilt. Worthen et al (1997) stated, "Evaluation should aspire to improve programs, not determine their guilt or innocence."

The adversary-oriented strategy attempts to reduce bias by attempting to assure fairness by incorporating both positive and negative views into the evaluation itself. Several models have been used for adversary evaluations, to include structured public debates, such as town hall meetings, and the use of opposing evaluators that debate the issues. The idea of using this model is not so much to win a verdict as it is for all stakeholders and evaluators to acquire a beter appreciation of the issues involved and to gain insights into other points of view (Worthen et al.,1997). For distance education, this strategy can be helpful if students and faculty members are identified who support and oppose the distance education program and are provided the opportunity to present their points of view to the evaluators.

One advantage to this evaluation strategy in distance education is that it illuminates both positive and negative view points. Additionally, the approach is open to participation by stakeholders and decisions place greater assurance in the conclusion of the trial. But, this evaluation approach is not commonly adopted because of it's determination of guilt. The other weakness of this strategy is that it can be used only in summative evaluations and it required compact effort and takes a long time.

Qualitative Evaluation Strategy

Qualitative evaluations use qualitative and naturalistic methods, sometimes alone, but often in combination with quantitative data. The data for qualitative evaluation typically comes from fieldwork. The evaluator spends time in the setting under study—a program, organization, or community where change efforts can be observed, people interviewed, and documents analyzed. Qualitative methods include three kinds of data collection: in-depth, open-ended interviews; direct observation; and written documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Greene, 1994).Permit evaluator to study selected issues, cases or events in depth and detail.

Qualitative methods are considered useful tools to evaluate the effectiveness of distance education programs (Beck & Kacirek, 2011). Qualitative research method uses a naturalistic approach to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002).Because of the qualitative program evaluation strategies are as if describe the story of program, these aproaches can be used as effectively in program evaluation of distance education.

Expertise-oriented Evaluation Strategy

The expertise-oriented evaluation strategy is the oldest and most widely used evaluation approach to judge a program, activity, or institution (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Evaluators utilizing this strategy draw on a panel of experts to judge a program and make recommendations based on their perceptions. But in this strategy , educational criteria of expertise evaluator is not clearly be defined. The expertise-oriented strategy to evaluation, widely used by accrediting agencies, depends primarily upon professional expertise to judge an educational program(Usun ,2016).

This strategy has a potential weakness in the evaluation of distance education programs,so, that is likely to have different criteria regarding value and effectiveness of distance education program. An other weakness is the limited reliability of expert testimony. Different experts may not make the same judgments and recommendations regarding the program (Rovai, 2003).In the eyes of critics, the overall limitation to the expertise-oriented evaluation strategy is the central role of the expert judge. Critics suggest that the use of expert judges permits evaluators to make judgments that are personally biased, inherently conservative, potentially incestuous, and are not based upon program objectives of distance education .

Consumer-oriented Evaluation Strategy

The consumer-oriented evaluation strategy is commonly used by government agencies and consumer advocates who compile information to evaluate a product's effectiveness. According to Stufflebeam et al., (2000), a consumer-oriented evaluation requires a highly credible and competent expert with sufficient resources to conduct a thorough evaluation. Scriven (1991) was a pioneer in applying the consumer-oriented approach to program evaluation and was responsible for distinguishing between the formative and summative roles of evaluation. The primary purpose of formative evaluation is to improve the quality of the program being developed so it will be possible to achieve the objectives for which it was designed (Beyer, 1995). Summative evaluation is conducted to provide decision-makers or potential customers with judgments about the worth or merit of a program in relation to important criteria (Brown & Gerhardt, 2002).

The central theme of this strategy is the development of information on products for use by consumers (i.e., students). Such an approach has particular appeal for distance education programs because of the increasing competition among such programs. Limitations on the use of this model in a distance education context arise as the result of individual student differences. What appeals to one student may not appeal to another (Rovai, 2003).

One advantage to this strategy is that it attracts attention the greatness and eventual cases of the program impacts and so sensitizes the program evaluators .In this strategy,in order to appoint the basic characteristics of the potential considerations, the evaluator of distance education have to take help from the other professional experts ,such as education psychologists .

