Faculties' Perception on Semester System at TU Affiliated Colleges, Nepal

Dawa Sherpa* & Khagendra Baraily†

Abstract

The total educational session completing in a half of the year is simply referred as semester system. In semester system the total educational activities are based upon the project basis. This study aimed at exploring the perceptions of faculties about the semester system adopted by a Tribhuvan University (TU) affiliated college in Nepal. It also dug out the faculties' experience of pedagogical transformation in higher education. For the sake of their world views, an interpretive paradigm was employed. In this philosophical orientation, subjective reality is an ontological position and multiple realities are epistemological standpoints. This study employed qualitative research method. Narrative inquiry was chosen as the research design. Four participants from the TU-affiliated colleges had been taken purposively from the campus located outside the Kathmandu Valley. An in-depth interview was conducted with research participants in their natural settings without any interruption. The result revealed that the faculties' perception of the semester system was diverse in nature. The student behaviors, faculty behaviors, and unpreparedness of teachers and administration seemed to be more challenging and unfruitful. The effectiveness of the semester system can contribute not only to pedagogical transformation but also to global knowledge. Through the semester system, the whole faculties and students are self-empowered and seek to understand the world through the effort of digital technology.

* *Mr. Dawa Sherpa is a lecturer of Education Planning and Management (EPM) at Central Department of Education, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur. Email: dawa.sherpa@tucded.edu.np*

† *Mr. Khagendra Baraily is a lecturer of Foundations of Education at Sanothimi Campus, Bhaktapur. Email: khagendraji@gmail.com*

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Introduction

The semester system was originally implemented at Tribhuvan University in 1970, but it did not endure long due to insufficient infrastructure and preparedness since it was replaced by the annual system in 1980. The semester system was introduced again in 2014 at the central departments of TU (Sharma & Subedi, 2018).

The semester system incorporates the notion of credit hours and grading systems in education. It necessitates students' attendance and participation at class on a regular basis. Minimum attendance is required in order to be eligible to appear in the final examination (Paudel, 2019). The form of learning encompasses individual and group presentations, case studies, and other critical reading tasks, which vastly simplify the conventional one-way lecture technique. It distinguishes itself by the provision of continual assessment of pupils through various tasks and written examinations. The form of evaluation differs due to the grading system both absolute and relative grading are used in Nepali institutions (Pokharel, 2019).

The essence of the semester system is a classroom with full academic activities. Teachers must keep a close eye on their students' academic progress and spend long hours beyond the classroom (Lamsal, 2018). Moreover, Lamsal (2018) stated that students appreciate each other's views, assess, learn, and exchange them in a semester system. Students are not recipients of knowledge, but rather readers, critics, authors, and creators of knowledge.

In the context of TU Nepal, the semester system is being implemented all over Nepal for Master, M.Phil. and Ph.D. levels. However, TU officials are found quite indifferent towards the problems of teachers and students. They fail to provide even basic office space for teachers and classrooms for students. Even today, a TU teacher lacks a chair and a table to sit on while assisting students in research work and helping solve their problems (Lamsal, 2018; Khaniya, 2014). The teachers' professional development mechanism was lacking in the university education system which impedes the construct of motivation theory. Teachers are not provided in-service and other refreshment trainings. Similarly, there is no incentive for teachers to be engaged and highly devoted to students' learning. In this context, this article aims at studying the teachers' perceptions on the semester system.

Objectives

This study was confined to explore the teachers' perceptions on semester system of TU and identify contemporary practices in semester system.

Research Method

The issues embodied in this study assemble the inner perceptions of teachers who have had a long time of expertise in the teaching field. The qualitative methods underlying the major strategies may explore perceptions along with lived experiences (Diekelmann, 2001). In this way, we had applied qualitative research strategies to carry out this study.

