Investigating the Role of Internal Evaluation in Improving the Quality of Education Based on the Master Students' Viewpoint in Educational Sciences Course at Islamic Azad University

Atefeh Jonbeshi and Allahverdi Hossein Zadeh,

Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran.

Abstract: The purpose of the present research is to examine the role of internal evaluation in improving educational quality from educational sciences static society is 350 student M.A students' view who are studying in Roudehen Azad university in academic year 2009-2010. Statistic society includes 200 students studying in various branches out of the whole students mentioned. Employed tool is researcher made inventory including 33 questions. It is made from two sections about individual's ideas and opinions. One-group t test, independent two-groups t test, variance analysis and operative analysis were used in order to hypotheses test. The results demonstrated the students' satisfaction and the efficiency of internal evaluation. Also about this opinion there is no difference between male and female students.

Key word:

INTRODUCTION

Growing process of changes in higher education of Iran during the recent years has decreased the teaching quality (Hejazi, 1998 - Nafisi, 2000 - Moghinzadeh, 2001). The whole higher education system is affected by our imagination about the future and if our imagination about the future is not consistent with the existing reality and does not follow a scientific and an objective basis, the higher education system will also go off (Mohammadi, 2002). In the third millennium, the expert and efficient human resources is the most important factor in the sustainable growth and development of countries. In developed countries, the major portion of investment is spent for training these people. For instance, 80% of Japan's capital is allocated to the human resources Factor and 20% allocated to the equipment, devices and technology (Ebrahimi, 1996). The efficiency of human resources in each society depends effectively on fulfilling their educational needs and the necessities (Zarei, 2003); in this regard, universities are the most valuable institutions which the society needs for development. (Pazargadi, 1998) One of the reasons for the failure of educational system in the country is the lack of systematic research in the academic educational program and a blind imitation of programs at Western Universities (Zarei, 2003) and there are always the question marks in it (Accreditation Report, 2002) Identifying the process of educational programs, adapting the output with the needs of society, realizing the objectives and finally clarifying the situation of higher education system require the constant feedback from implementing the programs (Pazargadi, 1998). The tool for providing the information required for feedback in the educational system contains the evaluations which are done within the defined framework (Hejazi, 1998). However, evaluation of objectives in the educational system is one of the most difficult affairs (Taghipour Zahir, 2001).

Therefore, the higher education system should examine itself scientifically in order to determine the amount of obtained objectives and tasks (Iranmanesh, 2003). On the other hand, the higher education system, as an objective phenomenon, has two quantitative and qualitative aspects (Ghoorchian, 1994). The quality of higher education is one of the important topics in higher education systems across the world (Bazargan et al, 2000).

The quality of education means the amount of outcomes in the system including the graduates and research products.

Quality in the higher education is a dynamic matter with multiple dimensions and is constantly changing (Izadi, 1996).

This dynamism and variability cause that the activity to be done constantly in order to improve it. (Neyestani, 1999).

Various theories have been proposed about the concept of quality and each of them has taken one or more its aspects into consideration (Bazargan, 1995). It is now trying to implement the attempt of higher education system in this country in line with involvement of higher education universities and institutions in this regard. The researcher in this study is trying to study the role of internal evaluation in improving the educational quality by taking a small step.

Internal Evaluation:

The nature of evaluation is to determine the worth of a thing, but it plays different roles; the roles of evaluation include: Determining the results of teaching and learning activities- Determining the worth of
program- Investigating and judging the functional systems of management structures, institutions and organizations which have the activity within their framework and ... (Taghipour Zahir, 2001 and Ebrahimi, 1998) Tyler considered the evaluation as a part of teaching process. He suggested that the "objectives, learning experience and evaluation" are the main elements of teaching process. (Wolf; translated by Kiamanesh, 2002) Educational Evaluation has been developed as the youngest science branches of educational sciences specialized field in the recent half century and has reached the integrity period with a significant development. (Conner Educa
tional Evaluation has been developed as the youngest science branches of educational sciences specialized experience and evaluation" are the main elements of teaching process. (Wolf/ translated by Kiamanesh, 2002) Tyler considered the evaluation as a part of teaching process. He suggested that the "objectives, learning experience and evaluation" are the main elements of teaching process. (Wolf; translated by Kiamanesh, 2002) Educational Evaluation has been developed as the youngest science branches of educational sciences specialized field in the recent half century and has reached the integrity period with a significant development. (Conner et al., 1986) Evaluation is a continuous bilateral, promotional, and common process (Busters, 2001) Using the evaluation in the educational activities for determining the learner's position has a history as much as the educational activities. (Bazargan, 2001).

During the past two decades, most of the higher education system around the world have made efforts in the field of evaluating and improving the quality of education and have used the internal evaluation as an underlying approach of promoting the culture of quality. (Mohammadi, 2007, p. 25).

In recent years, the quality of higher education has been the main concern of academic systems and the major basis of activities in most of the countries around the world. The review of success secrets in the field of institutionalizing the evaluation and quality-based culture in most of these countries verifies that the establishment of an efficient system of quality evaluation has been the most important reason for this success. (Parand et al., 2007, p. 49).

In our country, this approach was also taken into account in 1996 and now over 400 of educational departments have started the internal evaluation. (Mohammadi, 2007, p. 11).

Given the cultural, economic, political and social conditions of country, the role of establishment, capacity building, and support of government are necessary in this regard and the efforts will be futile without them. (pamphlet, prepared in the Evaluation Center of Assessment Organization, 2007).

The most concise definition of evaluation is to assess the merit (Papham, W.J., 1975) He presented a more detailed description of evaluation "collecting and applying the information in order to make decisions about a plan". (Cronbach, L.J, 1963) Perhaps the most famous definition of evaluation is provided by Ralph Tyler (1950). He considered the evaluation as the process of determining the amount of implemented educational objectives. According to another explanation, he considered the evaluation as a systematic process of collection, analysis and interpretation of data for determining the implemented objectives and its amount in a program (Gay, 1991) The concept of evaluation has been changed as a result of changes in the educational systems in the past few decades and has been changed from the measurement to the judgment of the worth or merits of educational phenomena. (Patton, M.Q., 1997; Stufflebeam, DL. and W.J. Webster, 1989, Chapman, D.W., 1990) A brief look at the provided definitions in this regard suggests that the concept of evaluation means to judge the worth or merit of educational phenomena or reduce the gap between the current and desired results. (Rahimi et al., 2002, p. 639).

The experts' diversity of experience and views is different and numerous about the nature of evaluation. Thus according to Worthen and Sanders's statement, more than 50 educational evaluation models have been proposed for the educational activities (Bazargan, 2001, p. 87). In an overall classification, Worthen and Sanders have classified the evaluation models into six groups including the goal-based, management-based and consumer-based approaches, and experts' viewpoint, experts' disagreement, nature-based and participatory. (Parand et al., 2007, p. 30).

**Quality of Education:**

The quality in higher education system is one of the most important pillars which play the significant role in the future of society and is considered as a combination of efficiency and effectiveness, productivity, accountability, innovation and status of education. (Mohammadi, 2002) The education with comprehensive quality is achieved through the implementation of comprehensive quality management in educational organizations. According to Patton's viewpoint, conducting the evaluation is a part of comprehensive quality management. (Bazargan, 2001, p. 60).

Quality, cost and efficiency have always been as the main factors considered by management in organizations and institutions. If the quality is improved absolutely, the cost will be reduced and productivity increased. (Parand et al., 2007, p. 48) Success and beneficial consequences of quality assurance programs depend on the acceptance and support of academic community at all levels. (Mohammadi, 2005, p. 33).