Constructivist (Postmodern) Evaluation Strategy

Constructivist evaluation is that form of evaluation based on the propositions (basic assumptions) undergirding the constructivist paradigm. Evaluation in constructivist settings is goal-free.A constructivist strategy to knowledge construction and learning can be well supported in distance education settings through a variety of technologies. Fourth Generation Evaluation (FGE) is Guba and Lincoln's (1989) response to what they believe to be the inadequacies of previous evaluation methodologies. Guba and Lincoln's (1989) specific complaints include previous evaluation generations' political bias toward whoever sponsored the evaluation; inability to acknowledge pluralism in participants' perspectives; and over-reliance and emphasis on 'qualitative analysis of a quasi-scientific nature'.The basic process of FGE includes (1) identifying stakeholders; (2) examining stakeholders' claims, issues and concerns about the construct; and (3) seeking consensus among stakeholders via discussion, negotiation, and interchange.

One of the weaknesses and criticisms of the constructivist strategy is its inability to evaluate learning. Therefore, distance education courses require clear and specific structure in order to be successful. Structure, however, does not necessarily suggest an objectivist approach to instructional design. Constructivist

evaluation is a difficult strategy to adopt. It is highly labor intensive. It is ever-recursive and requires frequent recapitulations. If is often adversarial and confrontational. It is a diffuse process impossible to specify in detail (in design form); hence, its personnel and resource commitments can at best be "guesstimated." It requires the evaluator to play multiple roles which at times may appear to be in conflict. It denies the possibility of reliable generalizations and of determining solutions "that work" everywhere (Guba and Lincoln ,1989).So, it can be said that constructivist evaluation is a difficult strategy to adopt, is not suited to distance education programs.

Traditional Evaluation Strategy

Patton (1997, 7) refered that ,with the application of scientific methods to program evaluations, traditional evaluation (TE) was born. Traditional evaluation is characterized by its emphasis on scientific methods. Reliability and validity of the collected data are key, while the main criterion for a quality evaluation is methodological rigor. TE requires the evaluator to be objective and neutral and to be outcome-focused. This leads to a preoccupation with experimental methods, numbers (as opposed to words), statistical tools, and an emphasis on summative evaluations (aimed to determine whether or not to continue a particular program) rather than formative ones (aimed at program improvement).

Stake (1973) argued for storytelling as a means of conveying the "holistic impression, the mood, even the mystery of the experience".In essence, the debate hinges on legitimacy: whereas TE draws legitimacy from scientific rigor, responsive evaluation draws legitimacy from endorsements by a majority of important stakeholders. Although Stake took pains to suggest that responsive evaluation should supplement traditional evaluation, rather than replacing it, it is easy to see the conflicting orientations of the two approaches. Thus, the seeds were sown for the debates discussed in subsequent sections of this paper. This early offshoot of TE would be a precursor to what has since been referred to as the "paradigm wars" (Caracelli, 2000.) Although TE is still widely used today, it is not the only available strategy to program evaluation in distance education . Competing strategies have since been developed, mostly in response to one of TE's most serious drawbacks – the fact that many TE reports are not used or even read (Patton, 1997). A weakness of this strategy is that it requires highly administral control , and also there are important problems concerned with objectivity and methodology.

Pragmatic Evaluation Strategy

These strategy essentially ignores the paradigm debate and show no hesitation to mix strategies in ways that loyalists to either paradigm would never do out of fear of compromising their findings. One might even speculate that these pragmatic approaches are appearing because of the persistence of the paradigm war – its abstract debates have not addressed the questions and problems that evaluators in the "real world" wrestle with, and may have led to the advent of "mixed-method approaches" . For example, Johnson, McDaniel, and Willeke (2000) argue that assessments of portfolios can satisfy psychometric demands of reliability. Datta (2001,405) concurs: "as the ends draw apart, the widening middle ground is getting filled with new approaches to unify us, such as realistic evaluation". Although a treatise of realistic evaluation falls beyond the scope of this paper, it is a noteworthy contribution worthy of further examination. Thus far, there are no articles reporting on an application of this philosophy to program evaluation. Time will tell whether or not emergent realism will catch on in the field.In spite of the continued paradigm war, which tends to polarize the field between two alternatives (objectivist or constructivist assumptions; quantitative or qualitative methods; summative or formative purpose; etc.), the literature shows an increase in popularity of pragmatic strategies (Bengston & Fan, 1999; Pratt et al., 2000).Pragmatic strategies act as a conciliator between different and dual alternatives, so, it can be said that pragmatic strategies are suited to distance education programs.