We adopted a qualitative method along with a constructivist paradigm. Regarding the philosophical orientation, pedagogical transformation was the ontological essence of participants' experiences in a semester from an epistemological view point. The quality enhancement, student empowerment and participatory learning culture (Silins & Mulford, 2002) were the axiological stand points for this study. Through the narrative inquiry the researchers have stated the experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) of teaching in semester system. The four faculty members teaching in the community college located outside the Kathmandu valley were purposively selected. The participant teachers were faculties teaching in both semester and annual systems teaching in Nepali, English, Educational Planning and Management (EPM) and health department.

The colleges selected were ranked in QAA by the University Grants Commission. These colleges were affiliated to run master's programs in two or more subjects. The faculty members under 45 years of age had more than five years of experiences as full-time faculty members, with gender inclusion. For the sake of narration, we contacted the participants via telephone with the purpose of meeting. When we visited the first participant, we had tea at the campus canteen and shared the feelings of daily life. Then, we interacted on the content of the research. We held in-depth interviews (Dackman, 1986) with guidelines about the teaching life on campus and experiences across the semester system. In the beginning, the interview guidelines supported digging out their inner perceptions, and the discourse itself transformed into an in-depth interview in the course of the semester system.

The narrative approach allowed the researchers to collect information about the implementation of the semester system (Beattie, McInnes, & Fearnley, 2004). The interview response was recorded and transcribed.

The transcribed data was coded and reorganized by decoding to obtain the main theme (Saldana, 2021). The main theme was analyzed to get the perception of the teachers toward the semester system blending with the major challenges. To ensure accuracy of our research and findings we applied data triangulation by overlapping questions during interviews with full of justification. Credibility had been ensured by revisiting the research participants. At the end of explanation of main theme along with the teacher's experiences about semester system, we mapped our research findings with similar researches and narrative studies of other researchers.

Results and Discussion

This section comprises the results from the transcribed data from interviews with the research participants by the thick description with the support of appropriate theory, which was subscribed by the literature review. From the data, the themes and corresponding sub-themes for this study were extracted and a conclusion was drawn accordingly.

Perception of Teachers towards Administration

Administration refers to the overall activity, either academic or nonacademic of the organization. It represents the planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, budgeting, etc. These types of functions are guided by the overall administrative system of the organization (Usman, 2016). The mutual relationships among faculties and administration enhance the organizational goals (Krucken, Blumel, & Kloke, 2013). The administrative roles create an extrinsic motivation for the faculties who are potentially adherent to the organizations. If the administrative system of the organization is unable to contribute to the professional and career development of the faculties, they exhibit negative feelings towards their responsibility and develop a negative attitude towards their profession (Louis & Kruse, 1995). If they are treated properly by the administration, they develop a positive attitude and wish to contribute more to the organization with their dedicated responsibility. In the context of administration, teacher (T1) stated:

> Our campus commenced the semester system as decided by TU in master level but the preparation was like that of annual system. The administrator of our campus was not still familiar with the semester system. The students and teachers were reluctant to engage in the new system because academic culture of our campus was remaining unchanged. The administrative personal were performing their duty with the dogmatic thought and stigmatization.

In this assertion, the administrative system was not intending to change the annual system. In the semester system, the administrative system needed to change their willingness to transform their behavior according to the need of society. In semester system, the students learnt themselves through constructivist approach and campus administration needed to facilitate them in participatory learning (Gold, 2001). Similarly, another research participant T2 asserted:

> The campus administration rarely provided physical and psychological support. Frankly speaking, we the teachers of college were unknown about core of semester system because campus administration had not conducted orientation on semester system and course dissemination. We were adapting ourselves with the semester parameters which are prescribed by the TU curriculum.

The statement shows that TU affiliated public campuses are not serious and responsible towards the essence of semester system. The overall activity adopted by the campuses was recursive of old traditions with the fragmentation of annual system (Deroy & Clegg, 2015). The semester system is guided by not only learning by teaching rather than learning by doing. It focuses on how to do in the act of teaching. Similarly another research participant (T3) asserted regarding semester system as:

> Being the academic environment is more participatory and collaborative, the whole campus family need to be attentive and committed to fulfill the need of students for the achievement of organizational goal. This type of motive enhances the potentiality of students through collaboration and cooperation.