A specific mission or task has been defined for most of the educational systems and its specification and refinement are the acceptable bases in evaluating the activities. The most important advantage of this task is to focus on what is really important. (Mohammadi, 2002).

Determining the status of program is an issue in achieving the determined objectives; the other issue is that whether these objectives meet the need, which the program is developed for them even if the program has been successful in achieving them; therefore, the requirements are the bases for the review of program goals and according to them the evaluation has no need to accept the stated objectives unconditionally. (Kiamanesh, 2002).
Research Method:
This study is applied based on the type of research and is a kind of descriptive survey research based on the data collection.

Statistical Population of Research:
The statistical population in this study is presented in the following table:

Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different branches of master of educational sciences</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Research</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Management</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Planning</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Philosophy of Education</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total statistical population</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistical population of this study consists of 350 students and they have been classified into four branches of educational research, educational management, educational planning, history and philosophy of education in master course.

3-4 - Sample and Sampling Method:
Statistical sample has been based selected 200 individuals based on Krejcie and Morgan table of determining the sample. Sampling method is stratified.

3-5 - Data Collection Method:
Data collection method in this research is the questionnaire which two parts. The part (a) indicates the questions about the personal characteristics or respondent's activities and part (b) indicates the questions with five point options (scale 1-5) which determine their reaction to a matter on a range with the choice that represents the beliefs or attitudes about that items in a best way.

Validity or Credibility:
The concept of validity responds to this question that to what extent the measurement tool examines the desired property. Without the knowledge of measurement tool validity, we cannot make sure of the accuracy of data obtained from it (Sarmad et al., 2006, p. 170). The Content Validity Method has been used about the validity or credibility of the questionnaire used in this study. The research questionnaire was distributed among the respondents and its validity was confirmed equal to 0.92 for 33 questions.

Reliability or Dependability:
Reliability is one of the technical features of measurement tool. The mentioned concept indicates that to what extent the measurement tool leads to the same results in the same conditions. The reliability is usually from zero (lack of communication) to +1 (complete communication). Reliability coefficient indicates that to what extent the measurement tool measures the subjects' stable features or his variable and temporary features (Sarmad et al., 2006, p. 166). Different methods are used in order to calculate the reliability coefficient of measurement tool and Cronbach's alpha is the applied method in this study and the reliability of research was reviewed and approved by the advisor and supervisor professor and according to these experts' professional viewpoints.

Method of Data Analysis:
Descriptive and inferential statistical methods have been used; in the descriptive statistical method, the central indicators are the "mean and mode" and the dispersion indicators are the "elongation and Skewness"; and in the inferential statistical method, One-sample t-test, t-test for two independent groups, Analysis of variance and the factor analysis have been used.

Findings:
First question: Are the students in different branches of Educational Sciences at Islamic Azad University of Roodehen satisfied with the internal evaluation?

Table 2: Summary of t-test about the first question of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.9057</td>
<td>0.7394</td>
<td>11.298</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result obtained from the table shows that the calculated $t$ (11.298) is higher than the critical $t$, thus the obtained result is consistent with the result of research by Fathabadi (1999) because the students in different branches are satisfied with the internal evaluation.

The range of internal evaluation is so wide and it includes the first step to the end of executive and yield sectors of program; hence, the scientists have proposed different models with different approaches (Parand et al., 2007, p. 32). House represented an eight-item classification in which the individuals’ participation is increased in the evaluation by a trend of quantitative data and relying on the objective methods towards the qualitative data and relying on the mental practices.

Second question: Is the internal evaluation effective based on the students’ viewpoint in different branches of educational science at Islamic Azad University of Roodehen

Table 3: Summary of t-test about the second question of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.5342</td>
<td>0.6133</td>
<td>12.318</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result obtained from the table shows that the internal evaluation is effective based on the students’ viewpoint. Internal evaluation at this stage of educational system is like watching ourselves in the mirror. The effect of watching ourselves in the mirror is to overcome the weaknesses; and when the weaknesses are changed into the strengths, the person can be aware of his own abilities. Therefore, despite the fact that the model of internal validation was widely used until now and the input factors were considered in the initial application of this model, now the output processes are also considered as well as the input factors (Hejazi, 1998; Bazargan, 2001, and Mohammadi, 2002). Considering the mentioned factors confirms the effectiveness of internal evaluation as shown by the results.