Humanistic Evaluation Strategy

Lee Cronbach quoted Ornstein (1988) two conflicting strategies in curriculum evaluation suggests that the two front ends are on a continuum. These strategies are: scientific and humanistic strategy is applying standard tests to evaluation of scientific approach indicators and in fact, this approach goes back approach is the ruling on education. Data obtained via a human strategy to significantly differ significance of scientific evaluation. In this strategy , often qualitative methods such as observation, interviews and data are use. In fact, this strategy

represents both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the field of evaluation. The most common way is that the curriculum as a sequence of courses or a program of what is thought to occur in the classroom. Assessment based on technical evaluation of this strategy is based on the belief that better results can be evaluated to determine the payments. In the second method, curriculum, not as a program but as what actually happens to students is viewed. The evaluation strategy is based on this strategy is more human approach. Humanistic strategy in the last three decades it has grown to feature which is trying to gain a more complete picture of the curriculum (Usun ,2016).

The advantages of this strategy are that it use often qualitative methods such as observation, interviews . In fact, this strategy represents both quantitative and qualitative strategies in the field of evaluation and it is based to process.The weakness of this strategy is that it applies standard tests to evaluation of scientific approach indicators. So, humanistic approach is not suited to evaluate of distance education programs.

Academic Evaluation Strategy

The academic strategy attempts to analyze and synthesize major positions, trends, and concepts of curriculum. It tends to be grounded on historical and philosophical curriculum developments and to a lesser extent on social conditions. This strategy is concerned with comprehensive domains of schooling, including the study of education. It is usually scholastic and theoretical, hence, also referred to as ―traditional, encyclopedic, synoptic, intellectual, or knowledge-oriented approach‖ (Ornstein & Hunkins 1993:6). This strategy has partially returned in recent times – Emphasis is placed on understanding how knowledge is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Also, this strategy was very concerned with presenting a broad variety foundational issues related to the topic, such as historical, philosophical , social and political (Usun ,2016).

The academic strategy is a more focused on the structure on knowledge and organization of subject matter into subjects. The training and development of the mind is what is most important. Observable actions are not as significant in this strategy. When people adopt this strategy they believe in training the mind like a muscle. A strong muscle can be used in many different ways just as a strong mind can be used in many different occupations in life. The weaknesses of this strategy is that it is not practical ,usually theoretical , encyclopedic, synoptic and intellectual ,so, is not suited to distance education programs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

It is essential that evaluation and evaluation strategies should be part of all distance education programs. In current and related literature there are only a few study on the program evaluation strategies in distance education. In this study, Usun's(2016) thirteen evaluation strategies that are frequently used to collect data for educational program evaluations were reviewed in point of suitabilities and utilities to distance education; The objectives-oriented evaluation strategy focuses on specifying the goals and objectives of a given program attained. This strategy is highly suited to distance education programs that have highly defined objectives, and the purpose of the evaluation is to determine if, and to what extent, these objectives have been met. Major weaknesses often cited regarding this strategy include the difficulty of evaluators of distance education to operate in a program environment with ill-defined objectives, to identify unintended program outcomes, and to measure learning. Systems -based evaluation strategy is very helpful to understanding distance education and that ''the systems model provides a tool that not only helps us recognize many of the issues that separate distance education from conventional education, but also helps us distinguish good distance education from bad.'' Consequently, it is important to evaluate distance education programs by how they work as a whole rather than by evaluating individual components without regard to overall program effectiveness. Potential weakness of the systems based (management oriented) strategy may occur from evaluators giving partiality to top management, from evaluators' occasionalinability to respond to questions, from costly evaluation processes, and from the assumption that important decisions can be clearly identified in advance .