From this fact, it is clear that smooth administrative system in the favor to student makes academic environment student friendly and zone of peace that results better outcomes for any institutions. The effective administrative system can also contribute to the career development of child (Hunt & Michael, 1983).

Basis for Adopting Global Knowledge

Global knowledge makes the person globally accepted and becomes well furnished by the 21ˢᵗ century skill (Murtha, Lenway, & Hart, 2002). This knowledge facilitates education experience of students which is the appreciation diverse perspective through the interconnection of the wider world. The students with global knowledge communicate and collaborate to international culture and tradition throughout the world (Pan & Leidner,

2003). In this context, a teacher (T3) asserted as:

> In semester system, students learn themselves using search engine and online sources. They can search relevant materials by using online access such as pro Quest, web of science, Google scholar, etc. The students in the semester system do not depend on text book and reference book of old edition. They entertain by the new information and latest wisdom with the help of online source.

In this assertion, the student learning completely adhered with the on line sources and fully engaged in the self-learning. Bookish knowledge is replaced by the collaborative and consultative learning. In fact, the semester system is highly accepted in blending with global knowledge through online sources. This system avoids the concepts of bookish knowledge and leads to the global skills and attributes of the person (Rao & Patel, 2012). In the favor of above arguments the research participant (T4) asserted as:

> In the semester system, the students are motivated by self-learning and make them competent with the help of digital technology. The students in the semester system entertain with online resources for sharing cross-cultural knowledge among various parts of the world.

The assertion explores that the theme of semester system seeks cross-boarder knowledge through the use of online sources. The students in semester system become more competent and skillful by the acquisitions of new knowledge through technology (Tai, Pan, & Lee, 2015). By the semester system the students are eligible to have the requirements of global citizen such as adopting technology, skills and qualities.

Perception of Teachers towards Students' Behaviors

The overall activity exhibited by students to carry out the academic function refers to the students' behavior. These behaviors represent the indoor and outdoor activities to be performed by students to achieve the learning objectives (Kuh, 2003). In this context a teacher (T1) asserted as:

> Our college has started semester system but the preparation was not so good for semester. The teachers and students were not well-prepared on the basis of learning culture. The students were still thinking that they did not need to attend regularly and the campus could not impose them compulsorily due to the various reasons. In our college, most of the students were job-holder and only attended in examination. Sometimes,

they might pressurize for high marks in the assessment via telephone call.

In the above assertion, the students who are partially engaged in regular class due to the job and other preferences. The students in the community college wanted to have master's degree by part time study due to their engagement in other profession. The campus administration cannot impose their students in the attendance due to the student union and student politics. On the other side, the campus administration showed the flexible characteristic due to the lower number of enrollment in master's degree (Eagan Jr & Jaeger, 2009). In the essence of semester system learning is to do not to be in this context students develop themselves by self-engagement, self-dedication in the allocated content areas. Similarly, semester system needed to focus on quality education rather than mass education. In the same context another teacher (T2) urged in favor of semester system as:

> In the positive aspect of semester system, the students were engaged for long time in college for the preparation of assignments. The students were seen to be frequently engaged in discussing in subject-matter and make the collaborative work for functional and constructive. The students in the semester system were engaging in library study sometimes in science laboratory for the creation of new knowledge and disseminate in the classroom.

From the above statement, it is clear that in semester system the traditional learning system was transformed into student-centered approach. The students interacted in relevant discipline and made the compromise for the agreement. While the students engaged in e-library and science laboratory, they could link up new things in the subject-matter and became more confident around the content areas (Linn & Hsi, 2000). For the sake of good learning attitude and institutions it needed to create facilitative environment in all respects such as access of e-library, data base, opportunity to participate in seminar and workshop, discussion forum. Likewise another participant teacher (T3) asserted as:

> In our college most of students who enrolled in master's degree were job-holder and they were far from the campus. Master degree program was running in morning shift and students could not attend in college. I have heard that teaching learning activity need to be carried out in participatory approach under semester system but in our campus it has not happened so.