Obtained result is consistent with the research conducted by Keizouri, Hosseini and Fallahi (1999).

Third question: Is the internal evaluation different based on the female and male students' viewpoint in different branches of educational sciences at Islamic Azad University of Roodehen.

Table 4: Summary of t-test calculations about the third question of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.6144</td>
<td>0.6842</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.4456</td>
<td>0.5130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Since the calculated $t$ (1.95) is smaller than the critical $t$ at the alpha level 0.05, it can be concluded with significant level 95% that the null hypothesis is accepted. In other words, there is no significant difference between the female and male viewpoints in the field of internal evaluation.

Fourth Question:

Is there any difference between the students’ view about the effect of evaluation on improving the quality of education in different branches of educational sciences at Islamic Azad University of Roodehen.

Table 5: One-way Analysis of variance about the fourth question of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of changes</th>
<th>Total square</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Average Total square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>3.645</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.215</td>
<td>3/343</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>71.217</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>74.862</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Duncan's post hoc test about the fourth question of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.374</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.529</td>
<td>3.5229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.628</td>
<td>3.6283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.8047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant level</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obtained results indicate that there is no difference between the female and male views about the internal evaluation. The obtained results are consistent with the results of research conducted by Eshaghi (2005).
Various ideas have been presented about the objectives and functions of internal evaluation. (Rahimi et al, 2003).

**Fifth Question:**
Is there any difference between the male and female students' views in different branches of educational sciences about the effect of internal evaluation on improving the quality of education at Islamic Azad University of Roodehen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Total square</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected</td>
<td>5/589 a</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0/837</td>
<td>2/329</td>
<td>0/021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>184/315</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>184/315</td>
<td>5/123 E3</td>
<td>0/000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of study and Gender</td>
<td>1/175</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0/392</td>
<td>1/090</td>
<td>0/355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of study</td>
<td>3/559</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/186</td>
<td>3/301</td>
<td>0/021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0/917</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0/917</td>
<td>2/552</td>
<td>0/112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>69/003</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>0/359</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>2573/036</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total corrected</td>
<td>74/862</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the value obtained from the table, it can be stated that there is no difference between the female and male students' view in different branches of educational sciences about the effect of internal evaluation on improving the quality of education. Obtained result is consistent with the results of research conducted by Eshaghi (2005) and Nicholson (1998).

**Conclusion:**

- Students of different branches are satisfied with the internal evaluation.
- Internal evaluation is effective based on the student's point of view.
- There is no significant deference between the male and female views of internal evaluation.
- Based on the students' views in different branches of educational sciences, the internal evaluation has an impact on the quality of education.
- Based on the female and male students' views in different branches, the internal evaluation has no impact on improving the quality of education.

By the internal evaluation, the M.A students in Educational sciences can measure their own academic quality, feel the positive and negative points, and take steps towards improving the negative conditions while maintaining the positive conditions. Thus they will achieve their own academic objectives and the access to the objectives will result in their satisfaction. This indicates that the internal evaluation facilitates the educational condition for the students.

In response to the first question, the result obtained from Table 2 indicates that the students in various branches are satisfied with the internal evaluation; the obtained result is consistent with the research conducted by Fathabadi (1999).

The range of internal evaluation is so wide and it includes the first step to the end of executive and yield sectors of program; hence, the scientists have proposed different models with different approaches (Parand et al, 2007, p. 32). House represented an eight-item classification in which the individuals' participation is increased in the evaluation by a trend of quantitative data and relying on the objective methods towards the qualitative data and relying on the mental practices.