In spite of the continued paradigm war, which tends to polarize the field between two alternatives (objectivist or constructivist assumptions; quantitative or qualitative methods; summative or formative purpose; etc.), the literature shows an increase in popularity of pragmatic strategies. Pragmatic evaluation strategies act as a conciliator between different and dual alternatives, so, it can be said that pragmatic approaches are suited to distance education programs. Qualitative methods are considered useful tools to evaluate the effectiveness of distance education programs .Qualitative research method uses a naturalistic approach to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest .Because of the qualitative program evaluation strategies are as if describe the story of program, these aproaches can be used as effectively in program evaluation of distance education. The central theme of the consumer-oriented evaluation strategy is the development of information on products for use by consumers (i.e., students). Such an approach has particular appeal for distance education programs because of the increasing competition among such programs. Limitations on the use of this model in a distance education context arise as the result of individual student differences. In this strategy,in order to appoint the basic characteristics of the potential considerations, the evaluator of distance education have to take help from the other professional experts ,such as education psychologists . The collaborative and participant-oriented evaluation strategies allow for the evaluator to engage with the stakeholder as a partner in solving the problems. The advantages to these strategies are that they use the technique of progressive focusing to data gather and analyse for prospective studies. The possible weaknesses of these strategies are that each stakeholder is likely to have different criteria regarding program value and effectiveness . The adversary-oriented evaluation strategy utilizes a judicial process in examining a program. For distance education, this strategy can be helpful if students and faculty members are identified who support and oppose the distance education program and are provided the opportunity to present their points of view to the evaluators. One advantage to this evaluation strategy in distance education is that it illuminates both positive and negative view points. The weakness of this strategy is that it can be used only in summative evaluations and it required compact effort and takes a long time.

Traditional, expertise-oriented,humanistic and academic evaluation strategies have potential weaknesses in the evaluation of distance education programs. Although traditional evaluation (TE) is still widely used today, it is not the only available strategy to program evaluation in distance education . Competing strategies have since been developed, mostly in response to one of TE's most serious drawbacks – the fact that many TE reports are not used or even read . A weakness of this strategy is that it requires highly administral control , and also there are important problems concerned with objectivity and methodology. The expertise-oriented evaluation strategy i strategy has a potential weakness in the evaluation of distance education programs, so, that is likely to have different criteria regarding value and effectiveness of distance education program. An other weakness is the limited reliability of expert testimony. Different experts may not make the same judgments and recommendations regarding the program. Humanistic strategy in the last three decades it has grown to feature which is trying to gain a more complete picture of the curriculum. The advantages of this strategy are that it use often qualitative methods such as observation, interviews . In fact, this strategy represents both quantitative and qualitative strategies in the field of evaluation and it is based to process. The weakness of this strategy is that it applies standard tests to evaluation of scientific approach indicators. The academic strategy is a more focused on the structure on knowledge and organization of subject matter into subjects. The training and development of the mind is what is most important. Observable actions are not as significant in this strategy. When people adopt this strategy they believe in training the mind like a muscle. A strong muscle can be used in many different ways just as a strong mind can be used in many different occupations in life. The weaknesses of this strategy is that it is not practical ,usually theoretical , encyclopedic, synoptic and intellectual ,so, is not suited to distance education programs.

By understanding the similarities and differences between the strategies above mentioned it is hoped that program evaluators of distance education can be more effective in their application of multiple evaluation strategies .

Recommendations

In this study, it was determined that the objectives-oriented and systems -based evaluation strategies were highly suited to distance education programs. But, traditional, expertise-oriented, humanistic and academic evaluation strategies have potential weaknesses in the evaluation of distance education programs . As above (in section of Introduction) mentioned , in current literature although there are some studies on the program evaluation models in distance education, but there are only a few study on the program evaluation strategies in distance education. The findings obtained in this study may be useful in the exploration of potential research areas and identification of neglected areas in the field of distance education. We think that the conclusions of our study is a set of new questions that can be used as ideas for further research. So , in future , qualitative and / or quantitative researches should be realized on the suitabilities and effectivenesses of the strategies of the objectives-oriented and systems -based evaluation for distance education programs.

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