In semester system, the student involvement is crucial and knowledge creation process is embedded to the participatory approach. If the college

is able to minimize the issue of absenteeism of students, the students are more benefited by learning environment and access the quality education (Barefoot, 2004). For ensuring the quality education, college needs to encourage all most all students in learning environment.

Perception of Teachers towards Teaching Learning Process

Overall activities that adopted by the teacher regarding semester system are concerned with teacher behaviors. The teachers' behaviors are influenced by the policy guidelines adopted by the host institution. In such context, teacher (T1) said as:

> In the beginning of semester introduction in the university I noticed that was launched within Kathmandu valley and from the next year it was introduced in out of valley colleges. When our college decided to run semester system, I felt completely in confusion regarding its pedagogy. In the annual system I used to use note book for illustration of content but now I needed to use power point presentation which was difficult for me.

The above assertion shows that teachers were not enjoying with semester system due to their professional incompetency and they are unable to adjust in semester system with full effort. In this case teachers are required to provide job refreshment and enrichment training to carry out transformative pedagogy in efficient manner. The teacher are encouraged to adopt new techniques and methods for delivering successful instruction in place of traditional pedagogy (Hennessy, Harrison, & Wamakote, 2010). In the same context as above, another teacher (T2) asserted as,

> I have been teaching Nepali in the department of Nepali education. In the annual system I used to use lecture method by using summary note. Now I have to use demonstration method with power point slides. Recently, I do not have computer and I do not know how to prepare power point slide in Nepali subject. Campus has not given training for ICT.

In the above assertion, the teachers were completely depended on lecture note for all subjects. In the implementation of semester, every teacher needed to adopt demonstration method by power point slide. Generally, teachers felt uneasy to prepare slide and other teaching materials in Nepali version. Besides this, most of the faculties were not provided laptop and training for ICT (Khaniya, 2014). In such case, campus needed to manage laptop or the e-library with full internet access so that they could teach from the campus. In the above context teacher (T3) observed as,

In our college I have been teaching algebra in the department of mathematics education since 2006. In algebra, I need to teach many theorems and algebraic applications. In algebra, I need to use more algebraic symbols but it is not found in computer. In my class almost students do not have computer and sometimes they are unable of prepare assignment.

In the above assertion, the teacher feels uneasy to teach algebra with the help of power point presentation. In one side, he is not perfect in slide preparation and other side all the mathematical symbols are difficult to find in computer (Veloo, Krishnasamy, & Wan Abdullah, 2015). In this case, institutions need to organize short term training for ICT and mathematics software. College needs to establish mathematics laboratory for doing mathematics experiment and ICT -oriented workshop.

Perception towards Preparedness

It refers to the lack of readiness for instructing in the semester class. The preparedness of all stakeholders in the semester system creates better academic environment and transforms the existing conventional system into new constructivist approach. In this context teacher (T4) said as:

When Tribhuvan University decided to introduce semester system in a college, our campus was not well prepared for adopting the new system. The teacher and students were not prepared for that program. The physical infrastructure was not ICT friendly. We used to teach by using conventional methods. However, the semester was running. The student absentees had been increased.

From this assertion, it is clear that constituent and affiliated colleges were not well-prepared for introducing semester system. It takes time and it is not easy to replace old structure and introduce new system. The management of human resource is more challenging and difficult to manage in short time. Infrastructure such as e-library and IT lab are not properly managed in each and every college (Rana, Greenwood, & Fox□ Turnbull, 2020). So, the administrations need to focus on the development of infrastructure and human resource management. With the support of above argument faculty T1 stated as:

Teaching pedagogy has been shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered. Students prepare individually or group wise and present the content in the classroom. They are encouraged by self-learning through books, articles and digital sources.