By the internal evaluation, the M.A students in Educational sciences can measure their own academic quality, feel the positive and negative points, and take steps towards improving the negative conditions while maintaining the positive conditions. Thus they will achieve their own academic objectives and the access to the objectives will result in their satisfaction. This indicates that the internal evaluation facilitates the educational condition for the students.

In response to the second question, the result obtained from Table 3 indicates that the internal evaluation is effective based on the student's viewpoint. Internal evaluation at this stage of educational system is like watching ourselves in the mirror. The effect of watching ourselves in the mirror is to overcome the weaknesses; and when the weaknesses are changed into the strengths, the person can be aware of his own abilities. Therefore, despite the fact that the model of internal validation was widely used until now and the input factors were considered in the initial application of this model, now the output processes are also considered as well as the input factors (Hejazi, 1998; Bazargan, 2001, and Mohammadi, 2002). Considering the mentioned factors confirms the effectiveness of internal evaluation as shown by the results.

Obtained result is consistent with the research conducted by Keizouri, Hosseini and Fallahi (1999).

In response to the third question, the result obtained from Table 4 indicates that there is no difference between the female and male views about the internal evaluation. The obtained results are consistent with the results of research conducted by Eshaghi (2005).
Various ideas have been presented about the objectives and functions of internal evaluation. (Rahimi et al., 2003) The factors including the organizational position, organizing and managing the educational process and students' status have been more taken into account by international experience of internal evaluation in academic systems, but none of the experience has considered the gender and the gender has no effect on the internal evaluation.

In other words, the gender does not change the view about the internal evaluation and the internal evaluation is effective based on the students' viewpoint.

- In response to the fourth question, the results obtained from Table 5 and 6 indicate that the effect of evaluation on improving the quality of education is different in different branches of educational sciences and the students in planning and philosophy have different views. This result is consistent with the results by Keizouri, Hosseini and Fallahi (1999).

The quality in higher education system is one of the most important pillars which play the significant role in the future of society and is considered as a combination of efficiency and effectiveness, productivity, accountability, innovation and status of education. Therefore, the necessity for maintaining its improvement and development forces the planners and manager to pay attention to the aspects of quality; its implementation tool is to establish a sub-system of qualitative evaluation in within the educational system. (Mohammadi, 2002) If we consider the elements of educational system (input, output processes and the outcomes), the quality can be defined based on each of them; thus the output quality can be as the quality of issue.

By better understanding of internal evaluation, students in planning course have considered its impacts more effective on the improvement of educational quality.

- In response to the fifth question, according to the value obtained from Table 6 it can be stated that there is no difference between the female and male students' view in different branches of educational sciences about the effect of internal evaluation on improving the quality of education. Obtained result is consistent with the results of research conducted by Eshaghi (2005) and Nicholson (1998).

Comprehensive quality is one of the approaches considered in the definition of desired quality; in this approach all elements of educational system are considered, in other words, the education is with the comprehensive quality in this regard and the quality of output, input, process and outcome are studied all together. The comprehensive quality is achieved through implementing the internal evaluation on quality of life improvement. (Bazargan, 2001).

Girls and boys are more influenced by the information, which they understand about their field, thus their field of study has a great effect on their type of attitude, but their gender attitudes cannot be a good criterion according to the well information they get.

Suggestion:
- Since the internal evaluation has been lead to the students' satisfaction, it is suggested performing this evaluation annually and in all Bachelor and Master Courses.
- Given the amount of students' satisfaction of evaluation in higher education, it is suggested extending this method in Bachelor and Master and Doctoral Courses.
- The effect of internal evaluation on the improvement of educational quality should be considered through the academic journals and relevant books.
- Further research should be conducted in this regard in order to determine all aspects of internal evaluation effects on improving the quality of education.
- It is recommended that the research should be conducted in Bachelor course and the results be examined.

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