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[Career & Campus]

e-forays

Diya Chaurasia explains why online tests facilitate the globalisation of Information Technology

The Internet is all set to pamper education with e-Assessment. The buzz is almost over with Jeff Ross, director, Assessment Tomorrow, UK, clearing his plans on e-learning in the West Bengal University of Technology on 15 April.

Jeff Ross along with the vice-chancellor, WBUT, and R Dhirendra, CEO, Eduquity, announced the formal implementation of online tests in India.

Assessment tomorrow is the future of e-assessment, which is a combination of technology, assessment and practical utility. The old methods of examination are giving way to online display of question papers, authenticated collection of responses from students and instant creation of results at the end of the tests. Eduquity, since its inception in 2000, introduced online tests in India and abroad. As Dhirendra explains "Eduquity was incorporated in India in June 2000 to identify "Right Fit" persons for the role, in terms of knowledge, skills and behavioural attributes." It is now on its way to make the WBUT use such methods. It involves five basic procedures: summative, formative, diagnostic, self-assessment and adaptive. Computers set, deliver and mark the test of a student's skill, understanding and knowledge. "We do not aim to teach students, we aim at sharing our knowledge with them. Online tests scan the true potential of a student", says Ashok Ranjan Thakur, vice-chancellor, WBUT.

It involves a plethora of tests with an eye on gauging the ability of students. Frequent tests enable efficient feedback. Moreover, frequent use of hardware skills enables them gather expertise in the field of IT, which is currently booming in the country and worldwide.

Computer remains unaffected by distance due to which unbiased, distant tests can be attempted in minimum time and difficult tasks can be accomplished in simpler ways. As a result cognitive skills that constitute an important part of IT are efficiently assessed. Randomisation and parameterisation ensure non-manipulative results and provide greater security. Use of multimedia unifies each of the electronic papers. They provide versatility and flexibility as well as a varied set of information.

Eduquity has designed a number of methods in order to avoid for-the-first-time sort of mistakes by users. It starts from online registration to filling of online application forms, choice of examination centres, date and slots allotted according to the choice of users. Admit cards are dispatched through the e-mail and the download facility is based on authentication. The tests aim at checking the basic cognitivity, consistency, briefing skills, logistics and awareness of applicants.

BITS Pilani has already perfected the method of testing. It provides online registration, forms, hall tickets, question banks, question papers, a variety of software and detailed student report creation.

The railway recruitment board also organises online tests.

All this requires enormous planning and organisational skills. Infrastructural anomalies pose a hurdle to the free utilisation of such a method. The user may initially hesitate to take the plunge for he is required to master new skills. Moreover, in a country like India where illiteracy rate is high, implementation of such a costly and ultra-modern method may take some time. "We need to clear misgivings before we can expect people to buy the concept", says TK Dutta, centre manager, Eduquity Career Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

Controversies keep cropping up such as fake merit testing through machines, inadequate drawing spaces etc., but the e-Assessment panel is bent on justifying the significance of online tests for reasons that are obvious.

The prevalence of online tests would facilitate the globalisation of IT. Around 23 million sq ft has been preserved for the expansion of IT by 2011. But in the last analysis it is the users on whom rests the success of the venture.

For further information log on to www.assessmenttomorrow.com

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