From the above assertion, the teaching learning environment is totally influenced by the student effective participation and they are encouraged to self-learning through digital resources. They share the knowledge whatever they learn by self-learning and make discussion in the classroom more collaborative. The students who are adhering to semester system give emphasis online reading materials. From this fact, it is clear that the students become more enthusiastic and curious to learn through online sources. Similarly, another participant (T2) asserted as:

> Teaching learning pedagogy is student-centered and teachers play the role of facilitator and guide. It has increased the creativity of the students and traditional rote learning has discouraged. ICT use in classroom has increased. In the semester system, teaching pedagogy is completely transformed into student-centered and teacher acts as facilitator in the course of student learning. On the behalf of creative work the student of semester system is far better.

The assertion shows that the role of teacher is to be guide for the learners and he should orient students' way forward to the goal of education. They require to encourage the students reading themselves with the use of ICT and digital technology (Rana et al., 2020). The teachers shape their instructions to activate the student's creativity in learning. Regarding the semester system another participant (T4) stated as:

> Semester system is just fragmentation of annual system. And no changes has found. Students learning practices has not shifted as norms and value of semester system. Regular and continuous learning is not priority. They focus on examination not for learning.

In this assertion the semester system is acting as just pseudo name of annual system. The practice and behavior are like that of an annual system. The recursive behavior indicates that semester system is just division of annum into two halves because the norms and values of semester have not been changed in evaluation system (Lamsal, 2018). In context to evaluation procedure participant (T3) stated as:

> An evaluation system is followed by continuous assessment system. Forty percent marks is evaluated by a subject teacher where subject expert assigned the students three assignments. In first assignment the teacher provide assigned class presentation to the peer, second assignment project work and third assignment is related to theoretical article and classroom participations and classroom interaction is observed. On the other hand 60 percent marks are evaluated through

final examination conducted by dean's office.

The above assertion shows that teachers use a continuous evaluation system for student learning. The students are given assignments and evaluated smoothly. These types of activities cover 40% of the whole weightage. The attendance, the activities in the classroom, and the involvement in the teaching-learning activities are also included in the evaluation. So the evaluation system has changed to an assignment basis (Lamsal, 2018). However, another participant (T4) opposed this statement and asserted as:

> Internal assignment has not implemented well. It has just practiced for formality and sometimes teacher provide number haphazardly without any specific criteria. Students secured marks just admitting the college. They never participate college for study and request for internal marks and participate in final examination.

In the above assertion, the practice of internal assessment system is very much effective in semester system but it is not implemented effectively. Sometimes, the teacher is pressurized to provide assignment marks without performing any activity. The teacher cannot evaluate the students himself due to the unnecessary pressure created by tourist students who cannot understand the essence semester system (Pokharel, 2019). In fact, the launch of semester system is working by just name of semester.

Conclusion

The semester system is not practiced well and teachers were dissatisfied with the semester system because of poor administrative preparedness and professional incompetence. In semester system, the traditional lecture methods were shifted into a student-centered approach and students are encouraged to self-learn using digital resources. Accordingly, the students' participation has been increased and knowledge generation process is shifted into the participatory approach. A smooth administrative system in favor of students creates a student-friendly educational atmosphere and a zone of peacefulness, resulting in superior outcomes for any college. The evaluation system was completely influenced by the teacher's monopoly through paper and pencil tests.

The essence of semester system is highly emphasized for students' overall activities and students intended to develop academic performance by engaging day to day activities performed in the college. However, the behavior modification was not going in the direction of personality development. The

attitude of a student needs to be transformed into a social activist, a knowledge creator, and the founder of reality and the agency of collaborative effort.

Administrative efficiency at work can help to refine the semester system for acquiring learning outcomes. With the extensive implementation of the semester system, students must become more engaged and accountable in the pursuit of higher success. Teachers are expected to enhance and empower in their profession and need to play role of facilitator, coordinator, and organizer in teaching learning.

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